

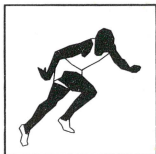
# Track and Field



*James Thorpe*



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## James Thorpe

### *Right up to his Death*

Ever since athletics competitions have excited the crowds, some athletes have tried to make money from their talent. Some, including several great names in athletics, have been caught and punished. The disqualifications of the Frenchman Jules Ladoumègue, then Guy Drut, of the Finn Paavo Nurmi, of the Swedes Gunder Haegg and Arne Andersson, and of the American Wes Santee, have created scandal, but they have not really changed anything.

It was in 1912 that a top-class athlete was first sanctioned. James Thorpe, an American Indian, had dominated the pentathlon and the decathlon at the Stockholm Olympic Games. The King of Sweden, Gustav V, had crowned him personally with the symbolic laurel wreath, declaring that he considered him the greatest athlete of all times.

A few weeks later, the man who had been given a hero's welcome on his return to the USA was disqualified for life by his Federation. It had been discovered that, two years before his victories in Stockholm, he had played on a South Carolina baseball team for 60 dollars a month. The decision was communicated to the Swedish Olympic

Committee, who took back James Thorpe's medals and gave them to the silver-medal holder, the Swede Hugo Wieslander, who had been beaten by nearly 700 points in the decathlon. Wieslander refused to accept the medals, but his gesture did not affect the organizers of world athletics.

They did not react either when in 1950, James Thorpe was voted by the American sports press as "the greatest athlete of the half-century" (rated above the boxers Jack Dempsey and Joe Louis, and the famous baseball player Babe Ruth).

Right up to his death, J. Thorpe never abandoned his claim to his Stockholm trophies, which are now in the Olympic Museum in Lausanne.

#### **JAMES THORPE**

Born May 28, 1888, in Shawnee, Oklahoma  
Died March 28, 1953

#### **AWARDS AND RECORDS**

Olympic pentathlon and decathlon champion in 1912 at Stockholm, but disqualified for professional activities

His best performances:

10.8 in the 100 m, 15.6 in the 110 m hurdles, 1.96 m in the high jump, 7.08 m in the long jump, 14.60 m in putting the shot