



I Just Ran: Percy Williams, World's Fastest Human

Samuel Hawley

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At the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics an unknown Vancouver runner named Percy Williams shocked the sports world by capturing the 100- and 200-metre gold medals. Some said the feat was a fluke. It wasn't. In 1929 Percy silenced naysayers by sweeping the US indoor track circuit, then he went on to set a world record in the 100 metres that would stand until the arrival of Jesse Owens. And in between he waged a speed duel with the fleetest men on the planet, a battle for track supremacy and the title "World's Fastest Human." Based on extensive research that included access to Percy's private letters, diary and scrapbooks, I Just Ran is the first full-length account of this sports legend, one of the most famous Canadians of his day but now largely forgotten. It begins as the Cinderella story of a youth who conquers a sport dominated by American sprinters. Then it gets grittier, for success and fame had a dark side. I Just Ran follows Percy and his janitor-coach Bob Granger as they journey through the world of elite running in the 1920s and '30s — a world that was not always pretty beneath the veneer of amateurism.



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