

# Track and Field



*Dick Quax*



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## Dick Quax

### The 'Cocky Guy' of the NZ Team

In athletics, the margin between obscurity and greatness can sometimes be measured in fractions of a second. This is especially so, of course, in the sprints. In the case of Dick Quax, it has proved true of the 5,000-m race.

In 1976, he was one-tenth of a second outside the world record and four-tenths of a second away from an Olympic gold medal. In 1977, the world record was at last his, but only by that tantalizing tenth of a second.

The rise to fame of this Dutch-born athlete was by no means perfunctory. As long ago as 1970 his name came to note when he beat Kip Keino over a mile in New Zealand. The Kiwi was modest enough to recognize that the Kenyan ace had got off the jet aircraft from East Africa only two hours earlier. Four months later he was to meet Keino again in the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games, and this time he had to make way to superior class, but his silver medal showed that Quax had arrived in international athletics.

Unhappily, the toil that took him there had cost him dearly in physical stress which caught up with him. He missed the 1972 Olympic Games with shin splints and the 1974 Commonwealth Games

with a stress fracture in his foot. In 1975, a lengthy surgical procedure cured his shin troubles but left him with 34 stitches in each leg.

All seemed well in readiness for his Olympic bid in 1976. The season's fastest time put him up among the favourites for the gold medal, but in Montreal, as fate would have it, he contracted a stomach virus which must have weakened him. Eliminated in the 10,000 m heats, he gave all in the 5,000 m to run home a praiseworthy silver medallist behind the Finnish superstar, Lasse Viren.

And so at length in 1977, in his favourite European arena in Stockholm, where his compatriot Murray Halberg had missed the same record by a fraction of a second in 1961, Quax became No. 1 in the world. It was, among other things, a consolation for his omission from the Oceania team at the first World Cup in Dusseldorf.

#### DICK QUAX

Born Jan. 1, 1948, in Alkmaar, Holland

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

1970 CG: silver medal, 1,500 m, 3 min 40 sec  
1976 OG: silver medal, 5,000 m, 13 min 25.16 sec  
World record  
1977: 5,000 m, 13 min 12.9 sec, Stockholm

*Dick Quax (33) and Henry Rono (38) dispute the lead in a 5,000-m race at Crystal Palace*