

# Track and Field



*Lasse Viren*



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## Lasse Viren

### *An Unprecedented String of Victories*

Lasse Viren created a unique place for himself in the annals of track and field at Montreal, winning both the 5,000 and 10,000 m at the Olympics twice in four years. But he was not satisfied with his quartet of medals, and 24 hours after his double victory at Montreal he was in the starting lineup for the marathon, an event he had never run before.

Viren did not get a fifth gold. Unable to repeat the exploits of Emile Zatopek, he nevertheless did finish in fifth place, which was still a considerable achievement.

Although Viren was hardly a newcomer to the world of international competition, his tour de force at Montreal came as quite a surprise. After his double victory at the Munich Olympics four years earlier, the bearded Finn had gone into a long slump. He continued to run, but he looked like a man who had passed his peak. All that changed at Montreal, however, and fans and experts were hard put to explain his "come-back". Rumors circulated that the Finns were using secret training methods, including blood trans-

fusions, but Viren's victories at Montreal were actually the result of arduous nonstop training. Beginning in the fall of 1975, he ran more than 7,000 km (4,200 miles) outside Finland, primarily at high altitudes. He spent a month in Bogota, and trained for long periods in the mountains before competing in the Corrida of São Paulo and in a semi-marathon in Puerto Rico. He also worked out in the high plains of Kenya. One month before the 1976 Olympics, he ran the 10,000 m in 27:43 (the best time world-wide that year).

Finland has found a successor to Paavo Nurmi in the tall and lanky Viren, who is bound to make an appearance in Moscow in 1980.

#### LASSE VIREN

Born July 22, 1949, in Myrskylä, FIN

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

1972 and 1976 OG: gold medal in 5,000 m and 10,000 m

World Records: 2 miles in 8:14, August 14, 1972; 5,000 m in 13:16.4, September 14, 1972; 10,000 m in 27:38.4, September 3, 1972

*Qualifying for the 5,000 m, Viren (301) prepares to overtake Quax (691) and Kuznetsov (888)*