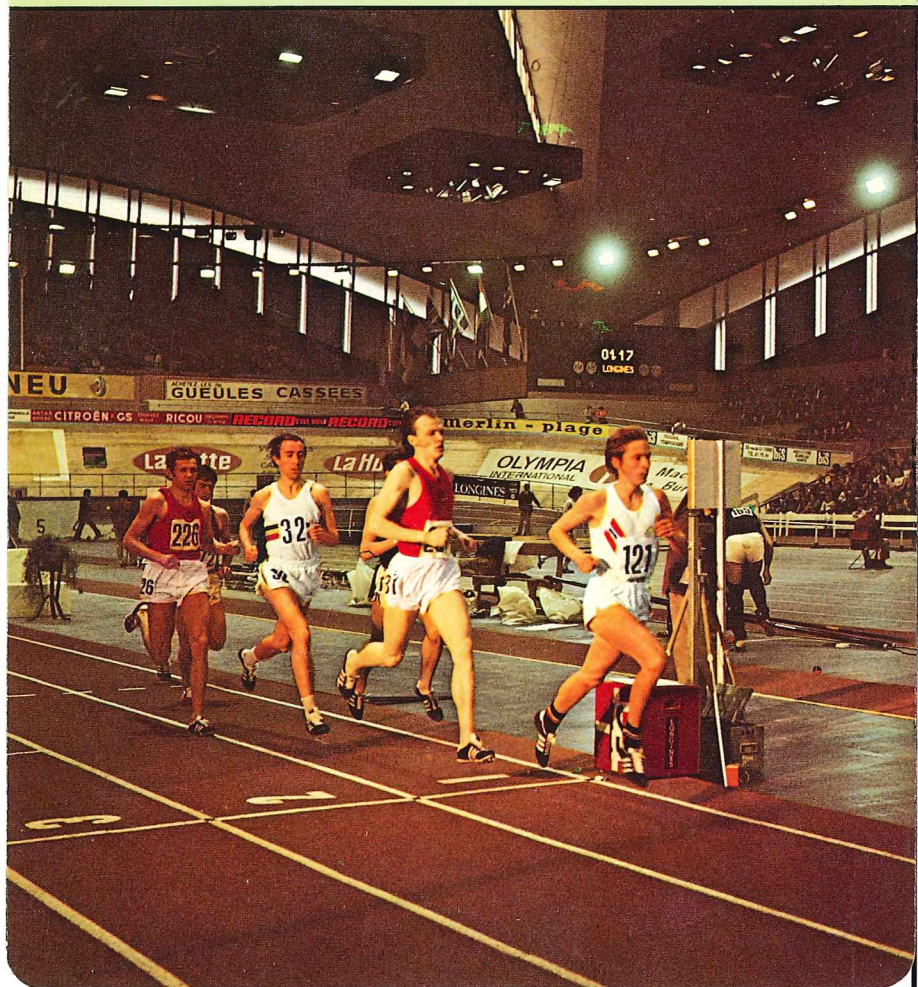


Track and Field



Indoor Athletics



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A Winter Wonderland

Indoor athletics started in the United States at the turn of the century, and one of the most important races was run on November 25, 1908 in Madison Square Garden, New York, when Dorando Pietri competed with Johnny Hayes. It was a re-run of that year's Olympic marathon, with the 26¼ odd miles run over a 156-yard track in front of some 20,000 spectators. However, this sensational race was not the first time that athletics had been seen indoors, and certainly by no means the last. The popularity of indoor athletics is mainly due to the fact that the public can watch the events from the very edge of the track and, especially in America, such meetings are the occasion for bands and cheerleaders, officials in dinner jackets and the consumption of vast quantities of refreshments around the circuit. It is because American athletes have grown up in this noisy arena that they can show such coolness in the major international meetings. Europe was 75 years behind the Americans, the first European Indoor Championships being

held in Vienna in 1970, after a trial period of 4 years with the European Games.

There are now some 200 indoor tracks in the world, two-thirds of them in the States. The smallest is at Loughborough Polytechnic in England, measuring 100 yards, the largest at Houston Astrodome, Texas, measuring 350 yards. The contours of the tracks vary just as much, some bends being banked and others flat; the construction material can vary from wood, through synthetics, clay or bitumen to cinders. The distance of races is not standardized either (sprints can be over anything from 40 yards through 100 m), so records are not ratified officially.

The statistics merely show the best world, European or similar performances... It is accepted that results indoors are usually inferior to those obtained in the open air. However, there is one notable exception: the first shot put of over 22 m (24 yards), produced by George Woods.