

Track and Field



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Pure Unadulterated Talent

In a few years' time, history will do justice to the Jamaican Donald Quarrie. The reckoning will be made and it will then be impossible not to realize that he was one of the greatest sprinters of all time. Why is this not clear in our own day? Quite simply because Quarrie started his career in a Californian university and, being painfully shy, has never been able to get himself talked about in the one country, the United States, with the media being very powerful, this is a shortcoming which inevitably prevents one from reaching star status. The second reason is that this thoroughbred's muscular system is terribly fragile: the problems he has had deprived him of several glittering prizes.

He was 17 years old and was to take part in the 4 x 100 m relay when, as early as 1968, he was injured in the Mexico Olympics. He was not beaten once over 200 m in 1971. A medium starter but very fast once he got going, he established a world record that year of 19.81 sec (the American Tommie Smith had run this distance in 19.83 in Mexico), at Cali (3,280 ft high), in the Pan-American Games. So he appeared

as the great favorite in this warm-up to the Munich Olympics. Alas! he injured himself in his semi-final. Was this really great champion, who won both the 100 m and the 200 m in the Commonwealth Games in 1970 and 1974, and in the Pan-American Games in 1971, never to win Olympic laurels? Double champion of the United States in 1975, which only one foreigner had achieved before, he carried through the 1976 season carefully. Finally, his talent received its just reward at the Montreal Olympics; the best sprinter in the Olympic contests, he missed the gold medal for the 100 m by two hundredths of a second, but won the 200 m.

DON QUARRIE

Born Feb. 25, 1951, in Kingston, Jamaica

AWARDS AND RECORDS

OG 1976: gold medal for the 200 m in 20.23
silver medal for the 100 m in 10.08

World records:

100 m: 9.9 on May 22, 1976, at Los Angeles

200 m: 19.8 on Aug. 3, 1971, at Cali

Was considered as absolute record holder of the 200 m by electric timing in 19.81, but after checking this time was corrected to 19.86 (1977)