

Track and Field



Renaldo Nehemiah



Track and Field



Renaldo Nehemiah

Clearing All Hurdles

Before he even was able to walk, Renaldo Nehemiah crawled around a room so fast that he was tagged with the nickname of "Skeets." The name and the passion for movement have lasted to manhood, and already he is being labeled the greatest hurdler ever.

During one stretch of four indoor races early in 1979, Nehemiah set four world records at three distances. He started it with a time of 7.02 seconds in the 60-yard hurdles, lowered that to 6.89, and recorded 6.04 for the 50-yard hurdles and 6.36 for the 50-meter hurdles. "I want to do the impossible," he said at one time, and on "another occasion he stated, "I am trying to become the best hurdler that ever lived."

The formula for success was bred into Nehemiah as a youngster in Scotch Plains, N.J., where his father encouraged Skeets, his brother and sister to be achievers and to participate actively in sports. Nehemiah was a good enough saxophonist to perform as a soloist with his high school band, and his play as a quarterback earned him a scholarship offer from Alabama.

Nehemiah trains heavily with weights and can bench press 300 pounds, and he is adept at other sports he has tried.

During his freshman year at Maryland, he was also the team's best sprinter and quarter-miler. "I see hurdling as all the events put together," said the young man who is favored to win the 110-meter hurdles gold medal at the Moscow Olympics. "Running, jumping, hurdling, balance. It's the symbol of track."

Nehemiah took up hurdling on a dare in the ninth grade, and he would practice his form before a mirror in his bedroom. By the time he was a junior in high school, he broke the New Jersey state record for 120 yards (13.6) and the following year he tied four national high school records indoors and set an outdoor record of 12.9 for 120 yards. Upon his graduation, Nehemiah was named the best high school hurdler in history, and in 1977 he was chosen High School Trackman of the Year.

During a European tour in 1978, Nehemiah won 12 of 13 races, and ever since he has only gotten better.

RENALDO NEHEMIAH

Born March 24, 1959, in Newark, N.J.
