

SPORTING LEGENDS: CARL LEWIS

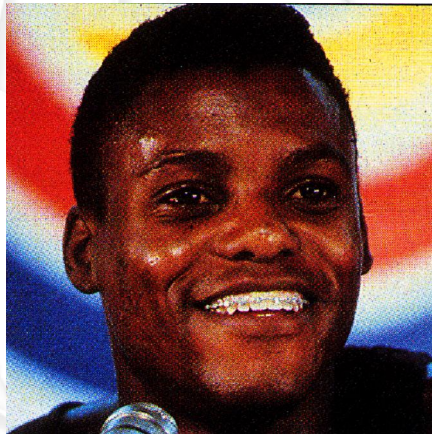
SPORT: ATHLETICS

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1980-1996

Frederick Carlton "Carl" Lewis (born July 1, 1961) is an American athlete.

He won 10 Olympic medals (of which 9 are gold) during his career, which lasted from 1984 to 1996.

He has also won 8 world championship's gold medals, and 1 bronze, from 1983 to 1993. His accomplishments have led many people to rank him as the greatest athlete of all time.



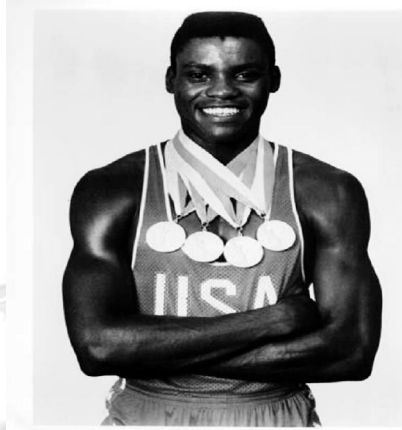
Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Carl grew up in Willingboro, New Jersey, in the Philadelphia area. At age 13, Lewis started to compete in the long jump. With his high sprinting speed, he also performed well in the sprint events.

In 1980, Carl was selected for the US Olympic team, but the American boycott of the Games in Moscow delayed Lewis' debut.

The following years, Lewis set season's-best performances in the 100 m and long jump. At the inaugural World Championships in 1983, Lewis won his first major titles, achieving victory in the 100 m, long jump and the 4 x 100 m relay events.

This made him a great favourite for success at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Also entering the 200 m, Lewis sought to equal Jesse Owens' performance of 1936 by winning these four events, which he did.

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Lewis's incredible 4-gold medal haul at LA '84 made him a worldwide household name.

After he had repeated his 1983 performance at the World Championships in Rome in 1987, he was set for four more golds at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, South Korea. However, things did not all go his way.

He won the 100 metre sprint, but only after Ben Johnson was disqualified for a doping offence. It has since become known that Lewis himself had failed a drug test before the games, although he was subsequently cleared by the IAAF.

In the 200 m, he was surprisingly beaten by compatriot Joe DeLoach. The 4 x 100 m relay team was disqualified in the heats (with Lewis not even running) due to a bad exchange. Lewis had no problems defending his long jump title and headed an all-American podium.

During the season of 1991, Carl Lewis and his team mate, Leroy Burrell, dominated the sprint events. In the races before the World Championships in Tokyo, Japan, Burrell broke Carl Lewis' world record, as he ran 9.90 secs. However, in the World Championships Carl Lewis responded to Burrell's challenge, in perhaps the best 100m race in history, as a true Champion.

In a race where six out of eight runners broke 10 seconds, a situation that had never previously occurred, Carl Lewis became the first man ever to break 9.90s, as he ran 9.86; thereby clinching his third World Championship title in the 100m and setting a new world record.

In the years subsequent to 1991, Lewis's sprinting career began to tail-off, although his long jump performance was still excellent. However, he was challenged in that event as well, as compatriot Mike Powell won an exciting duel at the 1991 World Championships in Tokyo, in which the legendary record of Bob Beamon from 1968 was finally broken.

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Long-levered and ecto-mesomorphic, Lewis's physique was perfect for sprinting.

At the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, another duel between the two was decided in favour of Lewis, winning his third consecutive Olympic long jump title. Lewis also ran the last leg of the American 4 x 100 m team.

In the years that followed, Lewis did not win any major titles, his only medal being a Bronze in the 1993 200m World Championship final (Stuttgart). In 1996, aged 35 - he made a strong comeback in the long jump event, and made a bid for a fourth consecutive Olympic title.

