

Jesse Owens



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It is difficult for us, living in an age when athletes such as Michael Jordan and Serena Williams are global megastars, to imagine a time when African Americans were not part of professional sports in the United States. But when Jesse Owens was a boy in the 1920s, there were no African American stars for him to emulate. As the first American in track and field to win four gold medals in a single Olympic Games, Owens' athletic accomplishments were achieved despite seemingly insurmountable odds. Yet while Owens broke world records in track and gained attention from the general public, few athletes could understand his experiences, including the overt racial discrimination he faced - and even fewer understood the complexities his fame brought. This insightful biography tells the life story of a boy who grew up in poverty in the Deep South, won Olympic gold in Hitler's Germany, and achieved fame and sometimes fortune in the midst of the Great Depression and a nation deeply divided by race. The author explores Owens' struggles and hard-earned accomplishments, as well as how he paved the way for future generations of athletes. A timeline, photos, and an extensive bibliography of print and electronic sources supplement this biography of one of the greatest athletes in Olympic history.

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