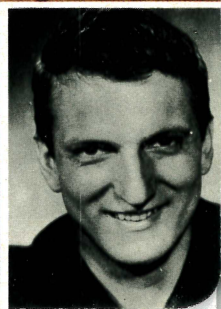


Track and Field



Martin Lauer



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A World Record which Did Not Please Everybody

On 7 July 1959 at Zurich, the German Martin Lauer ran the 110 m hurdles in 13.2 sec. A world record! Immediately, there was a tremendous uproar. There were several reasons for this: the Zurich time-keepers had the reputation of speeding up times; the previous record had been only 13.4 sec. Except for the British runner, David Finley (3rd in the Olympic Games at Los Angeles in 1932, and 2nd in the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 over this distance) and a few Scandinavians, no European had yet contested the American supremacy in this event.

Lauer had never run, and indeed was never to run, the distance in less than 13.5 sec; finally, the last point of contention was that the electric timing device on that day gave a time of 13.56 sec, which meant that, taking into account the time difference with manual timing, the German should have achieved a performance of 13.4 sec, or at best 13.3 sec.

Lauer's fourth place in the Rome Olympics in 1960, did not help matters. People forgot rather quickly that he had had an accident during the winter and that he was beginning to suffer from an inflamed cartilage which was

to put a premature end to his career in 1961. They also forgot that he had been European champion in 1958 and had already come fourth, when only 19, at the Olympics in Melbourne, four years earlier. In fact, Lauer was a highly gifted athlete. Had he not had a total of 7201 points the first time he took part in a decathlon? Faster on the flat than he was skilled at clearing obstacles, he was Olympic champion and world record-holder in the 4 x 100 m with the German team in Rome (39.5 sec). It was not until 1973 that the phenomenal American Rod Milburn improved Lauer's controversial world record by a tenth of a second. Perfectly aware of the state of affairs, Milburn had chosen to race at Zurich with just this aim.

MARTIN LAUER

Born Oct. 2, 1937 in Cologne, Germany

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1958 ECH: gold medal in the 110 m hurdles in 13.7 sec

1960 OG: gold medal in the 4 x 100 m relay with Cullmann, Hary, Mahlendorf (WGE) in 39.5 sec

World records:

13.2 sec in the 110 m hurdles on 7 July 1959 in Zurich

22.5 sec in the 200 m hurdles on 7 July 1959 in Zurich

39.5 sec in the 4 x 100 m on 8 Sept. 1960 in Rome

Martin Lauer (on the right) neck and neck with Willie May (USA)