

Jesse Owens. An Olympic Athlete

Read the text and then complete the chart:

J. C., as he was commonly known, was born on September 12, 1913, the tenth child to Henry and Emma Owens. His parents were sharecroppers, and his mother did other people's laundry to earn extra money. There was little time for school for J. C. and his siblings because they had to work in the cotton fields. In 1921 Henry Owens sold his mule and moved his family to Cleveland, Ohio, in search of a better life. Although he could not find steady employment, the children could attend school. When a teacher asked the shy J. C. his name, she heard him say "Jesse" rather than J.C. From then on he was Jesse Owens. When he was only 14 Coach Charles Riley took an interest in Owens and helped him train. Owens began breaking national records while he was still in high school. When Ohio State University recruited Owens for their track team, he did not think he could afford it. Coach Riley found Owens work operating a freight elevator and also got a job for Henry Owens as a janitor.

During a meet on May 25, 1935, Owens broke five world records and tied another. The following year he went to the Olympics in Berlin, Germany. Of the 66 participants on the American track and field team, 10, including Owens, were blacks. At that time, Adolf Hitler was in command of Germany. He and his followers believed that the Germans were superior to all other races. Hitler was in attendance at the games as Jesse Owens proved him wrong. First Owens won the 100 meter dash, then the 200 meter dash. After a shaky start in the broad jump he went on to set a record that would stand until 1960. Owens's fourth gold medal at the Olympics came as a member of the relay team.

In 1935 Owens married his high school sweetheart, Ruth, and they had three daughters. At first after the Olympics, Owens was treated like a star. Some people made him business offers. Later, he worked with children in a recreation department. On March 31, 1980, Jesse Owens died at the age of 66. He had been greatly honored during his lifetime. President Ford gave him the Medal of Freedom, and President Carter awarded him with the Living Legends Award. Owens claimed that the three D's helped make him an Olympic champion: discipline, dedication, and determination.

| | |
|---|--|
| NAME | |
| DATE OF BIRTH | |
| PARENTS | |
| COACH | |
| WHICH COMPETITIONS DID HE WIN AT OLYMPICS IN BERLIN? | |
| WIFE | |
| CHILDREN | |
| DEATH | |
| OWENS' THREE D's | |