

TWO AMERICAN SPORTING HEROES



JESSE OWENS

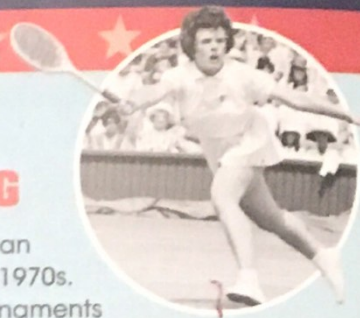


In 1936, the Olympic Games were in Berlin. Adolf Hitler, the German leader, wanted to show his country and his political ideas to the world. Hitler's political party – the Nazi Party – believed that white people were better than other races. But one athlete demonstrated in a spectacular way that this was not true!

Jesse Owens was a 22-year-old black American athlete. He was the grandson of an African slave and became one of the USA's greatest athletes. In 1935, he broke three world records in an hour at the University of Michigan. Then, at the 1936 Berlin Olympics he won four gold medals – in the 100- and 200-metres sprint, in the long jump, and in the 400-metres relay. Owens was the most successful athlete of the Olympics and showed that Hitler's ideas about race were wrong!

Jesse Owens has become a sporting legend. A street near the Olympic Stadium in Berlin now has his name, and every year the USA's best athlete is given the 'Jesse Owens Award'.

BILLIE JEAN KING



Billie Jean King was an American tennis player in the 1960s and 1970s.

The most important tennis tournaments in the world are the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open. Together, these tournaments are called the 'Grand Slam'. In her career, King won an amazing 39 Grand Slam tournaments, including Wimbledon on 6 occasions.

King did a lot to help women in sport. In the 1970s, she campaigned for women to have the same opportunities (and the same pay) as men. In 1973, Bobby Riggs, a retired male tennis champion, challenged King to a tennis match. Riggs didn't think that a woman could ever win a tennis match against a man. This famous match became known as the 'Battle of the Sexes'. It had the biggest TV audience ever for a tennis match: about 50 million people in the USA watched it! King quickly and easily beat Riggs. In the same year she started the Women's Tennis Association. Then in 2006, the National Tennis Center* (the home of the US Open) was re-named the 'Billie Jean King National Tennis Center'. King changed many people's ideas about women in sport.

*Center = American English spelling of Centre

Glossary

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