

Track and Field



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The Four Gold Medals at Berlin

25 May 1935 and 9 August 1936: these two dates mark the peaks of the career of Jesse Owens, considered by many experts to be the most distinguished sprinter of all time.

After his six world records established on 25 May 1935 at Ann Arbor, Jesse Owens had a slack period, but he was right back on form in August 1936 for the Berlin Olympics, of which he was the big star. In the space of six days, he collected four gold medals: the 100, 200, 4 x 100-m relay and the long-jump. In the long jump, his duel with the German Lutz Long held the 110,000 spectators who filled the Berlin Olympic stadium in suspense. While Long had qualified for the final straight away with a jump of 7.84 m, Owens only managed it at the third attempt (7.87 m). This performance was equalled by Long, but Owens left no doubt as to who was the winner with his last two jumps of the competition, clearing first 7.94 m, then 8.06 m, a new Olympic record, 7 cm short of his world record.

Adolf Hitler, the Chancellor of the Reich, had announced that he would receive in his box the medal-winners of each athletics event. But he left the stadium before the medal ceremony. He did not

want to have to congratulate a negro. He tried thus to show his contempt to Lutz Long, the blond Aryan who had been beaten by the representative of a race which Hitler considered inferior.

A few months after his triumph in Berlin, Jesse Owens turned professional. He ran against anything anyone cared to race against him (horses, cars, dogs), before taking part in the tours of the Harlem Globe Trotters. He has also devoted a lot of time and money to a youth organization for abandoned children.

A WEEK IN BERLIN

Results of Jesse Owens in the athletics events of the Olympic Games in Berlin:

Sunday 2 August: 100 m, 12th heat: 1. Owens, 10.3 sec; second round, 2nd heat: 1. Owens, 10.2 sec (world record equalled with favorable wind)

Monday 3 August: 100 m, 1st semi-final: 1. Owens, 10.4 sec; final: 1. Owens, 10.3 sec

Tuesday 4 August: 200 m, 3rd heat: 1. Owens, 21.1 sec; quarter final, 3rd heat: 1. Owens, 21.1 sec; long-jump: 1. Owens, 8.06 m

Wednesday 5 August: 200 m, 2nd semi-final: 1. Owens, 21.3 sec; final: 1. Owens, 20.7 sec

Saturday 8 August: 4 x 100-m relay, semi-final: USA, 40 sec

Sunday 9 August: 4 x 100-m relay, final: 1. USA (Owens, Metcalfe, Draper, Wykoff), 39.8 sec (world record)

Jesse Owens at the start of the 100 m in the Berlin Olympics in 1936