Lewis succeeded with remarkable ease, becoming only the third Olympian to win four consecutive titles in an individual event - the two others being Al Oerter (discus throw 1956-1968) and Paul Elvstrøm (yachting, 1948-1960).

Lewis and Oerter are the only two to have won the *same* event at four consecutive Olympics; Elvstrøm won in two different events. If Lewis would have qualified for the 4 x 100 m team, he could have won his tenth Olympic gold, surpassing Paavo Nurmi as the most successful male Olympian.

Lewis retired after the Atlanta Olympics and is now an actor, living in Los Angeles, California. In 2003 Lewis admitted that he had tested positive three times for banned stimulants during the 1988 Olympic trials.

Lewis claimed that he ingested the banned substances by mistake in a "herbal supplement". He was allowed to compete in the Seoul Olympics after the U.S. Olympic Committee ruled that his use of stimulants was "inadvertant" and not performance-enhancing.

In Seoul he went on to receive the gold medal in the 100 metre sprint after the disqualification of Canada's Ben Johnson.

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Lewis anchoring the USA team to 4x100m Gold at the Barcelona Olympics (1992).

Carl Lewis Medal History:

1983 - World Championship - 3 gold (100 m, long jump and 400 m relay)

1984 - Olympic Games - 4 gold (100 m, 200 m, long jump and 400 m relay)

1987 - World Championship - 3 gold (100 m, long jump and 400 m relay)

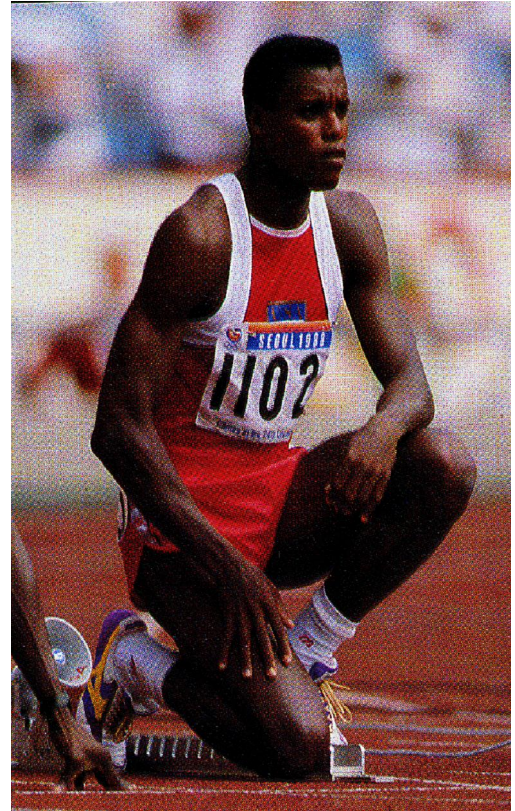
1988 - Olympic Games - 2 gold (100 m, long jump), 1 silver (200 m)

1991 - World Championship - 2 gold (100 m and 400 m relay), 1 silver (long jump)

1992 - Olympic Games - 2 gold (long jump and 400 m relay)

1993 - World Championship - 1 bronze (200 m)

1996 - Olympic Games - 1 gold (long jump)



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Scott Burton's Final Thought

Carl Lewis was without question the most famous athlete of the 1980s, and may certainly be considered as one of the greatest athletes of all-time.

His consistent success for over a decade was testament to his athletic prowess, mental focus and sheer will to win.

His legacy is going to be a hard act for any athlete to follow.

I grew up during the 1980s, and Los Angeles 1984 was the very first Olympics I watched. It was an incredible games, with many incredible performances.

Although the East German and Soviet boycott DID tarnish the integrity of the opposition, I believe that Carl Lewis would have won his 4 Gold Medals regardless. His fierce determination to emulate the feats of Jesse Owens in 1936 spurred him on to success.

Aside from his own personal drive, much of Lewis' success can be attributed to the excellent coaching, guidance and support he received from his father. After the disappointment of not being able to compete at the 1980 Olympics due to the US boycott, Lewis' father helped to re-motivate his son - in a bid to win the 100m Gold, arguably the richest prize in track and field.

He must have been immensely proud to watch his son win those 4 Gold Medals - the realisation of a lifelong dream. Years later, at his father's funeral, Lewis placed the 100m Gold Medal in his father hands before the burial ceremony. I thought that this was the perfect gesture, and the perfect send-off. The act of a true sporting legend.



Lewis won 4 consecutive Olympic Long Jump Gold Medals - that takes some doing!