

Track and Field



Gordon Pirie



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Puff puff Pirie

One of the most formidable distance runners ever to wear the British colors, Gordon Pirie was in the top rank for a period spanning three Olympic celebrations.

It was the inspiring sight, in 1948, of Emil Zatopek, the Czech master, which first drew Pirie into the sport with an ambition. It was to beat the man then regarded as invincible. In 1951, at 20 he won his first national title over 6 miles and in 1952 made the trip to Helsinki where he had his first encounter with Zatopek. The Czech won both the Olympic 5,000 and 10,000 metres with the Englishman finishing fourth and seventh respectively.

A murderous training schedule drawn up with the help of the German coach Woldemar Gerschler built Pirie into a world-beater in readiness for 1953, when he updated eight British records, broke the world 6-miles record and shared in the 4x1,500 metres record. He also won the classic Emsley Carr mile and even took the English cross-country title over 9 miles. Only Sydney Wooderson could have pointed to such versatility.

After a lost season with injury, Pirie returned to his conquests in 1955 when

he rounded off a fine season by defeating Zatopek over both 5,000 and 10,000 metres.

In 1956 the great challenge came from the Soviet star, Vladimir Kuts, European 5,000-metres champion and world-record holder. Pirie spelt out his intentions in June, when he slammed Kuts over 5,000 metres in world-record time and within three days equalled the world 3,000-metres record. This time was drastically reduced three months later when Pirie outgunned the Hungarian trio Istvan Rozsavolgyi, Sandor Iharos, and Laszlo Tabori in a truly sensational clash in Sweden. But at the Melbourne Olympics, his judgement was to be his downfall. Entered in the 10,000 metres for which he was not fully prepared, Pirie succumbed to the Russian and was then the more vulnerable to the 5,000 metres defeat which completed the Kuts double.

GORDON PIRIE

Born Feb. 10, 1931, in Leeds, Yorks, GB.

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1956 OG silver medal:	5,000 metres, 13:50.6
1958 ECH bronze medal:	5,000 metres, 14:1.6
World records:	6 miles: 28:19.4 (1953)
	4x1,500 m relay: 15:27.2 (1953)
	5,000 m: 13:36.8 (1956)
	3,000 m: 7:52.8 (1956)

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Gordon Pirie's gruelling training schedule pays off