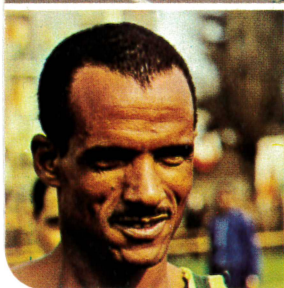


Track and Field



Mamo Wolde



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Mamo Wolde

The Ethiopian of Mexico

At the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games, it was only a question of an eventual third victory for Abebe Bikila in the marathon. But the winner in Rome and Tokyo, having given up shortly after the 15 km check point, was to finish the course by ambulance, and it was another Ethiopian, Mamo Wolde, who triumphed. It had taken him twelve years to make a name for himself, and this victory did more for his fame than his second place in the 10,000 m of the same Olympic Games, or the bronze medal which he further obtained, four years later, in Munich, still in the marathon. He was then approaching his 40th year!

In Melbourne, in 1956, Wolde finished 11th and last in his heat of the 1,500 m. His time wasn't even recorded. Consequently, for the Rome Olympic Games, it was thought wiser to leave Wolde at home. In Tokyo, with marked improvement, he finished fourth in the 10,000 m, a result that he was to better, four years later, in Mexico, by finishing on the heels of the Kenyan Naftali Temu.

Setting out on the marathon seven days later, the very lean Wolde, 5 ft 8 in and 117 lb (1.72 m and 53 kg) did not appear to suffer in any way from the heat and the

altitude. Pacing his race very wisely, he took the lead only a little before the 30 km mark and finished beaming, making two laps of honor by way of thanks to the spectators who had given him an ovation. 'If I gave up,' declared his famous compatriot Bikila, 'it was because the pain was too much. It was also because I felt sure that Mamo Wolde could take over from me.' A victim of circulation problems which caused him stiffness in the right knee, Abebe Bikila was no longer to appear on the Olympic scene.

Such was not the case for Wolde, who, at 39, was still valiantly defending his chances at Munich. Second for a long time, he did not concede the silver medal to Belgium's Karel Lismont, sixteen years his junior, until the very last miles.

MAMO WOLDE

Born June 12, 1933, in Ethiopia

AWARDS AND RECORDS

- 1968 OG: gold medal for the marathon in 2 hr 20 min 26.4 sec
silver medal for the 10,000 m in 29 min 28 sec
- 1972 OG: bronze medal for the marathon in 2 hr 15 min 08.4 sec

Mamo Wolde (329) in the Mexico 10,000 m. He was to finish second in front of Gammoudi (781)