

Track and Field



John Disley



Track and Field



John Disley

If It's Not One Obstacle It's Another

Still immensely fit at fifty, competing with regularity against the best veterans, John Disley has a longer track record in some of the hardest physical activities invented than almost anybody in British sport. It was in 1950 that he first made the British team as a steeplechaser. Coached by Geoff Dyson who had accurately gauged his potential from the age of 17, he made the first of five inroads into the British 3,000-metres steeplechase record, taking it from 9 min 18.4 sec in 1950 down to 8 min 44.2 sec in 1955. In those days, of course, the water jump usually had a concrete base.

In 1952 Disley was one of only two male British athletics medallists at the Helsinki Olympics when he won a bronze medal in what was up to then the greatest steeplechase ever seen. After two modest seasons Disley was well nigh unbeatable in 1955, winning four international matches and slamming the world steeplechase record holder, Jerzy Chromik of Poland. Disley had by this time already become an accomplished rock climber and also set a record of 7 hr 24 min for the 25 mile run over 14 peaks of 3,000 feet or more in Snowdonia.

In 1956 Disley's rivalry with Chris Brasher came to a climax at Melbourne.

He had already beaten the then world record holder, Sandor Rozsnyoi of Hungary, at White City and in some 50 encounters with Brasher over the years had only lost twice. However he reached the Olympics below his best, having suffered virus pneumonia only six weeks before. He still finished sixth behind Brasher in a time only 0.4 sec outside his career best.

A former Chief Instructor at the CCPR National Mountaineering Centre, Disley helped to introduce the sport of orienteering to Britain and was Director of the World Orienteering Championships in Scotland in 1976. His coaching work continued unabated through the years and he many times visited Canada to assist at Geoff Dyson's Coaching Clinic. As Vice-Chairman of the Sports Council, he was awarded the CBE in 1979. John's wife, Sylvia (nee Cheeseman), was an outstanding sprinter winning an Olympic bronze medal in the 4 x 100-metres relay in 1952.

JOHN DISLEY

Born Nov. 20, 1928, in Gwynedd, Wales

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1952 OG: bronze medal in 3,000-m steeplechase, 8 min 51.8 sec, Helsinki

Enjoying the water jump in a 1952 steeplechase