

George Kerr Remembered



The late George Kerr has been remembered as a 'half-mile talent rarely seen'. The feats of Jamaica's 1960 Olympic 800 metres bronze medal winner were recounted on April 15 by the US Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association in a story about Kerr's NCAA winning performances at the University of Illinois.

Posted on the Association's website in a series celebrating the 100th anniversary of the NCAA Championships, the story recounted Kerr's back-to-back wins in 1959 and 1960. In his first triumph, the Jamaican logged the third fastest time ever at the NCAA meet – 1:47.8

His title defence was even sweeter. "Kerr's final race as a collegian came at the 1960 NCAA Outdoor Championships, back again at Berkeley's Edwards Stadium", read yesterday's post. "The race - held at the Olympic distance of 800 metres instead of the then normal 880 yards - was a classic."

Kerr was in top form and ready for a big effort which was described as follows: "The first lap was led by Stanford's Ernie Cunliffe in 51.7 with Kerr in second until he stormed to the front on the last turn. He held his lead for an amazing time of 1:46.4, a new meet and collegiate record that made him third fastest in world history."

The story noted that though NCAA medal winners Kerr, Jerry Siebert and Cunliffe all reached the Olympic final in Rome later that season, only the Jamaica achieved a podium finish.

He actually left those Games with 2 bronze medals after his anchor leg for the British West Indies in the 4x400 metres relay. In addition, the soft spoken champion was a close fourth in the 800 in the 1964 Olympics.

To date, he and Arthur Wint, the runner-up in both 1948 and 1952, are the only Jamaican men to contest an Olympic 800 metres final.

Kerr, who died in 2012, is not the only Jamaican to have been celebrated in this series of articles. Recently, 1991 World Championship 4 x 100 metres relay gold medalist Dahlia Duhaney was cited for her NCAA 200 metres victory for Louisiana State University in 1992. In addition, the horizontal jump excellence of Kimberly Williams was featured. Her 2009 long jump/triple jump double for Florida State University was retold on April 17.

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