

**MADELINE
MANNING
MIMS
1948-**



**MIRACLE
ACROSS
FINISH
LINE**

At the 2020 Tokyo Olympics recently, Athing Mu became the first American woman to win the gold medal in the 800 meters in more than a half-century. It brought back memories of Madeline Manning's amazing victory at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics.

Madeline Manning was born in Cleveland in January 1948. At age three, she was diagnosed with spinal meningitis and not expected to live. Sick of being sick, she stopped reporting her illness to anyone. It took fourteen years to outgrow it.

After her scores set national standards in President Kennedy's Physical Fitness program in the 1960s, Madeline was put on the basketball, volleyball and track teams in the eleventh grade. She was spotted by a Hungarian coach in Cleveland who coached her. In 1965, she won her first national title in the 440-yard run at the girls' AAU championships and was named to the United States team that competed in meets against Russia, Poland, and West Germany.

While attending Tennessee State University, she met TSU alumna and 1960 gold-medalist Wilma Rudolph. "You are ready for that gold medal – now go out and get it," Rudolph told her. As the Olympics approached, she received hate mail to move out of the way and let white girls compete. At the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, Manning met 1936 Berlin Olympics star Jesse Owens who also told her to go get the gold medal. Both of these icons had a huge impact on Manning.

She became the first American to win the gold medal in the 800 meters. She married John Jackson in 1969 but it was an abusive relationship. As a single mother at the 1972 Munich Olympics, she won a silver medal in the 4x400 relay. Some of the women's track team were standing nearby when Palestinian terrorists seized the Israeli team. When they realized what was happening, they fled back inside their dorm. This experience, and helping her teammates cope, led to Manning's calling as an athletic chaplain.

After competing in the 1976 Montreal Olympics, Madeline and her son moved to Tulsa, where she served as a chaplain for the WNBA Tulsa Shock. In December 1978, she married Roderick Sims, whom she had met in Cleveland. In 1979 Madeline began her Masters of Divinity at Oral Roberts University, while training for the boycotted 1980 Moscow Olympics. She finished her degree and also a Doctorate of Ministry in sports chaplaincy.

At a 1980s track meet, a Nigerian official complemented Madeline for opening doors for women of color all over the world. Before then, she had no idea the broad impact of winning that gold medal. She founded the United States Council for Sports Chaplaincy and was a chaplain at the 1988 Seoul, 1992 Barcelona, 1996 Atlanta, 2000 Sydney, 2004 Athens, and 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, providing spiritual guidance to athletes.

In 1984, she was inducted into the U. S. National Track and Field Hall of Fame. At the 2000 Sydney Olympics, Mims was honored as an Olympic Legend in the stadium. She became an author, speaker and contemporary Gospel artist who was inducted into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame in 2005.

As Mims watched the 800-meter race at the Tokyo Olympics, she thought back on her landmark Olympic run in 1968. "I've been waiting for 53 years for an American woman to rise up."