

**LARGER** THAN  
**LIFE**  
A CELEBRATION OF GREATNESS



# Jesse Owens

(1913 - 1980)

**Determined**

10<sup>th</sup> May, 2008

# LARGER THAN LIFE

A CELEBRATION OF GREATNESS

James Cleveland "Jesse" Owens was an **African American track and field athlete.**

His stunning victories and achievement of four gold medals at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin has made him the best remembered of all Olympic athletes.

He was **inducted to the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame in 1970.**

In 1976, he was awarded the highest honor a civilian of the United States can receive. U.S. President Gerald R. Ford awarded him with the Medal of Freedom. **He overcame segregation, racism and bigotry to prove to the world that African-Americans belonged in the world of athletics.**

## JESSE OWENS' CHILDHOOD

On September 12, 1913, James Cleveland Owens, later known as Jesse Owens, was born in Danville, Alabama, the seventh of eleven children. His father was a sharecropper, and with eleven children, it often meant that there was not enough food for all them. As a result, Owens was often sick.

With such grave financial prospects, when Owens was nine years old, his parents sold the family mule and moved to Cleveland, Ohio. It was in Cleveland that Owens became known as Jesse. **When Owens started school, a teacher misunderstood his nickname J.C. and called him Jesse instead.**

## OWENS BECOMES A TRACK STAR

While at Fairview Junior High, track coach Charles Riley recognized Owens' talent after he saw him sprint down a street. Riley was quick to recruit Owens, and began coaching him.

With Riley still as his coach in high school, during his senior year he broke the world records for the 100 and 200-yard dashes and for the broad jump at the state scholastic meet. After high school many colleges tried to recruit Owens, but he chose Ohio State University. In 1935, at the Big Ten Track and Field Championship, Owens set new world records;

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he tied the world record for the 100-yard dash and broke world records for the long jump, the 220-yard dash, and the 220-yard hurdles. A year later, Owens made the U.S. Olympic team.

## OWENS COMPETES AT THE BERLIN OLYMPICS

At the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Germany, Hitler was in power and by then his racist philosophy of Aryan superiority was prevalent. Nevertheless, despite the tension, Owens won gold medals in the 100 and 200-meter sprint, the 400-meter relay, and the broad jump, setting a new world record of 25 feet, 10¼ inches.

## OWENS' CAREER AFTER THE OLYMPICS

Upon his return to the United States, Owens was disappointed with the continuing discrimination experienced by blacks. To make matters worse, Owens had trouble finding work.

He decided to turn professional, and began engaging in races against a horse, a car, and other nonhuman opponents. Professional racing, however, failed to materialize financially.

In the 1940s, he pursued work on the lecture circuit, which proved to be more lucrative.

## LATER YEARS

In 1972, while still working on the public speaking circuit, Owens moved to Phoenix, Arizona. He became a philanthropist.

In Owens' name and with his financial support, the Jesse Owens Memorial Medical Center and the Jesse Owens Memorial Track Club was established.

He also served on the boards of the National Council of Christians and Jews and the Boy Scouts of America.

Owens died on March 31, 1980 in a Phoenix hospital.

## Quotes

“The battles that count aren't the ones for gold medals. The struggles within yourself the invisible, inevitable battles inside all of us that's where it's at.”

“We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort.”

## Quiz

1. In which year was Jesse Owens inducted to the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame?
2. U.S. President \_\_\_\_\_ awarded Jesse Owens with the Medal of Freedom.
3. What was Jesse Owens' original name?

Send your answers with your name and department to [one2one@clarislifesciences.com](mailto:one2one@clarislifesciences.com)

First 3 correct answers will get Clarista coupon worth RS. 50.

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- **Canon Lall** - IRA