

Mini Page Hero: Jesse Owens



photo courtesy German Federal Archives

Mini Fact:

Jesse Owens, center, won the gold medal for long jump at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

Legends are created in many different ways. Jesse Owens became an international hero by overcoming bias to triumph on the world's biggest sports stage.

Owens takes off

Jesse first showed his athletic potential as a high school track-and-field star in Cleveland, Ohio. Many colleges recruited him for his incredible running and jumping abilities.

Jesse chose the Ohio State University Buckeyes. He earned a nickname at the school that stayed with him his whole life: Buckeye Bullet.



Just before the 1935 Big Ten Outdoor Track and Field Championships, Jesse fell down some stairs and hurt his back. He wasn't sure he could compete, but he decided to give it a try.

What happened next was "the greatest single-day performance in athletic history," according to Sports Illustrated. Jesse tied the world record in the 100-yard dash. Ten minutes later, he set a new world long-jump record. Within the next 30 minutes or so, he also set new world records in the 220-yard dash and the 220-yard low hurdles. Jesse had tied or set new world records in four events in just 45 minutes!

A world stage

Jesse's performance in 1935 was incredible, but it was the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, Germany, that made him a legend.

Twenty-two-year-old Jesse was one of just 18 African-American athletes on the United States Olympic team. Throngs of fans were eager to see him and get his autograph, including many young German fans. Jesse needed police escorts to make his way around the city. But his popularity in Nazi Germany was surprising.



photo courtesy Library of Congress

Jesse Owens begins his 200-meter record-breaking sprint at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany.

Germany's leader, Adolf Hitler, hoped that the Olympics would prove his belief that non-Jewish white people, referred to as Aryans (AIR-ee-uhns), were better than people of all other races.

That was Hitler's plan — until Jesse Owens started running and jumping. He captured four gold medals: the long jump, the 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash and the 4x100-meter relay.

Four gold medals in a single Olympics had never before been accomplished by a track-and-field athlete, and the record stood for 48 years.

Jesse had been a celebrated athlete before he traveled to Berlin for the 1936 Olympics. But his appearance in Hitler's Germany made him forever a legend in Olympic history.

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Living his dream

Jesse Owens was the son of sharecroppers and the grandson of slaves. Yet his name, achievements and legend live on because he made his dream come true through determination, dedication, self-discipline and effort.

After retiring from track and field, Jesse spent a lot of time speaking to youth groups to inspire them to greatness. In 1976, he was honored by President Gerald R. Ford for his Olympic triumphs and humanitarian service with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



photo courtesy National Archives

President Gerald Ford with Jesse Owens at the White House during the Medal of Freedom ceremony.

Resources



This issue of Mini Page Heroes is based on a chapter from "50 American Heroes Every Kid Should Meet" by Dennis Denenberg and Lorraine Roscoe. To order the book, go to heroes4us.com and click on "50 American Heroes Book" and "Order a Book."

On the web:

- jesseowens.com/about
- bit.ly/MPOwens

At the library:

- "Who Was Jesse Owens?" by James Buckley

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of Jesse Owens are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



ARYAN, ATHLETIC,
BERLIN, BUCKEYE,
EVENTS, HERO,
HURDLES, INSPIRE,
JESSE, JUMP, LEGEND,
MEDALS, NAZI, OHIO,
OLYMPICS, OWENS,
RECORD, RUN, STAGE,
TRACK, WORLD.

O X T R A C K N K O S S L A S
N I L R E B U A O T N J B R C
W M H P A R R I A E Z E U L I
X Z M J R H H G W Z X S C E P
L U O Z Y O E O X B X S K G M
J L U W A F G R O X V E E E Y
I Z A N N R E C O R D S Y N L
M E D A L S I N S P I R E D O
D L R O W B P C I T E L H T A
H U R D L E S T N E V E P H P

Cook's Corner

Turkey Barbecue

You'll need:

- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup barbecue sauce
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons sugar

- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- 3 cups cooked, chopped and shredded turkey breast
- 6 hamburger buns



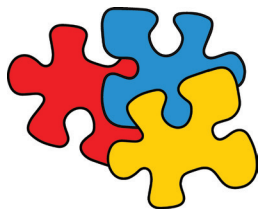
* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

What to do:

1. Combine water, barbecue sauce, ketchup, vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, sugar and mustard in a large nonstick skillet.
2. Mix well and add turkey; heat until just boiling. Reduce heat and simmer without a cover for 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Serve on buttered and toasted hamburger buns. Serves 6.

Puzzling

Unscramble the words below that remind us of running.



- epdse _____
- atmians _____
- ahrtnamo _____
- acre _____

Answers: speed, stamina, marathon, race.

Mini Jokes



- James:** Did you hear about the race between the lettuce and the tomato?
- John:** The lettuce was a "head," and the tomato was trying to "ketchup"!

Eco Note



Did you see the total solar eclipse in August? The moon helps keep conditions on Earth stable. Its gravitational pull helps steady Earth's rotation so that it doesn't wobble too much. It also influences the daily rising and falling of Earth's ocean tides.

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Thank You



The Mini Page thanks Dennis Denenberg, former teacher, principal, superintendent and university professor, and Lorraine Roscoe, a champion of heroes of every kind, for help with this issue.

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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