

NUTS NOTES  
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Vol 14 No 4 Editor: A Huxtable 78 Toynbee Road LONDON SW20 8SR Winter 1976  
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EDITORIAL

As our typing resources are fully stretched at present, we couldn't include the deep UK 10,000m list without holding up publication until the New Year so this issue is a bit thinner than I had hoped.

Two reminders: if you haven't yet responded to my circular letter of 11 November about sales of UK ATHLETICS ANNUAL 1976 and KRAFT OLYMPIC ATHLETICS HANDBOOK please do so without delay and you need not send your 1977 subscription to Brian until you have been notified which category (Active or Associate) you're in.

Best wishes to all members for a happy and statistically satisfying New Year!

MISCELLANY

Roger Gynn, together with Dr David Martin of Atlanta, Ga, presented a paper to the NY Academy of Sciences Marathon Conference (25-28 October) and has begun work on a definitive publication on the event. He would be grateful if any members who have suggestions or can give any assistance (particularly on pre-1950 national lists and championships) could contact him. Write or telephone: 36 On the Hill, WATFORD, Herts. WD1 5DR (01-428 2145).

WHO'S WHO IN THE NUTS

Michael Stuart Gill b. 16 August 1952, Huddersfield (W Yorkshire); 1.78m/67.0kg; Lecturer; single; educ. Colne Valley HS, Huddersfield; Univ. of Birmingham; Alsager College of Educ; other interests: all sports esp. soccer, badminton, mountaineering, drinking, women, music; athletics interest started: 1969; greatest performance witnessed: 3:58.9 Ray Smedley (1974); best marks: 200m -22.7; 110mH - 15.3w/15.7; 400mH - 55.15; HJ -1.83.

Anthony O'Neill b. 29 October 1931, Bristol; 1.81m/00.0kg; WCII, APTC; married, 2d; other interests: gymnastics, rugby, trampolining, boxing, weightlifting, social; athletics interest started: 1952; best marks: 440y - 52.1; LJ - 6.70; SP - 13.02; DT - 47.02; HT - 52.00.

TAKE THE STRAIN! AN OLYMPIC MYSTERY by Peter Lovesey

They face each other like the finalists in a tug-of-war, except that instead of ten metres of rope between them there are two hurdles and ten metres of track. Members of the NUTS feature prominently in each team, as do journalists, giants of the Olympic movement and ghosts:

The Diehards

Ellery Clark (1896 double Olympic winner)  
Tim Lynch-Staunton (NUTS)  
Tom McNab (BAAB National Coach)  
Peter Matthews (NUTS)  
Ferenc Mezö (Olympic historian)  
Otto Szymiczek (Dean of Olympic Academy)  
Dave Terry (NUTS)  
Baron Pierre de Coubertin (Anchor)

The Upstarts

Harold Abrahams (NUTS)  
Stan Greenberg (NUTS)  
Erich Kamper (Olympic historian)  
Norris McWhirter (NUTS)  
H Archie Richardson (Author)  
John Rodda (Journalist)  
Mel Watman (NUTS)  
Lord Killanin (Anchor)

Mystified yet? The contest has been going on for over twenty years. The honours were fairly even until recently, when the Upstarts began to look like winning by default. The point at issue, those two hurdles and ten metres, is the correct description of the hurdles event at the 1896 Olympics. The Diehards are all on record as making it the standard 110 metres, over 10 hurdles while the Upstarts maintain that the race was 100 metres, over 8.

If you are still mystified, don't go back. Read on; it can't be worse.

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The MEMOIRES OLYMPIQUES of de Coubertin (1931), Ellery Clark's REMINISCENCES OF AN ATHLETE (1911) and almost any roll of Olympic winners compiled before 1950, list the event as 110m. Among the output of Olympic literature for the recent Games, Tom McNab's OLYMPIC GAMES 1976 and the NUTS KRAFT OLYMPIC ATHLETICS HANDBOOK (compiled by Tim Lynch-Staunton, Peter Matthews and Dave Terry) also give 110 metres (but see below - more confusion follows!).

The 100 metres, 8 hurdles group seem to have formed in the early 'fifties. The first reference I can find among my own books is in the 1955 edition of ARCHIE'S LITTLE BLACK BOOK. I don't possess copies of the ATFS OLYMPIC HANDBOOKS of 1948 or 1952, and I wonder if it originated there. A HANDBOOK ON OLYMPIC GAMES TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETICS (1948) shows 110mH, but - wait for it! - THE ATFS OLYMPIC HANDBOOK (1952) states that the "distance was 100m, over eight hurdles, each 1 meter high". Ed. / Ever since, it has had a strong following. In recent years, ATHLETICS SPORTSGRAPH (Harold Abrahams), THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ATHLETICS (Mel Watman), THE GUINNESS BOOK OF OLYMPIC RECORDS (Norris and Ross McWhirter, with Stan Greenberg as Associate Editor) and THE OLYMPIC GAMES (Lord Killanin and John Rodda) have either deleted the result from their 110m Hurdles results or specified that the distance was 100 metres.

I though the NUTS were irrevocably divided on this issue until recently, when the amendments to the KRAFT OLYMPIC ATHLETICS HANDBOOK were distributed. Among them was a note of great significance: p.20 - 110mH 1896 was 100mH. At a stroke, three stalwarts of the Baron's Diehards defected, practically surrendering the contest. Both Peter (in THE PICCOLO ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SPORT 1975) and Dave (in ATHLETICS ARENA, January 1965) were confirmed 110m men.

Before as an organisation we totally abandon the 110m, 10 hurdle version, I had better declare myself a Diehard. The programme for the 1896 Olympics, photographed for Killanin and Rodda's book (p.15) lists the event as 110 mètres haies. The race could, of course, have been modified on the day; perhaps the groundsman had his own ideas, or found himself short of a few hurdles. I wrote to Monique Berlioux, Director of the IOC, who was kind enough to consult the 1896 Official Report in the IOC library. She states that it mentions a "course de 110m avec obstacles" and "with the exception of Rodda, Guinness and Kamper, which specify 100m, all sources I have been able to consult - including those of the period - indicate 110m hurdles, race according to the rules of the French Athletic Sports Union."

A further point for the Diehards (this is loaded from now on) is the time recorded by the winner, Thomas P Curtis (USA). He clocked 18.0 in Heat 2 and 17.6 in the Final, narrowly winning a two-man race from Grantley Goulding (GB). Even allowing that none of the performances on the Athens track were up to the best standards of the 19th century, a winning time of 17.6 over 8 hurdles for 100 metres is abysmal. One of the heats at the Cambridge University Sports that year (120y, 10 hurdles) was won in 17.4. The Oxford v Cambridge event was won in 16.6, the US title in 16.2 and the AAA final in 15.6. Perhaps someone has a note somewhere of other performances by Curtis or Goulding; if those two were regularly clocking around 20.0 for the full distance then you Upstarts have a point.

It would be nice to get to the truth of the matter before we are deluged with literature for the 1980 Olympics. Surely someone in the NUTS knows when, where and with what authority the 100m, 8 hurdle version emerged? To save the tug-of-war continuing indefinitely in these columns, if you can clinch the controversy either way please write to me at 7 Fullbrooks Avenue, WORCESTER PARK, Surrey KT4 7PE. I will try to sort out any claims - with favour to none - and report back with full acknowledgments in the next issue.

Congratulations to Peter on appearing in ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF MYSTERY AND DETECTION by Chris Steinbrunner and Otto Penzler (Routledge & Kegan Paul, £12.50)! Ed.