

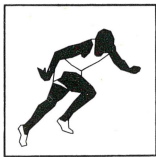
Track and Field



Charlie Greene



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The Enigma

Permanently hidden behind dark glasses, Charlie Greene looked something of an enigma. It was only on the athletics tracks, where his fluid style and his speed were a joy to behold, that he did not go unnoticed. He was the most consistent American sprinter between 1964 and 1970, but had the misfortune to find two exceptional champions, Bob Hayes and Jim Hines, across his path.

Considered as the main candidate for the gold medal before the Tokyo Olympic Games, he strained a muscle and could not even take part in the Olympic 100 m. Four years later, on 20 June 1968, in Sacramento (California), he ran the distance in 9.9 sec (10 sec on the electronic timer, 9.8 sec on two manual timers and 9.9 on another manual) in the second semi-final of the United States Championships. However, a few minutes previously, in the first semi-final, Hines had already realized this historical achievement. Charlie Greene was in superb form, but a muscle-bound reduced his chances in the 100 m final of the Mexico Olympic Games (3rd behind Jim Hines and Lennox Millee). However, even if he had been in full possession of his powers, he would nevertheless have been beaten.

Hines was much more powerfully built than Greene and in fact finished his races much better. Greene seemed to peter out. But his start was tremendous. Being 5'7" tall and weighing 135 lb, Greene usually got off to a thundering start, which enabled him to lay down the law in indoor competitions for a long time. In the last few meters of a 100 m race he would, of course, pay for not having a large stride. For this reason he often ran the first leg, the shortest one, in relay races. Having taken the world record with Mel Pender, Ray Smith and Hines in Mexico after a splendid Olympic final, Greene again became US champion on two occasions (in 1966 and 1968).

CHARLIE GREENE

Born on March 21, 1945, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1968 OG: bronze medal in the 100 m in 10 sec
gold medal in the 4 x 100 m relay

World records:

9.9 sec in the 100 m on June 20, 1968 in Sacramento

9.1 sec in the 100 yards on June 15, 1967 in Provo, Utah

38.2 sec in the 4 x 100 m relay on Oct. 20, 1968 in Mexico (with Mel Pender, Ray Smith, Jim Hines)

Charlie Greene: the eternal dark glasses, just like Livio Berruti