

# Track and Field



*Franklin Jacobs*



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## Franklin Jacobs

### 23 Inches Above His Head

At the start of 1976, Franklin Jacobs knew nothing about the high jump. He was then playing basketball at the Eastside High School in the State of New Jersey. Noticing his phenomenal springiness, which was particularly obvious in jump shots, a physical education teacher asked him: "Why don't you try the high jump?" Franklin agreed to have a go. From the first, he cleared 1.85 m (6 ft 1 in) with a Fosbury flop. At the end of the season he was up to 2.03 m (6 ft 8 in). For a lad only 1.73 m (5 ft 8 in) tall, this was not bad going.

However, still greater things were to come. During the winter, he injured his knee, which made him give up basketball for good. Profiting from his enforced rest, he studied films and photos showing details of the technique of Dwight Stones, and lost no time in meeting his model.

At the 1977 United States Championships, he even came very near to beating a disconcerted Stones: "He can't run, he doesn't know how to jump, he goes over the bar like a corkscrew, almost gets eliminated at 2.08 (6 ft 10 in) and finally clears 2.27 m (7 ft 5½ in)! A phenomenon!"

Perhaps Jacobs did not know how to jump, but he was afraid of nothing. At the Farleigh Dickinson University in Paterson (New Jersey) where he enrolled to study commercial law, coach Bill Monaghan took it upon himself to tidy up his style. And in January 1978 the amazed crowd in Madison Square Garden in New York saw him clear 2.32 m (7 ft 7¼ in). No-one had jumped so well indoors, and in the entire history of athletics, only the Soviet Vladimir Yashchenko had jumped one centimeter higher. Even better, Jacobs had jumped 59 cm (23¼ in) above his own head height, which constituted a prodigious record of its kind (Valery Brumel, for instance, was 1.85 m (6 ft 1 in) tall and had cleared 2.28 m (7 ft 5¾ in), therefore 43 cm (16¾ in) above his head height). Franklin Jacobs affirms that he will be the first to jump 2.40 (7 ft 10½ in). His secret weapon is in his feet: he takes size 11 shoes, which give him an above-average leverage at take-off, resulting in jumps which make his body crack like a whip.

#### FRANKLIN JACOBS

Born Dec. 31, 1957, in Paterson, New Jersey

*Franklin Jacobs: for Dwight Stones he is a high-jump phenomenon*