

Track and Field



Silvio Leonard



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Plagued by Bad Luck

On June 5, 1975, when he was still only 19, the Cuban Silvio Leonard equalled the world 100-m record with 9.9 (according to two watches—the third showed 9.8) in Ostrava, Czechoslovakia. A few days later he tore a muscle in his left leg and had to be hospitalized in Potsdam (EGE). But by October he was fit enough to win the gold medal in the Pan-American Games in Mexico. One of his rivals on this occasion was Hasely Crawford, the man who went on to become gold medalist at Montreal (10.15 to 10.21). Leonard was running so fast however that he was unable to pull up and fell heavily into the ditch around the track. Scarcely was he out of hospital after this injury, that he was back for an operation on the spine to free him from the pain which a pinched sciatic nerve was causing him in his left calf. He was back on the track after seven and a half months' complete rest, and was in top form when he arrived at Montreal. But his troubles were not over yet: while he was horsing around with a friend in his room in the Olympic village, Leonard knocked a vase over,

and some fragments became deeply embedded in one of his heels. The stitches were a great handicap, and he was eliminated in the quarter-finals (fifth in 10.59). A sprinter of outstanding ability who had run the 100 m in 10.9 when he was only 16 and in 10.2 when he was 17, Silvio Leonard has numbered Steve Williams, the Jamaican Don Quarrie and the Russian Valeri Borzov among his conquests. He has had to wait a long time for his first big success in a major international meeting however. By the summer of 1977, Leonard had regained his form and produced an excellent 9.98 over 100 m (second best time in the world).

SILVIO LEONARD

Born Sept. 20, 1955, in Cienfuegos (CUB)

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1973: 3rd in the 100 m at the Moscow World Student Games

1975: 1st in the 100 m at the Mexico Pan-American Games

In 1977, clocking 9.98 over 100 m, S. Leonard was challenging V. Borzov