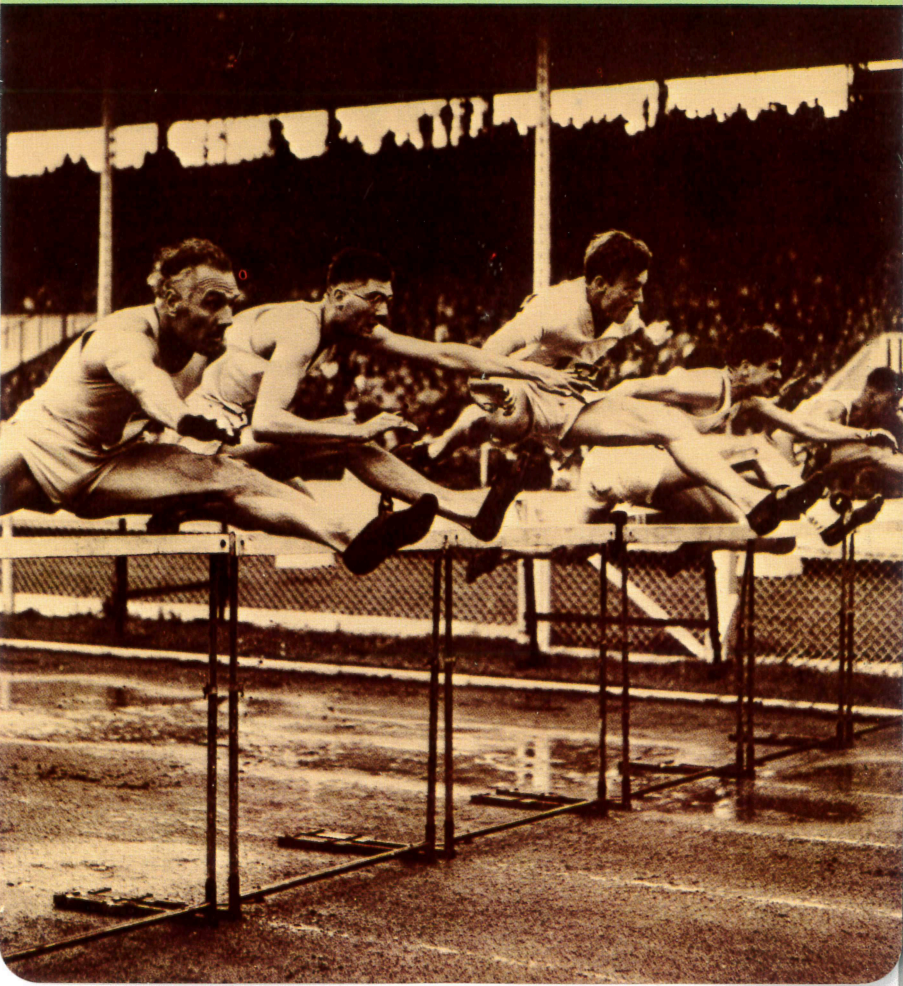


# Track and Field



*Donald Finlay*



# Track and Field



## Donald Finlay

### Forever Finlay

Lining up for the 120-yard hurdles at the AAA Championships in 1949 was a man whose receding grey hairline singled him out as a member of quite a different generation to the other finalists. The 40-year-old veteran had made his international debut 20 years ago, when his opponents were still in prams. He skimmed the barriers to race home an easy winner on the rain-soaked track.

Fans lucky enough to watch Finlay in his early days needed long memories. He had first represented Britain as a long jumper in 1929, and won his last international cap against France in 1949, in the national record time of 14.4 sec for the 120-yard hurdles. Such highlights signpost the extraordinary longevity of Finlay in a young man's sport.

In 1932 Finlay won the first of seven successive AAA titles in the 120-yard hurdles and travelled to Los Angeles for the Olympic Games. There he upset what was generally expected to be an all-American grand slam. At first placed fourth by the judges, he was promoted to third in the 110-metre hurdles after the race film had been studied. The American, Jack Keller, who

had received the bronze medal at the official ceremony, passed it on to Finlay. Four years later, Finlay reached the Olympic final again, this time winning a silver medal with a classic display of hurdling style, behind the American world-record holder Forrest Towns. The European title at Paris in 1938 confirmed his status as Europe's top high hurdler and his time of 14.3 sec remained unbeaten as the fastest time by a British hurdler for more than 20 years. More honours should have followed in 1939 but for the outbreak of war. Finlay made his third Olympic appearance in 1948 but had the bad luck to fall in his heat at Wembley.

His last international was in 1950, when he was still able to place fourth in the British Commonwealth Games in Auckland.

His premature death followed disablement in a motor-car accident.

#### DONALD FINLAY

Born May 27, 1909, in Christchurch, Hants.  
Died April 18, 1970.

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

|                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1932 OG bronze medal: | 110-metre hurdles |
| 1936 OG silver medal: | 110-metre hurdles |
| 1934 CG gold medal:   | 120-yard hurdles  |
| 1938 ECH gold medal:  | 110-metre hurdles |

*40-year-old Finlay winning the 120 yards hurdle in the 1949 AAA championship*