

Track and Field



Eddie Hart



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Old Man of the Sprints

One of the most notable occurrences of the 1972 Olympics was an event that never took place. The United States track and field contingent was faring especially poorly and was looking for something or someone to salvage a little pride. One of those hopes was sprinter Eddie Hart who was expected to provide some real competition for favored Valery Borzov of the Soviet Union. Hart may have been good enough to challenge Borzov, but no one will ever know. Through a mix-up in schedule changes, an assistant coach on the U.S. team forgot to notify Hart and he never even made it to the starting blocks for the trial heats.

Hart had been the national collegiate 100 champion while attending the University of California at Berkeley and at one time held a share of the world record. He salvaged some pride at the Munich Olympics by anchoring a 4 x 100 m relay team that included Larry Black, Robert Taylor and Gerald Tinker to a world record 38.2-second performance.

Hart hung up his spikes after that, pursuing other interests. The lure of competitive running eventually proved too

much for him, however, and Eddie resumed training early in 1978. At the advanced—for a sprinter—age of 29, he entered the West Coast Relays in Fresno, Calif., on May 6, 1978. Representing the Bay Area Striders, Hart had intended only to run in the relay and not in the open 100. After all, he was competing in his first serious race in nearly six years. His effort in the 100 m was not only competitive, it was good enough to win and his time of 10.21 seconds was more than respectable that early in the outdoor season.

After the race, Hart gave an evaluation of his performance. "I figured I could run respectably", he said, "I didn't know what my time was and didn't care. I'm not concerned about my times—just doing well and winning." The effort gave Hart a mental boost, and he began to seriously think about Moscow and the 1980 Olympics. He stayed in serious training, and by the end of the 1978 outdoor season had equaled the best time in the world in the 100 m, 10.07 seconds. He had matched the top efforts of two fellow, and younger, Americans, Clancy Edwards and Steve Williams.

Eddie Hart lunges in a world-record tying effort in the 100 m