

Track and Field



Herbert Elliott



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Three Perfect Records

After the age of 16, the Australian Herb Elliott was never beaten in either the mile or the 1,500 m. His career was extremely short since he gave up athletics when he was 23, but it was a particularly brilliant one during which he created three world records the last of which brought with it the Olympic 1,500 m title in Rome (1960).

Herb Elliott took his first world record on August 6, 1958 in Dublin, with a time 3 min 54.5 sec. over the mile, or 2.7 sec better than the record which was then held by Derek Ibbotson of Great Britain. The four athletes he beat on this occasion all ran the mile in under 4 minutes: Mervin Lincoln (AUS) (3:55.9), Ron Delaney (IRL) (3:57.5), Murray Halberg (NZL) (3:57.5) and Albert Thomas (AUS) (3:58.6).

Three weeks later in Göteborg, before 40,000 spectators, Elliott attacked the world 1,500 m record once more. He took the lead after 800 m and finished in 3 min 36 sec. An improvement of 2.1 sec. The record-holder was Stanislav Jungwirth (CZE), who finished second, 3 seconds behind.

Herb Elliott was to do even better in the finals of the Rome Olympics: 3 min

35.6 sec, which was enough to beat the Frenchman Michel Jazy (3:38.4) and the Hungarian Istvan Rozsavolgyi. Unfortunately, Elliott gave up athletics before he had tried his luck in the 5,000 m. Yet, he was sufficiently talented to make as much of a name for himself in this event as in the 1,500 m, but he decided to devote all his time to his family and his job (he had been offered an important job with a petroleum company).

Early in 1959, the American promoter Leo Leavitt offered him a contract worth \$240,000 to turn professional, but he refused. Had he accepted, Michel Jazy would probably have become the 1,500 m champion in Rome.

HERBERT ELLIOTT

Born Feb. 2, 1938, in Perth, AUS

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1960 OG: gold medal, 1,500 m
1958 CG in Cardiff: 1st in 880 yards and in the mile
In 1955, when he was Perth inter-college champion over 800 yards and the mile, he fractured a bone in his foot and was forced to give up running for a year

World records:

Mile: 3:54.0 on Aug. 6, 1958, in Dublin
1,500 m: 3:36.0 on Aug. 28, 1958, in Göteborg,
then 3:35.6 in Rome (Sept. 6, 1960)

Retired from competition in 1961

Olympic title and world record-holder in 3:35.6 over 1,500 m at the 1960 OG: Herb Elliott