

# Famous Olympians

If the names of famous Olympians were placed end to end, they could probably circle the globe many times. Here is an introduction to a few who earned the gold. Perhaps you will read to find out more about them. It is hoped you will continue your search to become acquainted with still other equally famous Olympic Games stars.

## **U.S. Olympic Games Stars**

In Athletics (track and field) events, the name of Jesse Owens, the sharecropper's son from Alabama, always tops the list of favorite Olympians. His four gold medals won at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games discredited Hitler's notion of German superiority over other races.

In 1984, another track sensation by the name of Carl Lewis matched Jesse Owens' performance of 28 years before and went on to excel in the 1988, 1992, and 1996 Games.

Babe Didrikson was the track star of the 1932 Olympic Games, capturing a gold medal for the U.S. in the javelin throw and another in the 800-meter hurdles. She went on to become a golf star and is still considered one of the most versatile female athletes.

The decathlon winner usually holds the honor of being considered the world's best athlete. In 1948, Bob Mathias became the youngest man to earn the gold. Four years later he won again at the age of 21. Other honored decathlon winners include Rafer Johnson (1960), Bill Toomey (1968), Bruce Jenner (1976), and Dan O'Brien (1996).

Swimming and diving have seen their champions, too. After winning five gold medals in swimming in 1924 and 1928, Johnny Weissmuller went on to play the original Tarzan. Patricia McCormick practiced over 100 dives a day to achieve her goal. She swept the diving events for the United States in both the 1956 and 1960 Olympic Games. Her daughter also went on to medal in diving in the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games.

Greg Louganis, protégé of the 1948 Olympic Games diving star Dr. Sammy Lee, began his Olympic diving career in 1976, winning the silver medal on platform at the age of 16. Louganis won gold medals in the 1984 and 1988 Games. After winning two bronze medals in 1968, Mark Spitz came back to earn seven gold medals in swimming events in the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich.

Eddie Eagan won a gold medal in boxing in 1920 and another in four-man bobsledding in 1932. He is the only athlete to have won a gold medal in both the Olympic Games and the Olympic Winter Games.

In 1980, speed skater Eric Heiden became the first to win five individual gold medals in his sport. Speed skater Bonnie Blair won five gold medals between 1988 and 1994.

The sport of figure skating has brought the gold to the U.S. quite often. Winners include Tenley Albright (1956), Carol Heiss (1960), Peggy Fleming (1968), Dorothy Hamill (1976), Kristy Yamaguchi (1992), and Tara Lipinski (1998). Dick Button was a two-time gold medal winner for the men (1948 and 1952) and continued to participate in many Olympic Games as a television commentator on his sport. Hayes Alan Jenkins won a skating gold in 1956, and his brother David took it in 1960. Other men's winners include Scott Hamilton (1984) and Brian Boitano (1988).

# Famous Olympians (cont.)

Some of the most familiar names among past U.S. Olympians are found in the boxing world. Floyd Patterson won the gold for the United States in the 1952 Games and later became the heavyweight champion of the world. George Foreman won the gold in the super heavyweight division in 1968. As a professional, he defeated the 1964 winner, Joe Frazier. Later he lost to the gold medal winner of the 1960 Games, Cassius Clay, known to boxing fans as Muhammad Ali.

