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Athletics Records -

1. 100 Meters

Usain Bolt, Jamaica, 9.58. Bolt, who was once a 200-meter specialist, broke the 100-meter world mark for the third time during a thrilling showdown with Tyson Gay at the World Outdoor Championships in Berlin on Aug. 16, 2009. The Jamaican pulled ahead of Gay early in the race and never let up, finishing in 9.58 seconds. The victory came exactly one year after Bolt broke the record for the second time, winning the 2008 Olympic gold medal in 9.69.

2. 200 Meters

Usain Bolt, Jamaica, 19.19. Bolt broke his own world mark at the 2009 World Outdoor Track & Field Championships, where he finished in 19.19 seconds on Aug. 20. He first broke Michael Johnson's 12-year-old mark during the Olympic final exactly one year earlier, finishing in 19.30 seconds while running into a slight headwind (0.9 kilometers per hour).

3. 400 Meters

Michael Johnson, USA, 43.18. Many expected Johnson to eventually break Butch Reynolds' mark of 43.29 seconds, set in 1988, but 1999 seemed an unlikely year for the record to fall. Johnson suffered from leg injuries that season, missed the U.S. Championships and ran only four 400-meter races before the World Championships (where he gained an automatic entry as the defending champ). By the day of the World final, however, it was apparent that Johnson was in top form and that Reynolds' record was in jeopardy. Johnson pulled away from the pack in mid-race and sprinted into the history books.

4. 800 Meters

David Rudisha, Kenya, 1:41.01. Former record-holder Wilson Kipketer (1:41.11) once told David Rudisha that he could be the one to break Kipketer's mark. Kipketer was right. Rudisha broke the record on Aug. 22, 2010, running 1:41.09 in Berlin. One week later, on Aug. 29, Rudisha lowered the mark to 1:41.01 at the IAAF World Challenge meet in Rieti, Italy. Rudisha followed his pacesetter through quick opening laps in both runs (48.2 seconds in Rieti), then nearly maintained his speed over the final 400 meters.

5. 1,000 Meters

Noah Ngeny, Kenya, 2:11.96. Noah Ngeny broke Sebastian Coe's 18-year-old world mark in a time of 2:11.96 at Rieti, Italy, on Sept. 5, 1999. The record hasn't been seriously challenged since.

6. 1,500 Meters

Hicham El Guerrouj, Morocco, 3:26.00. Hicham El Guerrouj was virtually alone when he completed his record-setting 1,500-meter effort of 3:26.00 on July 14, 1998, in Rome. Previously, Algerian Noureddine Morceli had run the four fastest 1,500s in history, with El Guerrouj fifth.

7. One Mile

Hicham El Guerrouj, Morocco, 3:43.13. The mile isn't run in the Olympics or the world championships. But it still captures people's attention, even though the record has been unchanged since Morocco's Hicham El Guerrouj won a brilliant battle with Noah Ngeny on July 7, 1999, in Rome's Olympic Stadium. With Ngeny virtually on his heels down the stretch, El Guerrouj broke the mile record with a time of 3:43.13. Ngeny's time of 3:43.40 remains the second fastest mile.

8. 2,000 Meters

Hicham El Guerrouj, Morocco, 4:44.79. On Sept. 7, 1999, Morocco's Hicham El Guerrouj capped a two-season assault on the record book by setting his third world mark – all previously held by Noureddine Morceli – while winning the 2,000 meters in 4:44.79. El Guerrouj topped Morceli's old record by more than three seconds.

9. 3,000 Meters

Daniel Komen, Kenya, 7:20.67. Daniel Komen couldn't qualify for his country's Olympic team in 1996 – he was fourth in Kenya's 5,000-meter trials – but shortly after the Atlanta Games he shattered Noureddine Morceli's 3,000-meter world record by 4.4 seconds, with a time of 7:20.67, in Rieta, Italy on Sept. 1, 1996.

10. 5,000 Meters

Kenenisa Bekele, Ethiopia, 12:37.35. Kenenisa Bekele took two seconds off the 5,000-meter record with a time of 12:37.35 set in Hengelo, The Netherlands on May 31, 2004. Kenyan David Kiplak set the pace for about half the race, leaving Bekele to attack the record on his own thereafter. Bekele was more than one second behind the record pace entering the final lap, but finished the lap in 57.85 seconds to earn the prize.
