

Track and Field



Naftali Temu



Track and Field



Naftali Temu

Clarke's "Executioner"

The beginning of the story of the Kenyan Naftali Temu is not very original: born into the tribe of the Kissii, he covered long distances to go to school, discovered athletics at a village race, in 1963, at the age of 18, entered the army to do his military service and stayed there so that he could train. It is afterwards that the story gets interesting. Taking part for the first time in an international competition in 1964, at the Olympics in Tokyo, Temu scarcely had an opportunity to make himself noticed in the marathon, in which he finished 49th in 2 hr 40 min 46.6 sec. But then in Kingston, the capital of Jamaica, venue of the 1966 Commonwealth Games, he beat the Australian Ron Clarke over 6 miles in 27 min 14.6 sec. Suddenly he became famous. He was to become even more so after the Olympics in Mexico, two years later.

In the 10,000 m, Temu let Clarke conduct the race as he wanted, and then flew away in the last lap. Helped by being used to high altitudes, his qualities of stamina (he only weighs 135 lb (61 kg) and is 5 ft 7 in (1.70 m) tall so he "burns up" little oxygen) and speed have had marvellous results. In the 5,000 m he

came third, behind the Tunisian Mohamed Gamoudi and another famous Kenyan, Kip Keino, who stood up equally well to the altitude and who are doubtless in a class above. The day of the marathon arrived and Temu, indefatigable, was at the start. In the lead at the 30-km mark, which he reached in 1 hr 39 min 26 sec, he foundered from then on and finished 19th in 2 hr 32 min 36 sec.

After the Mexico Olympics, Temu rarely repeated his performances at sea level, even though he had declared that his results owed nothing to altitude. Smiling, and extremely good-natured, the "executioner" of Clarke, who claimed he would have won the 10,000 m by half a lap in open country, discreetly faded out.

NAFTALI TEMU

Born 1945, in Nixxonu, Kenya

AWARDS AND RECORDS

- 1966 CG: gold medal in the 6-miles in 27 min 17.4 sec
1968 OG: gold medal in the 10,000 m in 29 min 27.4 sec
bronze medal in the 5,000 m in 14 min 06.4 sec

The 10,000 m at the 1968 OG: Naftali Temu takes off on the outside. It is all over for Clarke (103)