

Once upon a time at Finnie Stadium . . .

Olympic champions and world record holders came to Berea for a memorable afternoon of track & field

BY CHARLES HOWE, RUNDYNAMICS.NET

The year was 1975. President Gerald Ford had declared our long national nightmare over the previous year, and began issuing WIN buttons ("Whip Inflation Now") to cure the ailing economy. Popular tastes of the day ran to things like leisure suits, lava lamps, KC & the Sunshine Band, and *All in the Family*; *Welcome Back Cotter*, featuring someone named John Travolta, was the season's new hit show (*Charlie's Angels* and the Farrah Fawcett phenomenon would come in 1976). At the movies, *Jaws* was a box-office smash, and few people outside of Georgia knew who Jimmy Carter was. Here in Cleveland, the fire department kept a close eye on two hazards of the highest priority: Mayor Perk's hair, and the Cuyahoga River.

In the sporting world, famed basketball coach John Wooden bowed out after his UCLA Bruins won a tenth NCAA championship, while the Pittsburgh Steelers, Golden State Warriors, and Cincinnati Reds each claimed memorable world titles. Muhammad Ali, back on top as World Heavyweight Champion, was at the zenith of his career after a 14th-round TKO of Joe Frazier in the rubber match of their rivalry, the fabled Thrilla in Manila.

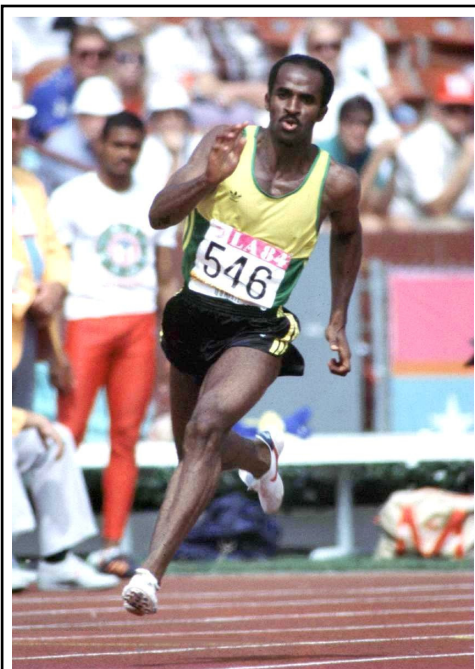
The international track and field year was dominated by two events: the death of Steve Prefontaine in the early morning of May 30, and John Walker's demolition of the world mile record on August 12. Walker became the first to break 3:50, lopping a healthy 1.6 seconds off the existing mark of 3:51.0. As chosen by *Track & Field News*, however, the performance of the year – steroid suspicions left aside – was Brian Oldfield's 75-0 shot put, which exceeded the previous record by nearly 3½ feet. Some other top performers of 1975 were Jacqueline Hansen (first woman to run the marathon under 2:40), Bruce Jenner (decathlon), Houston McTear (a Florida high school junior who tied the world record for the 100 yd. dash), Brazil's Joao Oliveira (58-8½ triple jump, an altitude-assisted by WR by 17½ inches), Bill Rogers (marathon), and Norway's Grete Waitz (nee Andersen, women's 3,000 meter WR).



YIFTER THE SHIFTER – his age was a mystery, perhaps because he himself had lost track of it: "Men may steal my chickens, men may steal my sheep, so I count these. But no man can steal my years, so I do not count them," he once explained.

Adidas was far and away the world leader in footwear, but for \$27.95, you could order something called the Waffle Trainer directly from an upstart little company in Beaverton, Oregon, called Nike, and another \$2 got you a Steve Prefontaine commemorative poster. Things like electronic stopwatches and synthetic tracks were becoming more common, and the Cleveland area got one of the latter in 1971 with the completion of the George T. Finnie Stadium on the campus of Baldwin-Wallace College. Inevitably, the new facility attracted top-flight competition, including the NCAA Division III National Championships in May, and the USA-Africa Invitational Meet at the height of summer.

I attended both events, and at the latter, I sat in the east grandstand, among the brothers on the backstretch. Because I had a heat sheet (reproduced below), I found myself in demand helping identify the sprinters and hurdlers who so impressed them, such as Jamaica's Don Quarrie, the world record holder for 200 meters. Distance events, on the other hand, held less interest, but they certainly did take notice when Miruts Yifter exploded in the last lap of the three mile run; "Yifter is Swifter" read the title of the *Plain Dealer* preview article, and the tiny (5-3¾, 117 lb.) Ethiopian's peerless kick did not disappoint, as he closed with a final 200 meters timed at 25 seconds by one observer. If not for the misfortune that kept him out of the 1972 Olympic 5,000 (he arrived late for his race, for reasons that are still unclear), then the African Olympic boycott in 1976, it is entirely possible that he, not Lasse Viren, would have four gold medals in the 5,000 and 10,000 meters.



