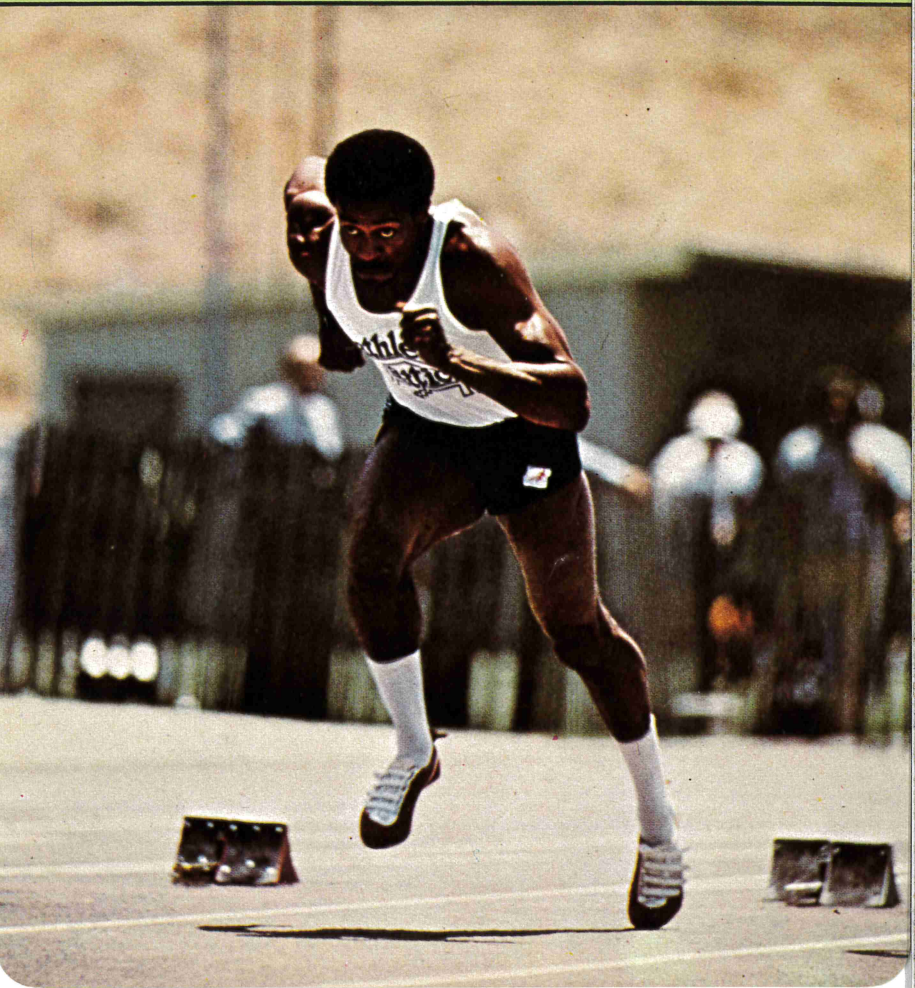


Track and Field



Olympic Sprints



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The World's Fastest Human

Running well may be the oldest sport known to man, as well as the most natural. No special equipment is necessary and even at the original Olympics, stretching back to 776 B.C., running predated boxing, wrestling and chariot racing by several years.

Of all the running events, the sprints would have to be considered the purest inasmuch as they demand an all-out burst of speed with no time for strategy. The winner of the Olympic 100 meters appropriately is billed as "the world's fastest human."

The key to both the 100 and 200 meters is the start, and it is most critical to possess the instinct and the reflex to get off the mark at the instant the start is signalled. There have been some occasions when innovative starts made all the difference, such as at the first modern Games in 1896 when American Tommy Burke surprised the other runners by getting down into a crouch at the starting line while they stood almost straight up. The crouch had been in common use in the U.S. since 1884, but still was new to Europeans.

Burke won the race in 12 seconds, the slowest winning time ever. Forty years later, when Jesse Owens was making

history in Berlin, everyone was starting from a four-point stance, but starting blocks still were experimental.

It is common for individuals to enter both sprints, and since the 200 meters was included in the Olympics in 1900, there have been seven double champions. Five of them were from the U.S., including Archie Hahn, 1904; Ralph Craig, 1912; Eddie Tolan, 1932; Owens, 1936, and Bobby Morrow, 1956.

The other two were Percy Williams of Canada, 1928, and Russian Valeri Borzov, 1972.

Despite American domination of the sprints, the U.S. has been shut out since 1968. Following Borzov's double, Hasely Crawford of Trinidad won the 100 in 10.06 seconds in 1976 and Don Quarrie of Jamaica the 200 in 20.23.

Jim Hines is the only man to break 10 seconds for the 100, clocking 9.9 in 1968, while Tommie Smith set the Olympic 200 record of 19.8 the same year. The best known American woman sprinter was Wilma Rudolph, who completed a double in 1960. Annetregt Richter of West Germany won the 100 in 1976 in 11.08 and Baerbel Eckert of East Germany the 200 in 22.37.