

Track and Field



Lynn Davies



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Lynn the Leap

There are few pinnacles in sport which, when first attained, are not readily scaled by fresh aspirants once they see it can be done. The first four-minute mile was followed within a few weeks by a second. So it is that the place in athletics history of Lynn Davies is a very special one. Until he jumped to fame, no athlete had completed the 'grand slam', a complete set of gold medals in the major championships—Olympic, European and Commonwealth. And more than a decade after having achieved this feat, no other athlete has stepped forward to emulate him.

Davies was a natural athlete who could have made his name in football or rugby. But when, aged 18, he cleared over 21 ft in his first attempt in the long jump, it was clear where his genius lay. He was only 20 when placed fourth in the Commonwealth Games in 1962. Two years later he had reached the summit. An outsider in the Tokyo Olympic final, he was the least disconcerted by the damp, windy conditions and defeated both the defending champion, Ralph Boston of the United States, and the Soviet star, Igor Ter-Ovanesian, with a jump of 26 ft 5¼ in.

The collection of European and Commonwealth gold medals in 1966 seemed, by comparison, routine efforts but there was much else to tabulate in the catalogue of his successes. He retained his 1966 Commonwealth title in 1970 and twice won the European Indoor championship. He was relegated to ninth place in the 1968 Olympic final, but in 1969 inflicted a very rare defeat on Bob Beamon who had won the Mexico City gold medal with a spectacular world record leap of 29 ft 2¼ in.

The first-ever Welshman to win an athletics gold in the Olympics and the first British athlete to win a field-event gold medal, Davies has served as technical director both in Canada and his native Wales where his unequalled experience and good humour are valued as much as his gold-medal jumps.

LYNN DAVIES

Born May 20, 1942, in Nantymoel, Glamorgan, Wales

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1964 OG: gold medal: 26' 5¼"
1962 ECH: gold medal: 26' 2¼" (in Budapest)
1969 ECH: silver medal: 26' 5¾" (in Athens)
1966 CG: gold medal: 26' 2¾" (in Kingston)
1970 CG: gold medal: 26' 5½" (in Edinburgh)

Wales' first athletics gold-medal winner