Owens, Jesse,

byname of JAMES CLEVELAND OWENS (b. Sept. 12, 1913, Oakville, Ala., U.S.—d. March 31, 1980, Phoenix, Ariz.), outstanding American track-and-field athlete, who set a world record in the running broad jump (also called long jump) that stood for 25 years and who won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. His four Olympic victories were a blow to Adolf Hitler's intention to use the games to show Aryan superiority.

As a student in a Cleveland high school, Owens won three events in the 1933 National Interscholastic Championships, Chicago. In one day, May 25, 1935, while competing for Ohio State University (Columbus) in a Western Conference (Big Ten) track-and-field meet at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor), Owens equaled the world record for the 100-yard dash (9.4 s) and broke the world records for the 220-yard dash (20.3 s), the 220-yard low hurdles (22.6 s), and the running broad jump (8.13 m [26 feet 8 1/4 inches]). As a member of the United States team in the 1936 Olympic Games, Owens tied the Olympic record in the 100-metre run (10.3 s); broke Olympic and listed world records in the 200-metre run (20.7 s) and the running broad jump (8.06 m; his world-record leap in 1935 had not yet been officially accepted); and ran the final segment for the world-record-breaking U.S. 400-metre relay team (39.8 s). For a time, Owens held alone or shared the world records for all sprint distances recognized by the International Amateur Athletic Federation.

After retiring from competitive track, Owens engaged in boys' guidance activities, made goodwill visits to India and the Far East for the U.S. Department of State, served as secretary of the Illinois State Athletic Commission, and worked in public relations.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.**