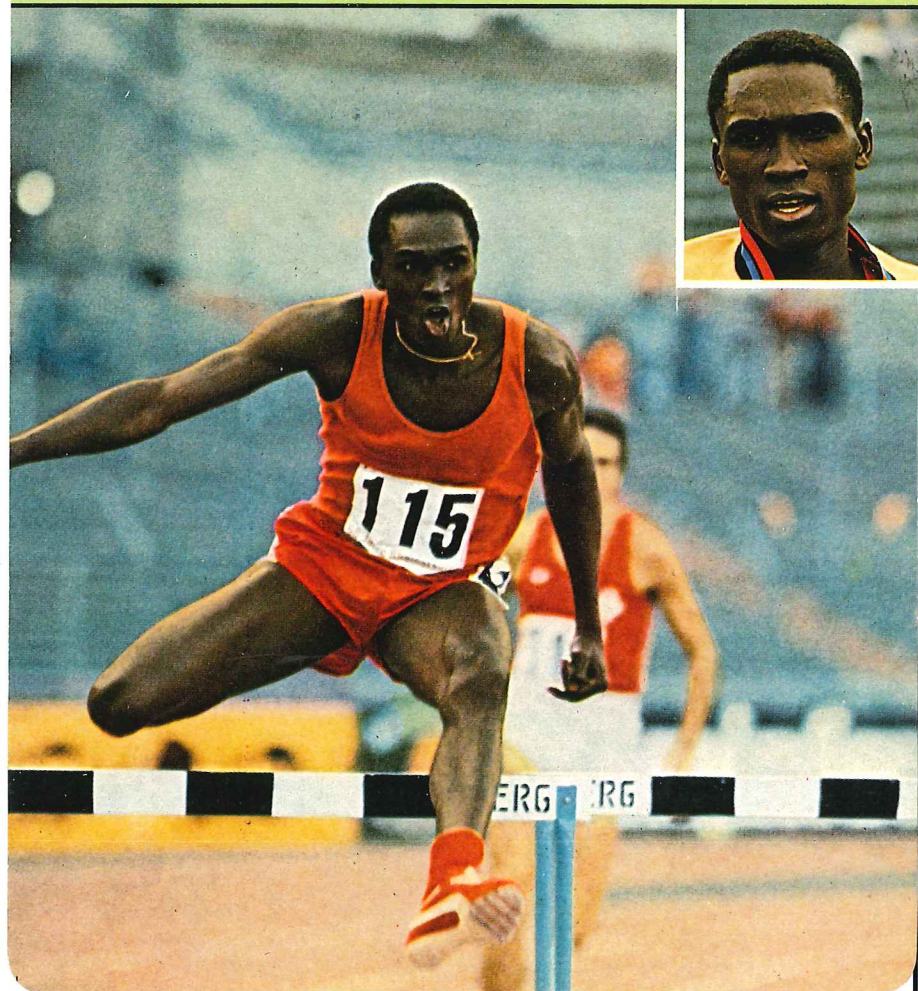


Track and Field



John Akii-Bua



Track and Field



John Akii-Bua

Gifted, Precocious and Multi-talented

The son of a family of no fewer than 43 children (his father, a Muslim, had 8 wives), the Ugandan John Akii-Bua was undoubtedly an extraordinarily gifted and precocious athlete. He started his career at the age of 12 in school competitions and in those days specialized in pole vaulting and high jump, but particularly in the triple jump (44' 3½"). His debut over the hurdles occurred when he was 17, but he did not abandon the other disciplines; he even tried discus throwing. One year later he was running the 110-m hurdles in 14.3 sec, when he met the Briton Malcolm Arnold, who became his coach and encouraged him to devote himself to the 400-m hurdles. The truest test of his multi-talented capabilities can be found in his African decathlon record (6,933 pts) which he set in 1971 after running the 100 m in 10.9 sec, the 400 in 47.2 sec on the grass track at Kampala, and jumping 6.65 m (21' 9¼") in the long jump and 1.90 m (6' 2½") in the high jump.

The previous year he had made his big international debut on the occasion of the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh; he finished fourth in the 400-m hurdles, a performance which gave

him a good deal of personal satisfaction. In 1971 he started beating the top Americans in this event, scoring a 49 sec victory in the America v. Africa meeting. The year 1972 brought him international fame. After six months of tough training, running farther and farther each day and carrying a belt weighing 12 kg, he went on to beat the Americans on their own ground, with 49.6 sec.

Then came his triumph at the Munich Olympic Games, with a stunning world record which he managed to establish in spite of being drawn in the difficult No. 1 lane. He had just run a straight 400 m in 45.82 sec and seemed in superb form when he was injured in June 1976. What would he have done against Edwin Moses? Since the African countries boycotted the Montreal Olympics, no one will ever know.

JOHN AKII-BUA

Born Dec. 3, 1949, in Kampala Uganda

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1972 Olympics: a gold medal in the 400-m hurdles in 47.82 (world record)

For J. Akii-Bua (UGA), hurdles are no obstacle to continuing success . . .