

Track and Field



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Slight but Combustible

One of the most exciting performers in British track athletics today, Seb Coe personifies the axiom that hard work and a questing mind can compensate for physical limitations. He stands only 5 ft 9 1/4 in (1.76 m) and weighs just 128 lb (58 kg) but enjoys what coaches call a high power weight ratio.

Yorkshire Schools cross-country champion in 1972, AAA Youth 1,500 metres and English Schools 3,000 metres winner in 1973—these were the indications of promise. A stress fracture in 1974 kept him off the track for a year but he returned at a fresh level of promise to take the AAA Junior 1,500 metres and a bronze medal in the European 1,500 metres in 1975.

In 1976 he was not far off Olympic selection with fourth place in the AAA 1,500 metres. However, the indoor season which followed saw him emerge unequivocally. His light, compact frame and easy stride, nicely adjusted to the tight indoor circuit, took him to 800 metres titles both in the AAA and European arenas.

Poised for a great outdoor season, he was stopped by an Achilles tendon injury and only recovered his track legs for the AAA Championships, finishing a surprising

second. In Helsinki for the European Cup he was jostled and spiked in a final which he might well have won.

Never down for long, Seb atoned for this disappointment by scoring a brilliant victory in the Emsley Carr Mile over the former world record holder, Filbert Bayi of Tanzania. Then moving back to his principal event, the 800 metres in the Coca-Cola meeting, he ran a fine second to the World Cup runner-up, Mike Boit of Kenya, in the UK record time of 1 min 45.0 sec.

In 1979 he reigned supreme on the middle distance, establishing three world records in the 800 metres, 1,500 metres and in the mile. The following year, his confrontation with Steve Ovett was one of the top event of the Moscow Olympics; beaten by Ovett in the 800 metres, he avenged himself in the 1,500 metres, earning the gold medal.

SEBASTIAN COE

Born Sept. 29, 1956, in London

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1980 OG: gold medal in the 1,500 m
silver medal in the 800 m

World records: 800 m, 1:42.3, 5 July 1979, Oslo
1,500 m, 3:32.1, 15 Aug. 1979, Zurich
Mile, 3:49.0, 17 July 1979, Oslo
1,000 m, 2:13.4, 1 July 1980, Oslo

Coe leads round the bend: European Championships, Prague, 1978