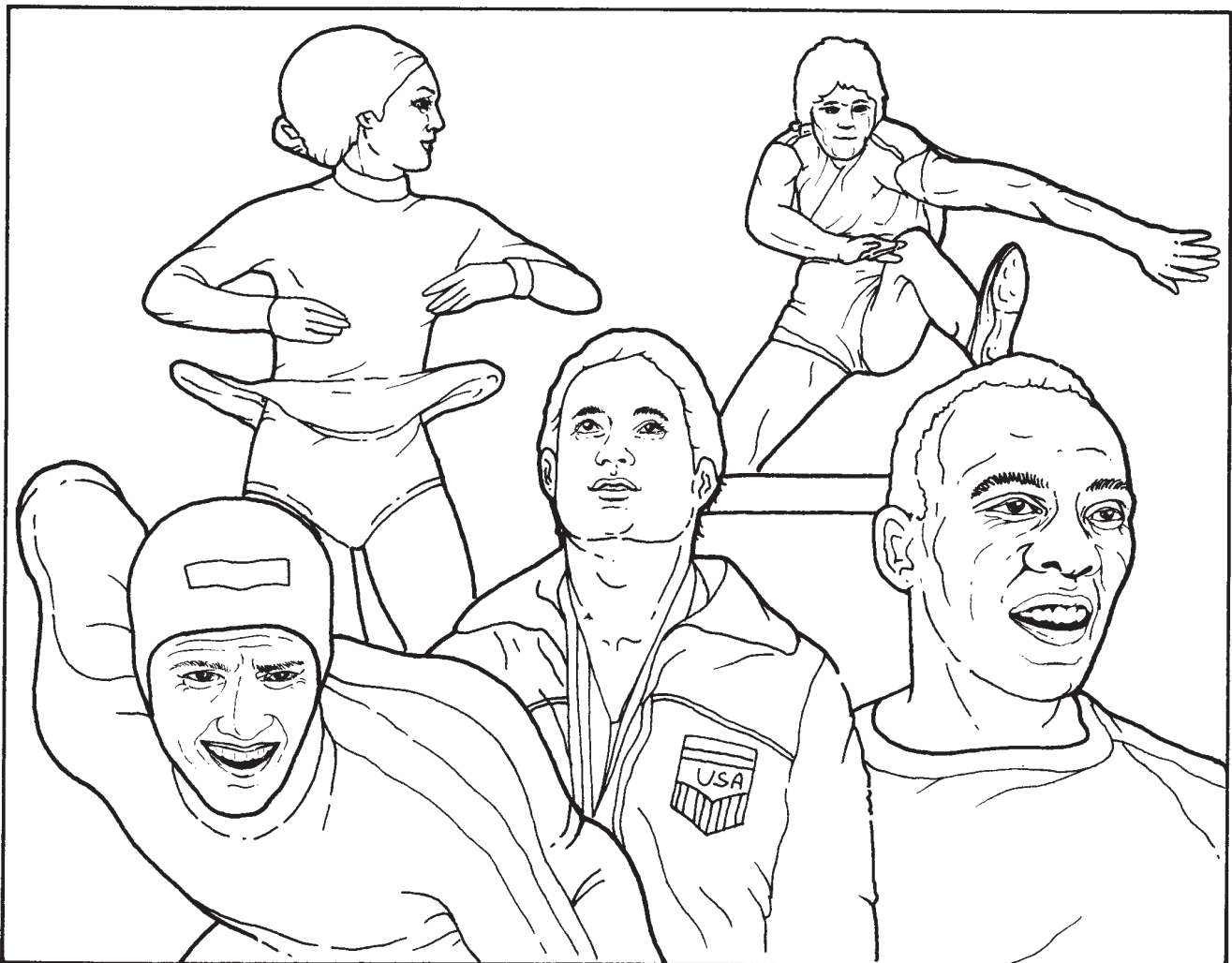
## Other famous U.S. Olympians include:

Andrea Mead Lawrence of Vermont who was the first U.S. woman to win two medals in Alpine skiing.

Harrison “Bones” Dillard who was considered one of the greatest hurdlers of all times. He won four gold medals for the U.S. in 1948 and 1952.

Al Oerter who threw the discus to win the gold in four Olympic Games (1956–1968).

Parry O’Brian who threw the shot put in four Olympic Games (1952–1964) for two gold medals and a silver medal.



# Famous Olympians (cont.)

## Foreign Stars

Leonidas of Rhodes, perhaps the greatest runner of all time, won the 200- meter, 400- meter, and hoplite in four Olympic Games from 164 B.C. to 152 B.C.

Paavo Nurmi, known as the “flying Finn,” first competed in 1920. He won seven gold and three silver medals for Finland over three Olympic Games. He was known for his explosive starts and habit of boasting ahead of time about his winning performances.

Daley Thompson of Great Britain became the pride of his country by winning the decathlon in 1980 and 1984.

Dawn Fraser, Australia’s popular freestyle swimmer, competed in three successive Olympic Games (1956, 1960, and 1964). She earned one silver and five gold medals.

Sonja Henie of Norway was only 11 years old when she appeared in her first Olympic Games in 1924. She did not win that year, but she later won three gold medals in figure skating (1928, 1932, and 1936). After her figure skating career she became a popular movie star.

In 1956, Anton (Tony) Sailer became the hero of Austria as the first skier to sweep gold medals in all three Alpine events.

In 1968, Jean Claude Killy of France succeeded in repeating Sailer’s feat. In 1992, he was once again in the spotlight as he secured and organized the Games for Albertville, France. These Games took place in the Alpine mountains only a few miles from where Killy had grown up and first learned to ski.

