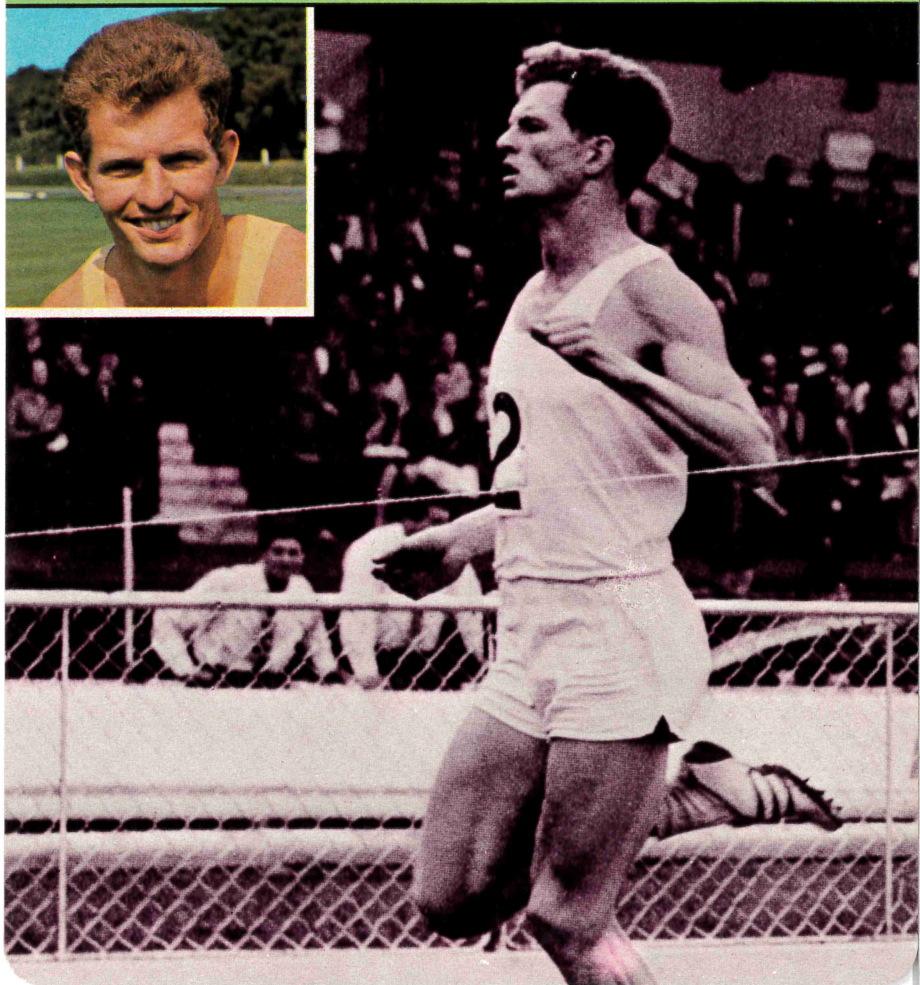


# Track and Field



*Robbie Brightwell*



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## Robbie Brightwell

### *Ace Anchor Man*

The names Robbie Brightwell and Peter Radford spring automatically to mind as the sprint prodigies of England of the late 1950s. Both were products of Midland backgrounds. At first overshadowed by Peter in the short sprints, Robbie moved up and found his real distance over one lap, succeeding John Wrighton, the 1958 European champion, as the British number one. In 1960, in his first Olympic appearance, Brightwell twice reduced Wrighton's UK record for 400 metres to 46.2 sec and 46.1 sec, failing however to reach the final in Rome.

The student years at Loughborough were the making of the boy Brightwell and he emerged in 1962 as a harder, more experienced runner capable, in fact, of joining the elite. He did so, for the first time, in the European Championships in Belgrade, gathering gold in the individual 400 metres and silver in the relay. Later that year, he was beaten by Jamaica's George Kerr in the Commonwealth Games in Perth but his work in the relay helped England to victory. It was certainly as a team man that Brightwell proved himself most formidable notably in what many then regarded as one of the greatest relays ever run, in the Tokyo Olympic Games. Disappointed to finish only fourth

in the individual 400 metres, despite twice equalling Adrian Metcalfe's UK record at 45.7 sec, Brightwell gave it all he had in the relay. Taking over on the last leg from hurdler John Cooper, he overhauled Kerr of Jamaica but was elbowed by Kerr as he passed. With 50 metres to go he still had nearly three metres to make up on Trinidad's Wendell Mottley, silver medallist in the individual 400 metres. With a superhuman effort he drew level and threw himself headlong across the line to snatch the silver medal placing behind America's Henry Carr. The first three teams, United States, Great Britain, and Trinidad were all inside the world record. His future wife, Ann Packer, meanwhile had posted another epic for the family album by winning gold in the 800 metres.

#### ROBBIE BRIGHTWELL

Born Oct. 21, 1939.

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

- 1962 ECH: gold medal in 400 m in 45.9 sec
- 1962 ECH: silver medal in 4 x 400 m relay in 3:05.9 sec
- 1962 CG: silver medal in 440 yds in 46.8 sec, Perth
- 1962 CG: gold medal in 4 x 440 yds relay in 3:11.2 sec, Perth
- 1964 OG: silver medal in 4 x 400 m relay in 3:01.6 sec, Tokyo