

# Track and Field



*Michel Bernard*



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## Michel Bernard

### *What a Temper!*

His rivalry with Michel Jazy was for a long time the joy of the sportswriters and of French athletics. The younger man was pronounced highly talented while it had been decreed that Bernard himself was a plodder. His whole career was nothing but a long struggle to prove the opposite. When one asked this foreman in a steelworks in the Nord region where one could reach him, he invariably gave the telephone number of his factory. Wherever he was, he would add: "I'll be there tomorrow first thing", implying that Jazy was not submitted to the same strict routine. From the day in 1956 when he was left behind at home and Jazy was sent to get experience at the Melbourne Olympics, in fact, Michel Bernard's anger never abated. Four years later, his fury was still raging: at the Rome Olympics, he first knocked out the German Siegfried Valentin, the 1,000-m world record-holder, in the heats; then he led for 900 m in the final of the 1,500 m in front of the distinguished Australian Herb Elliott, who would probably not have beaten the world record without this impulsive run.

Michel Bernard was certainly not lacking in spirit. It was this which made him so popular with spectators, who were delighted to see his angular frame constantly shaking. Of course, his stride did not have the elegance of Jazy's. But how effective it was! From the 1,500 m to the 5,000 m, he established numerous records in France and was eleven times national champion over those distances, as well as over 10,000 m and in the cross-country. Although his career had begun late, in 1954, when he was 23, the length of his sporting career was exceptional. Except for Alain Mimoun, no other athlete has worn the tricolor jersey so often: sixty-seven times.

#### MICHEL BERNARD

Born Dec. 21, 1931, at Sepmeries, France

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

ECH 1958: 9th in the 5,000 m in 14 min 18.4 sec  
ECH 1962: 5th in the 5,000 m in 14 min 03.8 sec  
OG 1960: 7th in the 5,000 m in 3 min 41.5 sec  
and in the 5,000 m in 14 min 04.2 sec  
OG 1964: 7th in the 1,500 m in 3 min 41.2 sec  
World records: 4 x 1,500 m relay: 15 min 04.2 sec  
on 28 June, 1961, in Versailles, in the final leg, with  
Jean Clausse, Robert Bogey and Michel Jazy  
62 French championship titles