

Track and Field



Harold Abrahams



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Doyen of British Athletics

A prominent figure in British athletics for well over half a century, Harold Abrahams was ultimately at least distinguished in the many facets of the sport to which he contributed.

While still an undergraduate at Cambridge he was selected for the Olympic Games at Antwerp in 1920 but failed to survive the second round. Returning to university athletics, he gained eight victories in sprint and long jump events in the annual Oxford v. Cambridge series. Growing maturity and the advice of the ablest sprint coach of the day, Sam Mussabini, meant that by 1924 he was Britain's fastest man and winner of the AAA 100 yard title in 9.9 sec. Though an outsider in the Olympic Games in Paris, Abrahams succeeded in equalling the Olympic 100 metres record three times in two days, beating in both semi-final (with a bad start) and final, the then 'world's fastest human' Charlie Paddock of the United States. He was also a silver medallist with Britain's team in the 4 x 100 m relay. In 1925 Abrahams broke his leg while long jumping – his English record of 24 ft 2½ in stood for 32 years – and forthwith retired from active athletics. The break was not a real one, for Abra-

hams and athletics remained inseparable for the rest of his life. Non-playing captain of the Olympic team in 1928, he attended every Olympic celebration up to 1976 with the exception of 1932.

In the administration of the sport, his role was perhaps the most pervasive and permanent. Already a member of the AAA General Committee in 1926, he was treasurer of the BAAB from 1948-68 and Chairman from 1968-75. He was also a member of the IAAF for many years and was responsible for framing many of the rules by which the sport is governed, a task for which his qualifications as a barrister were invaluable.

In the fields of journalism and authorship, the name of Abrahams was before the public for lengthy periods. He was athletics correspondent of the *Sunday Times* for over 50 years and a regular commentator with BBC radio for almost as long.

HAROLD ABRAHAMAS

Born Dec. 15, 1899, in Bedford, England
Died Jan. 14, 1978

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1924 OG gold medal 100 m 10.6
1924 OG silver medal 4 x 100 m 41.2

1924, Britain's then fastest man, winning a 100-yard race