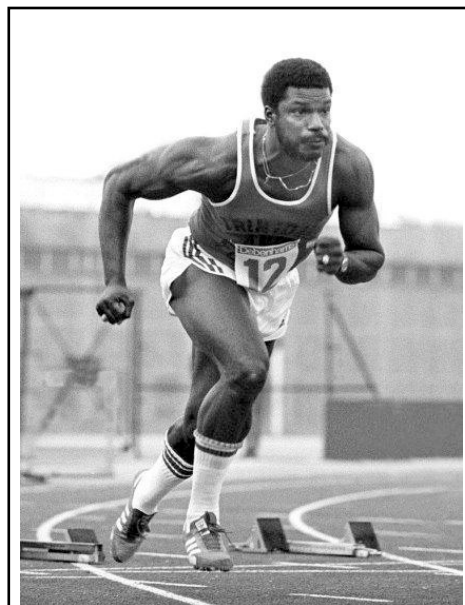
GRAND OLD MON – the 5-9, 155 lb. Quarrie made his fifth Olympic Team in 1984. Unable to qualify for the 200 meter final, he nonetheless anchored Jamaican squad to a silver medal in the 4 x 100m relay.

achieve Olympic success in Montreal: Herman Frazier claimed bronze in the 400m and gold in the 4 x 400m relay; Kathy McMillan, 18 years old and just out of high school, barely missed a gold medal in the long jump; and Debra Sapenter placed 8th in the 400m behind Irena Szewinska's runaway WR win.

An oddball event, the 300 meters, was included in an apparent attempt to achieve a record performance, but ironically, no one seemed to notice an esoteric mark that the high jump produced, as Ron Livers went 7-4¼ to set an unofficial world-best of 17½ inches in excess of height. This was bettered indoors at the 1978 Millrose Games by Franklin Jacobs, who jumped 23¼ over his head in clearing 7-7¼. Livers was actually more accomplished as a triple jumper, ranking 3rd, 7th, 3rd, and 3rd in the world from 1977-80, and leading the world list in 1977.

Quarrie (who went on to win the Olympic 200 meters the following summer in Montreal) and Yifter were the meet's marquee names, but not the only stars. Cleveland's own Madeline Manning Jackson, the 1968 Olympic 800 meter gold medalist and first American woman to break two minutes for that distance, won her specialty; Hasely Crawford of Trinidad & Tobago was third in the 100 yard dash and would win the Olympic 100 meter title in Montreal; (black) chrome-domed Charles Foster, bald long before it got to be beautiful, won the high hurdles, and came 4th in Montreal. Other international-caliber Americans present (1975 *Track & Field News* world ranking in parenthesis) were pole vaulter Earl Bell (3rd, and 6th Montreal), Bruce Collins (8th, 400m hurdles), Reggie Jones (6th, 200m), Ron Ray (2nd, 400m), and Stan Vinson (7th, 400m). Among the Africans of world rank were Stephen Chepkwony (5th, 400m), John Kipkurgat (9th, 800m), Nathan Langat (9th, steeplechase), Fatwell Kimaiyo (9th, 110m hurdles), and Yohannes Mohamed (8th, steeplechase). Finally, old war-horses Curtis Mills and Charles Asati were the 1st and 2nd ranked quarter-milers in 1969 and 1970, respectively; the latter was part of Kenya's gold-medal-winning 4 x 400m relay team at the 1972 Munich Olympics, and anchored their silver-medal-winning effort at Mexico City in 1968.

A number of emerging, as-yet-unranked athletes were present, and would



PEAKING WHEN IT COUNTS – shrewdly managing his competitive schedule and accurately sizing up his opponents, the 6-2¾, 192 lb. Crawford ran the best race of his life at exactly the right moment: the 1976 Olympic 100 meter final. His winning time of 10.06 was the second-fastest ever run at sea level.

USA-Africa Invitational Track Meet

July 23, 1975
Berea, Ohio

MEN'S 100 YARD DASH – 1. Reggie Jones (USA), 9.5; 2. Don Quarrie (Jamaica), 9.6; 3. Hasely Crawford (Trinidad & Tobago), 9.6; 4. Charlie Wells (USA), 9.6.