The West Germans were hoping for the same three Alpine medals in 1976 from their skiing sensation, Rosi Mittermaier. She won the first two races but lost the Giant Slalom by only .12 of a second.

The beginning of the gymnastic craze is often credited to 17-year-old Olga Korbut of the Soviet Union, but she did not win a gold medal in individual event competition. Her aggressive and daring style amazed the fans at the 1972 Games. Four years later, Nadia Comaneci of Romania collected seven perfect tens, the highest score in gymnastics. Nadia won three gold medals in Montreal in 1976 and two in Moscow in 1980.

The continent of Africa has been the home of many brilliant runners. Abebe Bikila, used to running barefoot in his native Ethiopia, saw no reason to put on shoes as he ran the marathon in the 1960 Olympic Games. After winning the gold medal in two hours and 15 minutes, he still had enough energy to take a victory lap around the stadium. In 1964, he again won the marathon, this time wearing shoes. He is the only man in Olympic Games history to win two consecutive marathons.

Runner Kipchoge Keino of Kenya won two gold and two silver medals over two Olympic Games (1968 and 1972). He wore a cap when he raced and delighted in tossing it to the crowd as he completed his final lap.

# Famous Olympians (cont.)

How well do you remember the Olympic Games stars? Match each star below with his/her description in the opposite column. Use a ruler to draw a straight line from one to the other.

Sammy Lee	•		• Popular woman diver
Abebe Bikila	•	I	• Norway's skating queen
Dawn Fraser	•	7	• Barefoot marathon winner
Jesse Owen	•		• Became heavyweight champ of the world
Olga Korbut	•	S	• Almost swept the Alpine for her country
Eric Heiden	•	12	• Winning Australian swimmer
Cassius Clay	•	E	• Track star, Berlin Games
Eddie Eagan	•	H	• Won seven gold medals in swimming
Mark Spitz	•	I	• Winter and summer medalist
Rosi Mittermaier	•	17	• Sparked interest in gymnastics
Babe Didrikson	•	2	• Youngest decathlon winner
Patricia McCormick	•		• Won diving gold and coached another winner
Daley Thompson	•	15	• Swept Alpine events
Sonja Henie	•	6	• U.S. figure skating champ
Jean Claude Killy	•	1	• Won five golds in speed skating
Bob Mathias	•		• Two time decathlon winner for Great Britain
Dick Button	•	S	• Great all-around female athlete

As you draw each straight line, you will notice that it passes through one square with a **number** in it and through one square with a **letter**. Below you will find a row of numbered boxes. **Place the letters in the boxes with their matching numbers.** (One is already done for you.) If you have matched all the stars correctly, you will find the answer to this riddle.

What did the ancient Olympian say when he lost his olive wreath?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	!
T																	

# Answer Key (cont.)

## Page 75

### Immediate Effects

**Good:** aggressiveness leading to harder training, some muscle buildup

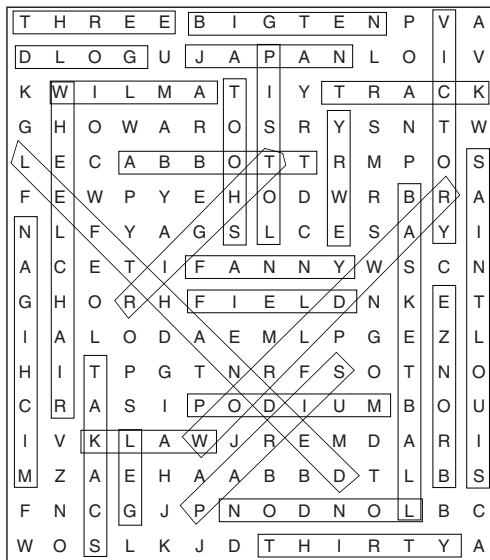
**Bad:** “roid” rage, baldness, for women—deepening of voice and whiskers

### Long-term Effects

**Good:** none

**Bad:** liver problems, cancer, reproductive system affected, bone growth slowed

## Page 77



## Page 78

Left-handed, Abbott, Michigan, Big Ten, victory, Japan

Wilma, walk, basketball, track, bronze, three

Ewry, wheelchair, leg, Paris, Saint Louis, London,

Fanny, World War, thirty, track, field, Takacs, pistol, right, shoot, podium, gold

## Page 82

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
T	H	I	S	S	U	R	E	I	S	T	H	E	P	I	T	S