

Track and Field



Karel Lismont



Track and Field



Karel Lismont

The Youngest Champion

At the age of 22, at the 1971 European Championships in Helsinki, Karel Lismont became the youngest-ever winner of a top level marathon. It was the third time he had run the classic distance. Since then, without fuss, he has built up an honors list for himself which in brilliance falls short of those of the great Ethiopian Abebe Bikila and the American Frank Shorter. In order of merit, Lismont doubtless comes somewhat below these two men. But it is a fine record, built upon his remarkable finishes, his frugal living, and to a heart which beats at a rate of only 40-44 to the minute at rest. Naturally, born in a country which has produced so many long distance runners, Lismont began with the cross country when he was 12. At the age of 19, he showed his aptitude for road racing when he won the Sedan-Charleville race. At 21, in his debut in the marathon in the National Belgian Championships, he beat the distinguished veteran Aurèle Vandendriessche. He became an astonishing European champion the following year. He failed to keep his title because of the heat in 1974, abandoning the race in the Rome Championships. Lismont, who has

already run the 1,500 m in 3 min 41.4 sec and the 10,000 m in 27 min 56.8 sec (1976) covers only 25 km a day in training. He is today a civil servant in the tax department.

Of course, he is not yet a member of the very closed club of those who have run the marathon in less than 2 hr 10 min. But he is not really very far from it (2 hr 11 min 13.2 sec in 1975) and can still cherish the hope of gaining entry.

Even if he only managed 2 hr 14 min 08 sec in 1977, he is a marathon runner whose finishes are formidable and who catches everyone's attention on the great occasions. And he is only just 30, the prime of life, for a marathon runner.

KAREL LISMONT

Born March 8, 1949, at Borgloon, Belgium

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1972 OG: silver medal in the marathon in 2 hr 14 min 31.8 sec

1976 OG: bronze medal in the marathon in 2 hr 11 min 12.6 sec

1971 ECH: gold medal in the marathon in 2 hr 13 min 09 sec

1978 World Cross Country Championships: 3rd at Glasgow

Karel Lismont at the end of the Olympic marathon in 1976 (bronze medal)