

# ANTHONY WILLIAM "NICK" WINTER AUSTRALIA'S TRIPLE JUMP STAR OF 1924

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**T**he 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, France have become better known in recent years for the exploits of Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell, made famous in the movie "Chariots of Fire".

For Australia it was a successful Games with its relatively small team winning three gold, one silver and two bronze medals. One of the gold medals went to "Nick" Winter, who accomplished in the triple jump what many athletes dream of, and that is a gold medal with a world record.

He was born in the New South Wales (NSW) country town of Brocklesby, near the Victoria/NSW border, on August 25th, 1894. His family moved to Sydney when Winter was in his late teens. His father ran two snooker saloons and Winter became an expert in snooker and billiards and later played many memorable games against the famous Lindrum brothers.

Winter was a well built and versatile athlete who became a fireman. Little is known as to when Winter started athletics, but after serving in World War I as a Light Horseman and later as a driver he came to athletic prominence when he triple jumped 14.50 metres in Sydney in December 1919.

Winter did not compete in the 1920 Australasian Championships in Sydney as there was no triple jump. The triple jump was not part of the national championships until 1927. Winter was not selected for the 1920 Olympics, even though his best at the time matched the winning jump in Antwerp. In December of that year he jumped 14.68 meter, which was 18 centimetres better than Vilho Tuulos' winning Olympic jump.

The state championships resumed in NSW in 1921 after a five-year break due to World War I. Winter won the first of his eight state triple jump titles during these championships and his only long jump title. In December he cleared 15 metres for the first time with a jump of 15.15. In 1922 he won the state 120-yard hurdles title in 16.2 sec-

onds, but was not able to reach 15 metres in the triple jump, although he dominated the event in NSW. At that time there was little or no travel interstate and Australasian Championships were not held annually. Winter did not get elected for the 1921/1922 Championships in Adelaide, as neither his hurdles or long jump were good enough.

Finally in 1924 Winter competed in the Australasian Championships in Hobart, where he finished third in the decathlon with 4,176.293 points. He did not contest the 400 or 1,500 metres of the decathlon, but as there were only three competitors he was assured of a place. He finished fourth in the hurdles and discus and was unplaced in the high and long jumps. He was also entered in the shot put and hammer throw, but did not take part in them.

Winter was selected for the 1924 Olympics, but only just as he was the lowest priority in the team. He sailed with the Australian team in the liner Ormonde and the journey took five weeks. They arrived two weeks before the Games. Winter was 29 years of age and had no international experience, nor did he have any warm-up meets prior to the Games.

**T**he triple jump was held on the 12th of July 1924, in hot conditions. There were 19 athletes in the field and Winter opened with a foul. He cleared 15.19 metres on his second attempt, before fouling his third attempt. He was behind Argentinean Luis Brunetto, who had set an Olympic and South American record of 15.425 metres on his first jump and was in the lead. Winter again cleared 15.19 metres and then did an enormous jump in the vicinity of 15.85 metres but had again overstepped the mark, and also jarred his heels. Winter's competitive temperament came through on his last jump, when he set a new world and Olympic record of 15.525 metres to win the gold medal.

After his win, Winter told the press that it was his life's

ambition to win the Olympic hop, step and jump, as the event was called in those days.

Winter received a great reception on his return, along with Australia's other two gold medalists, Dick Eve (diving) and Boy Charlton (swimming), who were also from the Sydney suburb of Manly, as was Winter.

Winter who was married with two children continued to compete for South Sydney and had a best of 14.87 metres in 1925 and 14.55 metres in 1926. In 1926 he changed to the Western Suburbs club, but missed the Australasian titles in Brisbane. In 1927 he won the state decathlon title with 4,966.623 points and had a best triple jump of 14.58 metres in Camden in October. Again Winter missed the Australasian championships in 1927, as they were held in Wellington, New Zealand. These were the last Australasian titles because New Zealand withdrew to continue on their own.

The 1928 Olympic team was selected, but Winter was not included on the team. He asked for special consideration to defend his title and the selectors allowed him to do a special trial at Hurstville Oval in April, where he jumped 14.96 metres and was added to the Olympic team.

**T**he Australian Olympic team traveled by ship (RMS *Naldera*) to England and Winter entertained the other passengers with standing high jumps during the trip. The team arrived and Winter was able to compete in the British AAA's championships at Stamford Bridge in early July. He finished second to Dutch champion Willem Peters with a jump of 14.51 metres, which indicated that he was in good form. However in Amsterdam he was unable to reproduce his form and could only manage 14.15 metres to finish 12th in a field of 24 jumpers, won by Mikio Oda of Japan with 15.21. Winter's form returned after the Games, when he cleared 15.02 metres in Dublin in late August. It was obvious that the lack of competition was not very helpful prior to the Games and Winter at the age of 34 needed everything going for him.

Winter continued his athletic career, but for the first time he was not the number one triple jumper in NSW, managing only 14.21 metres in 1929, behind Ernest Baker's 14.40 metres.

In 1930 Winter bounced back and won the state title with 13.85 metres three weeks after winning his first national title when he jumped 14.40 metres in Melbourne. He had jumped 14.58 metres in early January, but he was not selected for the first British Empire Games (Commonwealth Games), to be held in Hamilton, Canada. However Winter also added a javelin bronze in the Nationals to his many successes with a throw of 46.14 metres. Whilst financial constraints kept the team to a small number, Winter's best in 1930 would have gained him a silver medal in Hamilton.

Winter had changed clubs again, joining Kensington. In

1931 he had a best of 14.53 metres and in 1932 he finished second in the National Championships in Sydney with 14.34 metres. Finally, at the age of 38, Winter retired from athletics.

Surprisingly Winter did very little long jumping, especially in the latter part of his career and his best was only 6.83 metres in 1920.

Winter's life came to a tragic end in 1955, when he moved back to his Pagewood in Sydney home and died from gas asphyxiation. He had apparently hit his head in the bathroom and knocked an open pipe from which gas flowed. At the time of his death he was trying to cope with his wife dying of cancer.

Nick Winter was then 60 years old and missed the Melbourne Olympics he had so hoped to see.

Winter had an amazingly long and successful career in an event that wasn't even recognized nationally until late in his career. He competed only on grass, except when he went to the Olympics. He had no real international experience, yet he won Olympic gold with a world record. He was a 'laid back character who worked full time, raised a family and was a truly unique and amazing athlete.

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