

World's Fastest Humans

PERCIVAL A. WILLIAMS, winner of the 100- and 200-metre running races at the Olympic games in Amsterdam, Netherlands, in 1928, was born and raised in Vancouver. He showed that his success was not an accident, winning the 100-yard dash at the inaugural British Empire Games in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1930 and setting a world record. The Americans were not happy and invited Williams to a series of indoor track meets south of the border. They were even less happy when Williams won 19 out of the 21 races on their turf to become the fastest sprinter in the world. Unfortunately, Williams pulled a thigh muscle and was never able to make a comeback. He competed in the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles but was eliminated, after which he left sports and became an insurance agent.

“Chick” Turner was a world-class runner from Vancouver’s Point Grey. A brilliant student, he enrolled at the University of British Columbia in 1945 at the age of 16 and by age 19 was easily breaking all previous world records for running and was looking forward to competing in the Olympics in Holland in 1949. Turner became a Rhodes scholar and went to England for university. Ironically, the International Olympic Committee at the last minute changed the rules that required an athlete to train in his home country for the six months prior to the games, with the result that he was disqualified. John N. W. Turner did however go on to have a successful political career and became Canada’s 17th Prime Minister.

Vancouver hosted the British Empire Games in 1954 at the newly completed Empire Stadium in Hastings Park, and the most famous event of the games was a one-mile race in which John Landy and Roger Bannister both ran a 4-minute mile. Nearing the very end of the race, Landy glanced over his shoulder and Bannister barely nosed past him to win the race.

Henry Winston Jerome won gold medals in 1966 and 1967 at the British Empire Games and the Pan American Games respectively and set a total of seven world records.

Percival A. Williams, born and raised in Vancouver, won the 100- and 200-metre running races at the Olympic Games in Amsterdam, Netherlands, in 1928.



Above

These track shoes, a gift from his schoolmates, were worn by Williams and are currently proudly displayed among other Williams memorabilia in the BC Sports Hall of Fame.

Below

Williams's likeness, cast in bronze, rests on a pedestal at the entrance to BC Place Stadium.

