

Track and Field



Livio Berruti



Track and Field



Livio Berruti

The Sprinter with Glasses

Livio Berruti created one of the most glorious pages in the history of Italian athletics on 3 September 1960 at the Rome Olympic Stadium. On that day, he equalled the 200-m world record (20.5 sec) on two occasions and gave Italy their first Olympic gold medal in a sprint event. In a final which saw the overthrow of the favorite, Ray Norton of the United States, he got the better, in 20.5 sec, of two other sprinters, Lester Carney (USA) and Abdoulaye Seye of France, who were timed at 20.6 sec and 20.7 sec respectively.

Berruti had started with the high jump when he was still a schoolboy. However, he was soon directed towards sprinting by his physical education teacher, who managed to convince him to go into competition. Tall and slim at 5 ft 11 in (1.81 m) and 145 lb (66 kg), Livio Berruti was built for fast running. He was soon to confirm this. At the age of 17, he had already run the 100 m in 10.9 sec several times and managed to do 22.2 sec in the 200 m.

In the following year, he successfully ran his first 100–200 m double in the Italian championships. At that time, he was doing 10.4 sec in the 100 m and 21.4 sec in the 200 m.

After having won 20 races out of 25 in 1959, Livio Berruti had the best season of his career in 1960, when he equalled the European 100-m record (10.2 sec), then the world 200-m record on two occasions, which won him the Olympic gold medal in Rome.

Livio Berruti was quickly nicknamed the "sprinter with glasses". During his career he always wore sunglasses when he ran. After studying chemistry, he joined the police force, but was then signed up by Fiat in Turin. In charge of public relations, he also ran the athletics section of the great Turin firm, one of whose most illustrious members is none other than his successor, Pietro Mennea.

Livio Berruti retired from competition in 1970.

LIVIO BERRUTI

Born May 19, 1939, in Turin, Italy

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1960 OG: gold medal in the 200 m
World university champion in the 100 m in 1959
12 Italian championship titles
European joint record-holder in the 100 m in 10.2 sec,
world joint record-holder in the 200 m in 20.5 sec

Livio Berruti ten years after his victory in Rome: a fine presence and the perennial sunglasses