

# Track and Field



*Hurdles*



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## Hurdles

### *Up and Over*

For a long time, hurdlers were the subject of subtle derision from many other runners. Those who competed in the shorter hurdle events were often regarded as sprinters who just could not sprint fast enough. Competitors in the intermediate hurdles (400 meters) were thought of as quarter-milers who just did not rate with the best. But the success of runners such as Rod Milburn, Willie Davenport and Edwin Moses have thrown a new light on these versatile athletes.

The short high-hurdle races (generally run at 60 meters indoors and 110 meters outside) is an explosive combination of speed, agility and concentration. The objective is to *run* over the barriers, not to jump over them. To accomplish this, the hurdler must have a precise plan involving: the number of strides he should take between hurdles; the leg with which he will lead his body over; and the position of his body must keep to maintain the fastest possible speed... If he runs in too upright a position, he runs the risk of increasing wind resistance, or of getting too much "jump" in his effort to clear the hurdles.

In the intermediate hurdle races, the barriers are set 36" high, instead of 42" in the shorter events. And they are spaced almost four times as far apart from each other. But the most important difference is the pacing; while the high hurdler can rely on one short burst of speed to get him through the race, the intermediate hurdler has to regulate himself for the longer distance, making sure to keep on stride so that he can smoothly clear each succeeding barrier. The success of Edwin Moses, American gold medalist in the 1976 Olympic Games, can best be attributed to his speed and sense of pace. In fact, he can usually approximate his time after a event without looking at a stop-watch.

Of course, in both events, the fewer hurdles that the competitor knocks over, the better off he will be. Though there is no penalty for not clearing a hurdle, the contact itself is usually enough to slow down the fastest runner.

Hurdling is no longer a second-class event. Its competitors are now looked upon as specialized athletes, not just runners who need an extra gimmick.

*Form is as important as speed*