

Track and Field



Sonia Lannaman



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Never too Young

At 22 years of age, Sonia Lannaman was already a track veteran with eight international seasons behind her. Simple arithmetic shows just what that means. But to express it precisely, she was 14 years 333 days old when she first wore the G.B. vest, the youngest competitor ever to represent Britain. At that age she was already running 100 yards in 11.1 sec.

One of a prime group of stars to hail from the Midlands club, Wolverhampton and Bilston, she has as teammates 400-metre man, Glenn Cohen, and Britain's top javelin thrower Tessa Sanderson, both Jamaicans like herself. Sonia's quick start and rapid pick-up first attracted attention at the indoor arena at R.A.F. Cosford, near Wolverhampton where she placed second in the 50-metre dash against East Germany in February 1971. Ahead of her was the formidable Renate Stecher, Olympic gold medallist and then the world's fastest woman. Sonia had earned her place in the team by winning the W.A.A.A. title the previous month. She was still only 16 when she earned a place in the Olympic team, reaching the second round of the 100 metres in Munich.

In 1973 a gold medal at the European Junior Championship in Duisberg was a flying start but she was soon to suffer from that bugbear of the high tension sport of sprinting, muscle injury. All seemed well in Olympic year 1976. A silver medal in the European indoor 60 metres and a British record for 200 metres in 22.81 sec were positive indications. But at Montreal, only three days before the heats of the 100 metres, she broke down in a relay training session.

Silver medals in both the European Cup and World Cup 100 metres in 1977 proved that she had at last got the better of her old rival Andrea Lynch. The pair also picked up relay gold medals in the Europe Selection team. But sprinter Sonia still has some youthful years to atone for the disappointment of Montreal.

SONIA LANNAMAN

Born March 24, 1956, in Birmingham, England.

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1973 European Junior Championship gold medal 100 m 11.73 (Duisberg)
1974 CG silver medal 4 x 100 m relay (Christchurch)
1977 European Cup silver medal 100 m 11.22
1977 World Cup silver medal 100 m 11.26
1977 World Cup gold medal 4 x 100 m relay 42.51
World record
1977 4 x 200 m relay 1:31.6 Crystal Palace

Britain's top sprinter Sonia breasts the tape again