

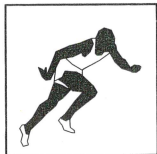
# Track and Field



*Rod Dixon*



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## Rod Dixon

### *No Cakewalk at First*

Among that healthy breed of sportsmen who emanate from down under, none looks more suited to life on a surfboard than Rod Dixon. Tall, bronzed and perfectly proportioned, he is a fine example of nature's gift to sport. He first impressed European fans at the Munich Olympics in 1972 when he raced home for a bronze medal behind the Finn Pekka Vasala and the defending champion Kip Keino of Kenya. Still relatively untried, Dixon decided to stake all on a European tour in 1973, realizing that the best Kiwi runners have had to migrate to the European summer for the hard experience and competition which they lack at home. He was quoted at the time as saying: 'It was no cakewalk for me at first. I sold my car and spent all my life-savings in a gamble.' It paid off. In March he beat Dave Bedford in the English cross country championship and in August he crowned his season with a share in New Zealand's world 4 x 1,500 relay record, teaming up with Tony Polhill, John Walker and Dick Quax.

The Commonwealth Games 1,500 metres final in 1974 was one of the greatest races of its kind in history. Dixon clocked a time only ever beaten once before—3 min 33.9 sec. Winner Filbert

Bayi of Tanzania broke the world record with John Walker second and Kenya's Ben Jipcho third. Five years later these four runners all remained in the top five of all time and no comparable 1,500 metres race had yet been seen.

His friendship with John Walker and Walker's coach, Arch Jelley, have been central to Dixon's development. Jelley in fact took over his final preparation for the 5,000 metres in the Montreal Olympics. On the way, Dixon won the AAA 1,500 metres title, and later beat Bayi. At Montreal Dixon was beautifully placed with a lap to go and seemed poised in the final rush for a medal of some sort. But the amazing Finn, Lasse Viren, recaptured the gold medal which he had won in Munich, beating Dixon's team-mate Dick Quax. In the final stride the West German, Klaus Hildenbrand, hurled himself over the line and snatched the bronze medal with Dixon a disconsolate fourth.

#### ROD DIXON

Born July 13, 1950, in Nelson, New Zealand

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

1972 OG: bronze medal, 1,500 m, 3 min 37.5 sec,  
World record:

4 x 1,500 m relay, 14 min 40.4 sec, 1973, Munich

*A tight finish between Rod Dixon (9) and Dave Moorcroft (24)*