

Track and Field



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In the Space of Two Months

The Ugandan John Akii-Bua, who was 400 m hurdles champion at Munich in 1972, where he was the first man to break the 48-second barrier (47.8), was still one of the favorites four years later in Montreal. The withdrawal of the black African nations for political reasons prevented him from defending his title. So the American, Glenn Davis, remains the only man to have won two consecutive Olympic titles in this event, the first in 1956 at Melbourne, then in 1960 in Rome.

Born on 12 September 1934 in Wellsburg, West Virginia, Glenn Davis came to the 400 m hurdles late in his career. At 16 he had proved himself an excellent sprinter (9.8 in the 100 yards). However, during his college days in Ohio, he preferred American football to athletics. When he decided to take up running again seriously, at the beginning of the 1956 season (he could no longer play football due to a shoulder injury), he had not worked hard enough on his basic speed to be outstanding in the sprints, so he opted for the low hurdles.

Two months later he shattered the

world record with 49.5 (29 June 1956 in Los Angeles). He was to improve on this time in 1958 at Budapest (49.2). At Rome in 1960, after acquiring his second olympic title in the 400 m hurdles, he was involved in the American victory in the 4 x 400 m relay (in 3:02.2) a world record, with Jack Yermann, Earl Young and Otis Davis). Because of his boxer-like appearance and his determination when running, European journalists nicknamed him "Violent Glenn".

GLENN DAVIS

Born Sep. 12, 1934, in Wellsburg, W. Va.

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1956 OG: gold medal in 400 m hurdles in 50.1

1960 OG: gold medal in 400 m hurdles in 49.3
gold medal in 4 x 400 m relay

World records:

440 yds in 45.8 (equalled May 24, 1958);
45.7 (June 14, 1958)

220 m hurdles in 22.5 (equalled Aug. 20, 1960)

440 yds hurdles in 49.9 (June 21, 1958)

400 m hurdles in 49.5 (June 29, 1956);
49.2 (Aug. 6, 1958)

4 x 400 m in 3:02.2 with Yermann, Young and
Otis Davis (Sep. 8, 1960)

The first to break the 50-second barrier...