

# Track and Field



*David Jenkins*



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## David Jenkins

### The Long Sprint

Sprinting is the fullest form of running and the sheer exuberant power demanded of its champions is primarily a gift of nature. This is why in sprinting real talent shows young. David Jenkins was still a teenager when he strode to fame in a man's world. It was in the European Championships in Helsinki that he achieved what remains perhaps his greatest lap, despite several full international seasons, including two Olympic appearances since then. In Helsinki, Jenkins was inspired, so inspired, in fact, that he could not himself believe it. Crossing the line in the 400 metres final ahead of the South African-born Italian Marcello Fiasconaro, he shook his head and waved his arms. For a moment he thought that he had lost. But the photo-finish camera brought verification. Boy David, 19, had won a gold medal, and the men had to take their places behind him.

The most difficult task for a brilliant junior is to live up to the inevitable expectations heaped upon him. At the Munich Olympics, he failed to reach the individual 400-metre final but was a hurtling anchorman in Britain's silver medal winning relay team.

Then in 1975 Jenkins emerged as a

true world-ranking 400-m man. Sprinting in the AAU Championships in Eugene (Oreg.), he disposed of the doubts of those who had so far classed him as just another goodish European one-lap man. He won clearly in 44.93 seconds, a United Kingdom record, beating into second place Fred Newhouse who was to claim a silver medal in the Montreal Olympics a year later. Montreal proved a harrowing disappointment. The months of preparation, of public scrutiny, of private analysis, left Jenkins a tense and edgy starter. He was a humbled seventh in the final. But a curious sequel was to reward his effort in a quite unexpected way. The film of his year of preparation entitled "The Long Sprint" won the Gold Grand Prix Award in the British International Sport Film and Television Festival in 1977.

#### DAVID JENKINS

Born May 25, 1952, in Point-à-Pierre, Trinidad.

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

1972 OG silver medal: 4 x 400 m relay, 3:00.5  
1972 EC gold medal: 400 m, 45.5 sec (Helsinki)  
1974 EC silver medal: 400 m, 45.67 sec (Rome)  
1974 EC gold medal: 4x400 m relay, 3:03.3 sec  
1976 European Cup: winner of individual 400 m  
and member of winning 4x400 m team.

*David Jenkins—chasing his promise*