

Track and Field



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What has become of him?

After having cleared 29' 2½" at the 1968 Olympic Games, Bob Beamon thought he would stay in the long jump headlines. So did the American public. This, of course, proved to be far from the case, and Beamon, a sensitive, vulnerable and introspective man, suffered terribly as a result. He always had injuries to account for his decline in athletics. But his problem was really a psychological one. The truth was that he had been traumatized by his superhuman feat. After Mexico, he returned to the University of Texas, El Paso and played basketball. He even considered turning professional, but a player 6' 3" in height weighing 165 lb did not interest the scouts: too small and too frail. Finally, in 1972, he obtained a diploma in sociology. That year he started again to train seriously for the Munich Olympic Games. But he had lost his touch. Whereas he normally took off from the right foot, now he could only use the left. The following year he joined the short-lived professional track and field team.

Conscientiously, he achieved performances which were acceptable for just

anybody (between 7.60 m and 7.90 m), but not for him! Then one fine day in 1974 he disappeared. He had decided to look after abandoned children in New York, where he was born.

He never says who he is to the children for whom he is now responsible. When they find out, they can never understand why such a famous man should be interested in them. How could they know that Beamon has at last learned to face facts, that he no longer wants to spend whole days and sleepless nights thinking of his fantastic jump. Divorced, head over heels in debt, expelled from his university in 1969, he bought himself seven television sets, thirty-two pairs of shoes, drove around in a blue Cadillac and filled a wardrobe with suits in an attempt to forget his troubles. Having lost his mother, who died of tuberculosis, when he was still very young, he had, in his childhood, played the clown at school, dancing on the teacher's desk with enormous shoes; then he had begun to play with knives in the street, at night. Athletics had provided him with an outlet for his emotions. But his stupendous Mexican feat had nearly been his downfall.