

Track and Field



Chris Chataway



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Come on, Chris!

On Oct. 23, 1954, two men held 40,000 spectators at London's White City stadium and 15 million TV viewers in a state of thrall. For 12 laps of the floodlit arena, they pounded out a desperate duel. In the lead was Vladimir Kuts, the Soviet sailor who only a few weeks before had broken the world 5,000 m record, defeated the hitherto unbeatable Czech master runner, Emil Zatopek, and captured the European title.

Behind him paced the red-haired Englishman, Chris Chataway, whose determination to win held the imagination of every British supporter.

Only in the last stride of those 5,000 torrid metres was the result decided. And it was the Englishman who forced himself ahead on the line. His reward was a new world record and the satisfaction of beating the man who then, and for the next three years, led the world distance rankings.

Chataway opened his international career in 1951, his stocky physique and rather short stride not really showing promise of outstanding success. But Chataway always made up in spirit what he lacked in other respects. He also enjoyed the advantage of being a

contemporary of Roger Bannister, in whose four-minute mile Chataway played an important part as pacemaker. Chataway made his first Olympic appearance in 1952, but his 5,000 m bid came to grief on the last turn where he fell when in a strong position to challenge the eventual winner, Zatopek. Two years later, Chataway was an easy winner of the Commonwealth Games 3-miles title and silver medallist behind Kuts at the European Championships. His world 3-miles record in 1955 marked him out as the most potent threat to the monopoly of Kuts, but at Melbourne in 1956, stomach cramp prevented him from giving his best in his final Olympic appearance.

Before he gave up active sport, Chataway had already made a name for himself on television, and he was later a Minister in the Conservative Government of Mr Edward Heath.

CHRIS CHATAWAY

Born Jan. 31, 1931, in London, GB

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1954 Commonwealth Games: gold medal in 3 miles

1954 European Championships: silver medal in 5,000 m

World records:

3 miles 13:32.2, July 10, 1954

3 miles 13:23.2, July 30, 1955

5,000 m 13:51.6, Oct. 13, 1954

Chris Chataway winning the 3 miles at White City, 1955