

Men like Jesse Owens paved the way for black Olympians to follow, including Wilma Rudolph, the most dominant female

Olympian, who displays the three gold medals she won in the 1960 Rome games.

## The Olympic pioneers: Paving the way

By ART CARTER Syndicated Columnist

This article is the first in a three-part series.

sang stirring strains of business. "The Star-Spangled Banner" and a dazzling stream of Olympic athletes from around the world emerged from a tunnel and spread over the green turf of the big bowl while spectators cheered themselves hoarse. Vice President Charles Curtis read the Olympic oath and cited the spirit of the Olympics. The Big Games were underway.

The 1932 Olympics were staged in the immediate wake of the stock market crash as the nation struggled to recover from the worst economic depression in its history. It, too, was a time when disaster, labor problems, joblessness and poor dominated the news.

It also was a time in U.S. history when segregation reigned in grand style and, in some states, legally. It was in that atmosphere that the first black to win an Olympic championship on American soil broke into history. He was Eddie Tolan, who captured gold medals in both Olympic sprints, the 100 and 200 meters.

Trials and triumphs have marked the remarkable and historic participation of black men and women athletes down through Olympic history since George C. Poage won bronze medals at the 1904 Olympics in the 200- and 400-meter hurdles.

Winning a gold medal in the Olympic Games is the highest award an amateur athlete can obtain. It climaxes years of preparation and preliminary contests prior to the one big event which comes every four years.

Hundreds of gold medals have been won in many different events. To some winners, winning the Olympics marks the start of a new career as a professional where the rewards are riches and more fame.

This has happened to some black athletes who

were gold medal-winners numerous black winners helped or hurt their citizens opposed the locaseeking degrees in the schools they previously attended or following a Few persons are still previously-sought profesaround who remember the sion, and still others, ap-Angeles in 1932, as the their accomplishments, fade. great, white-robed chorus have found rich rewards in

Ralph Metealfe, left, and Jesse Owens

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mainly in one athletic event: wind up with gold medals endeavors, and whether or tion of the Owens monuboxing, others have return- and gold memories. And not the Olympics helped ment on city hall property ed to their earlier pursuits, they simply fade from the them down a path of in Oakville, Ala.

> The Black Olympians A Special Series

What we've found is that Hitler. The feats of Owens

The incomparable Alabama town where he was born when citizens erected a monument honoring Owens as its most prominent citizen.

Yet, even in that instance, Owens had troubles as a political battle Many blacks have com- Olympic champions, developed over where the peted in events that have no especially the gold medal- monument honoring him irrational behavior patterns future professionally, and winners, to find out how should be located. Some of among the rich and the once the Olympics end, the Olympic movement the old Southern-spirited

opening ceremony in Los plauded by their peers for picture when the headlines achievement and success.

In this article, we have to some, it has been a are almost without parallel

tried to locate some of the lodestar; to others it has in Olympic history. been a series of problems, but generally there have ever so completely been gains for most in the dominated the scene as did post-Olympic period.

Owens, who shocked Adolph Hitler with his astounding victories, never made the fortune lessfamous Olympian winners made, but posthumously gained respect in the

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Jesse Owens is hammered

deep in the stone Marathon

Gate of the Berlin Stadium,

and it appears there more

often even than that of

Certainly no individual

the great sprinter from

Ohlo State University. He

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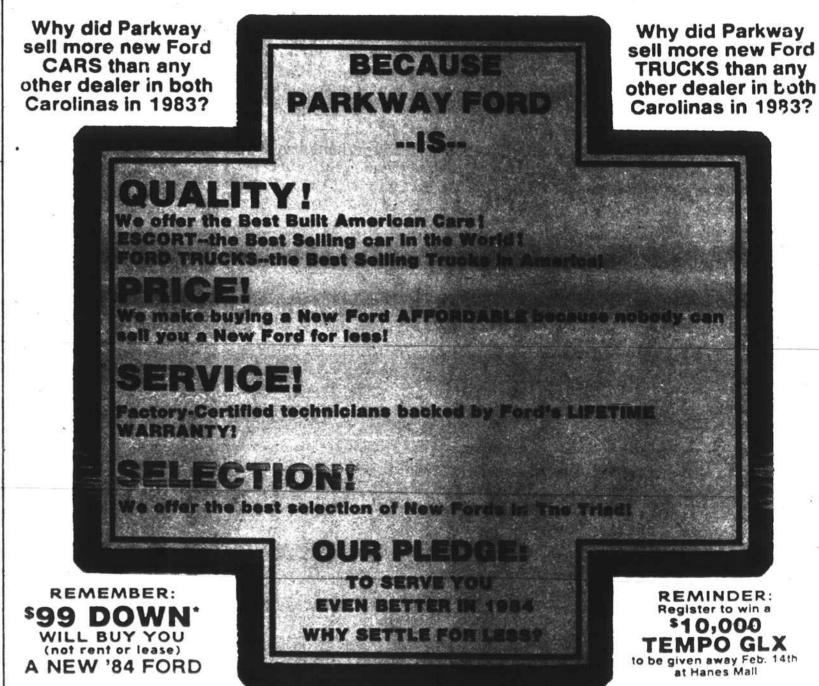
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