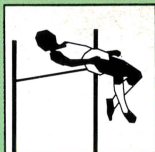
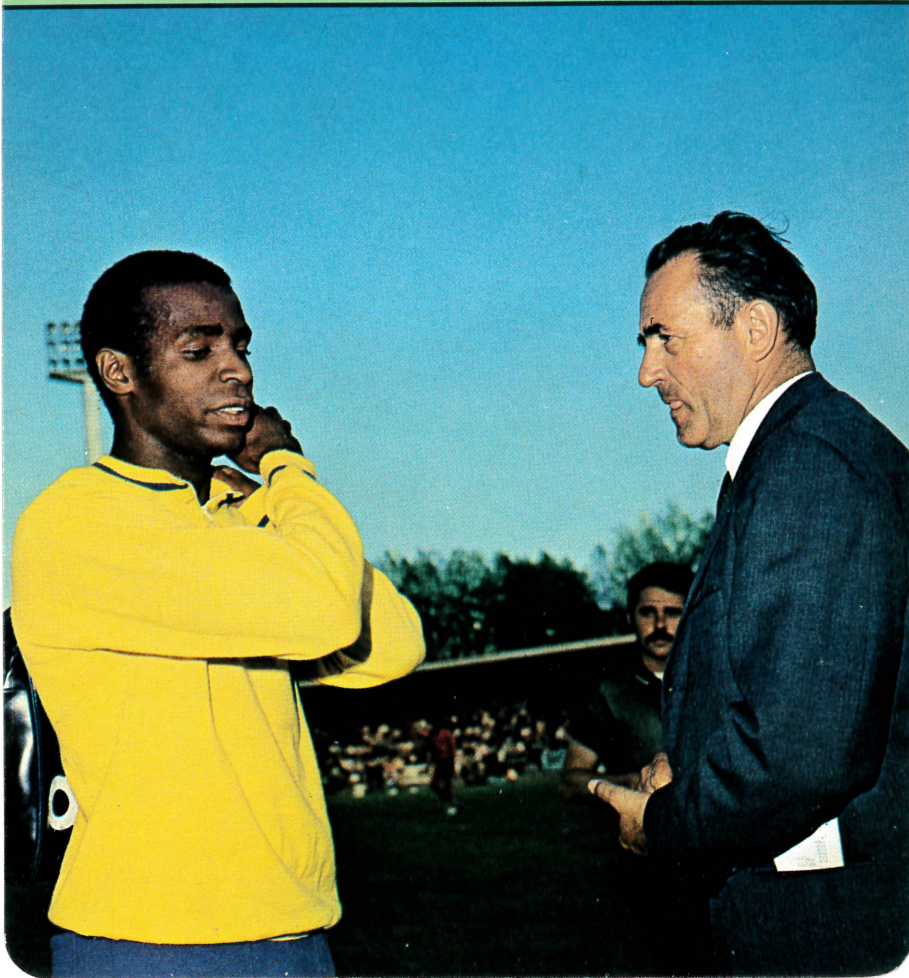


Track and Field



Robert Bobin



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Robert Bobin

Preaching in the Desert...

Born on August 2, 1920, Robert Bobin held the French record for the triple jump on three occasions (14.42 m in 1947, 14.58 m then 14.65 m in 1948), was selected for the London Olympics, finished 8th in the European Championships final in 1950, eight times international and twice champion of France. A steady career, but nothing startling. A physical training instructor and voluntary trainer to the Union Sportive Métro, his career took an unexpected turn when, at the age of 38, he was called upon to take charge of French national athletics. This was the beginning for Robert Bobin of an exceptionally long, brilliant and fruitful manager's career, whose summits were marked by the European Championships at Budapest (14 medals, of which 4 were gold) in 1966, and by the French victory over the USSR in 1970 at Zurich in a semi-final of the European Cup.

A smiling autocrat, as a man he lacked neither determination, nor intelligence, nor charm. He knew how to maintain the best of relations with the press, concentrated power exclusively in his own hands and achieved excellent results from athletes of high standard.

With a stubbornness which he himself attributed to having been born in the Vendée, he speeded up the training of coaches and managers, increased the number of contests and contacts with foreign countries, organized teach-ins, distributed equipment, and gave sustained attention to the young. In short, he worked to such good purpose that from 1962 to 1972 the number of licentiates rose from 42,000 to 92,000 and French athletics reached the heights.

Then came the slowing-down period: the French team was losing speed. Erosion of its strength? Evidence of the ineffectiveness of a plan of action based on opportunism and pragmatism? The fact remains that at the beginning of 1973, Robert Bobin was dismissed. He who for nearly twelve years had maintained, in the midst of virtually total indifference, that scholastic and sporting education should go hand in hand! This great admirer of Napoleon does not seem to have become in any way bitter on this account. He is from now on responsible for the department of top competitive events at the National Sports Institute in Paris.

Robert Bobin (right) with Roger Bambuck: a never-failing understanding