WOMEN'S 300 YARD DASH – 1. Pam Jiles (USA), 33.2; 2. Debra Sapenter (USA), 33.3; 3. Robin Campbell (USA), 34.0; 4. Mary Mand (Africa), 35.3.

MEN'S 300 YARD DASH – 1. Herman Frazier (USA), 29.19 (new American record; old record by Marshall Dill, 1974); 2. Ron Ray (USA), 29.5; 3. Charles Asati (Kenya), 30.1; 4. Stan Vinson (USA), 30.5.

WOMEN'S 880 RUN – 1. Madeline Manning Jackson (USA), 2:04.9; 2. Cathy Weston (USA), 2:05.8; 3. Debbie Vetter (USA), 2:06.5; 4. Kathy Hall (USA), 2:08.3

440 YARD INTERMEDIATE HURDLES – 1. Bruce Collins (USA), 50.8; 2. Daniel Kimaiyo (Kenya), 51.6; 3. Randy Williams (USA), 52.2; 4. Silvar Ayoo (Uganda), 52.2

WOMEN'S 440 RELAY – USA (Teresa Montgomery, Pat Collins, Pat Donnelly, Pam Jiles), 46.1 [only entry]

MEN'S 440 RELAY – 1. USA (Charlie Wells, Ronnie Ray, Lou Wilson, Reggie Jones), 39.6; 2. Philadelphia Pioneers, 39.6; 3. Africa, 40.3.

3000 METER STEEPLECHASE – 1. Yohannes Mohamed (Ethiopia), 8:31.2; 2. Nathan Ndege Langat (Kenya), 8:32.1; 3. James Munyala (Kenya), 8:37.8; 4. Heile Michael (Africa), 8:47.7.

WOMEN'S 110 METER HIGH HURDLES – 1. Pat Donnelly (USA), 14.2; 2. Sharon Clarke (USA – Cleveland T.C.), 15.4.

MEN'S 120 YARD HIGH HURDLES – 1. Charles Foster (USA), 13.6w; 2. Gerald Wilson (USA), 13.8; 3. Fatwell Kimaiyo (Kenya), 13.9; 4. Clim Jackson (USA), 14.0; 5. Charley Johnson (USA), 14.2

WOMEN'S 100 YARD DASH – 1. Alice Annum (Africa), 10.5; 2. Therese Montgomery (USA), 10.8; 3. Pat Colinsel (USA), 11.0; 4. Cathy McMillan (USA), 11.1.

MEN'S 880 YARD RUN – 1. Mulugeta Tadesse (Ethiopia), 1:47.0; 2. John Kipkurgat (Kenya), 1:47.2; 3. Tom McClean (USA), 1:47.9; 4. Tom Bach (USA), 1:50.7.

3 MILE RUN – 1. Miruts Yifter (Ethiopia), 13:11.0; 2. Paul Mose (Kenya), 13:15.7; 3. Richard Juma (Africa), 13:21.1; 4. Pat Mander (USA), 13:32.1; 5. Joel Cheriot (Africa), 13:40.8.

220 YARD DASH – 1. Don Quarrie (Jamaica), 20.7w; 2. Reggie Jones (USA), 21.2; 3. Charlie Joseph (USA), 21.2; 4. Lou Wilson (USA), 21.5.

MILE RUN – 1. Steve Heidenreich (USA), 3:58.4; 2. Wilson Waigwa (Kenya), 3:59.6; 3. Dick Buerkle (USA), 4:00.6.

WOMEN'S MILE RELAY (2-member teams) – 1. USA 1 (Kathy Weston, Madeline Manning Jackson), 4:05.2; 2. USA 2 (Debra Sapenter, Robin Campbell), 4:05.2.

MEN'S MILE RELAY – 1. USA 1 (Curtis Mills, Gerald Wilson, Brian Mondschein, Stan Vinson), 3:07.2; 2. USA 2, 3:10.9.

HIGH JUMP – 1. Ron Livers (USA), 7-4¼; 2. Dennis Adama (USA), 7-2¼; 3. Sheikh Faye (Africa), 6-10¼; 4. Mark Branch (USA), 6-10¼.

POLE VAULT – 1. Jan Johnson (USA), 17-0; 2. Earl Bell (USA), 17-0; 3. Russ Rogers (USA), 16-6; 4. Alla Ghatta (Africa), 15-0.

Where possible, the nationality of African runners has been noted.

w – wind-aided

Sources: *The Plain Dealer, Track & Field News*

