

# Jesse Owens

Jesse Owens was born in Oakville, Alabama in 1913 to a family of sharecroppers. He was the last of 10 children born to Henry and Mary Emma Owens, and he was the grandson of enslaved people. One of the defining moments in his childhood was undergoing the removal of a large fibrous mass from his chest, near his heart. The surgery was performed in the kitchen of his house, with a kitchen knife, by his mother.



At times Jesse and his siblings were forced to pick cotton, but they would also play in the fields, which is where Jesse developed a love of running. This was the start of his journey to becoming one of the most impressive Olympic athletes of all time.



James became known as Jesse after a teacher mistook his pronunciation of his initials "J.C." for his first name. While in high school, Jesse competed in the National Interscholastic Championships where he took first place in three events.

# Black History



Jesse's illustrious career began in May 1935 while running for Ohio State University where he tied the world record for the 100 yard dash, with a time of 9.4 seconds. He proceeded to win four gold medals at the 1936 Olympic Games. During those games he broke four world records and tied a fifth. He held and shared world records for all sprint distances

recognized by the International Amateur Athletic Federation. Jesse is also well known for having raced against a horse, and won.

The Jesse Owens Foundation was created by his friends and family in 1980 after his death. The Foundation helps to support youth athletes in their pursuit of excellence. They also provide scholarships to students who compete in sprinting events.



Jesse Owens remains a role model to many young athletes.