

Track and Field



Parry O'Brien



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From 1952 to 1964 at the OG

The American shot putters Jack Torrance (6' 7½", 320 lb) and Randy Matson (6' 6½", 260 lb) left their mark on an era. On 5 Aug. 1934 in Oslo, the former achieved a remarkable put of 17.40 m, but injury prevented him from consolidating his supremacy with a gold medal at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. Matson was olympic champion in 1968 in Mexico, where five of his throws passed the 20 m mark. It was his first shot of 20.54 m which won him the title, but he had done even better in the qualifying round with a throw of 20.68 m. Although the undisputed winner at the time, he was not able to hang on to his title for long.

Parry O'Brien on the other hand stayed at the top for ten years, during which he bettered the world record ten times, and raised it from 17.95 m to 19.30 m. He is credited with introducing a new technique, which put him far ahead of his rivals. He was the first to start his throw with his back to the stopboard, and to turn at the chest, thus increasing the throwing distance.

Born on 28 Jan. 1932 in Santa Monica, Parry O'Brien (6' 3", 256 lb) started by playing American football. He did not finally decide to concentrate exclusively on the shot put until he was 20 years old. He was olympic champion in 1952 in Helsinki and in 1956 in Melbourne; he also won the silver medal in Rome in 1960 behind his compatriot Bill Nieder. O'Brien was still around in 1964 in Tokyo, where he had to be content with 4th place with 19.20 m (Dallas Long was the winner with 20.33 m). Two years later, 34-year-old Parry O'Brien bettered his output to 19.69 m.

PARRY O'BRIEN

Born Jan. 28, 1932, in Santa Monica, Calif.

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1952, 1956 OG: gold medal in shot put

1960 OG: silver medal in shot put

Unbeaten in shot put from 1952 to 1956 (116 victories)

Has beaten 10 times the world record, for the 1st time on May 9, 1953, in Fresno with 18 m, last time on Aug. 1, 1959, in Albuquerque with 19.30 m

Pan American champion shot putter in 1955 and 1959
18 U.S. champion titles (univ. or AAU)