

Gregory & Lorraine - 2 Medals in 15 Minutes in Sydney



In 15 minutes on September 25 at the 2000 Olympics, Gregory Haughton and Lorraine Graham re-established Jamaica as a 400 metres super power. Graham became the first woman from the island to win an Olympic medal in the one lap event and Haughton raced to the first medal by a Jamaican since 1952. The double impact made an impression still felt today.

Impressively, it was the first time since the 1984 Olympic Games that one country had won medals in both the women's and men's 400 metres.

Unseen but highly rated during her days at Manchester High School, Graham had matured at college in the United States all the way to third place in 49.88 seconds at the 1999 World Championships. In Sydney, host of the 2000 Games, she cruised into the final and at 8:10 pm, local time, she blazed out to an early lead. Mere weeks past her 27th birthday, the slim Jamaican had hustled the first 200 metres and kept going.

Home favourite Cathy Freeman went by to win with Graham holding off Britain's Katharine Merry for the silver with a personal time of 49.58 seconds. Graham was overjoyed. Speaking years later to the IAAF, she reflected, "There is a huge heritage with Jamaica's 400 metres men at the Olympics so to become the first woman to get a medal over that distance was an incredible feeling that has stayed with me ever since."

Haughton strode to his blocks in lane 8 for his first individual Olympic final at 8:25 pm local time. "I'd missed out on my first Olympics in the individual 400 metres so it was something that I looked forward to because I wanted to be a part of history so as usual once I was in the blocks, I was telling myself that this is something that I wanted through all my life and I wasn't going to blow it."

Just like Graham, Haughton flew through 200 metres. He reached the top of the home straight with training partner Michael Johnson drawing level at 32.1. "I knew with me going out so fast that it was a risk to some degree and it would take away a little bit at the end of the race but I was prepared to do that", he reflected last week.

He held his form as US number 2 Alvin Harrison rushed forward. "After I saw Michael pass and I saw Harrison pass, I started saying to myself, nobody else is going to pass. I rather dive over the finish line", Gregory resolved as he ran the last 50 metres. His focus got him the bronze behind the two Americans in 44.70 seconds.

Also in that final was Greg's compatriot Danny McFarlane.

48 years had passed since George Rhoden and Herb McKenley went 1-2 in 1952. Asked if he had been aware of the historical significance of his effort, the 1995 World Championships bronze medal winner replied, "In the moment, I wasn't really thinking about the history. I was thinking about getting it over with, but it's a humbling experience to be associated with people like the Herb McKenleys the George Rhodens, the Arthur Wints, because all my life I trained for this and if I told you one day, it would have been a possibility, I would be lying."

Humbled by his achievement, Greg recalled, "people didn't see me cry but if you notice at the end of the race, I was on my back and I was looking up in the sky, I was crying literally and crying within because I'm saying God, you gave me this opportunity to at least win an individual Olympic medal which myself I am eternally grateful."