

Running. Anyone can do it. It is quite possibly the purest, simplest, sporting activity in the world. So it may come as a surprise to many people to discover how radically recent advances in technology have demonstrated the ways that a Pentium processor, and a one-part-per-million oscillator chip, can improve the sport.

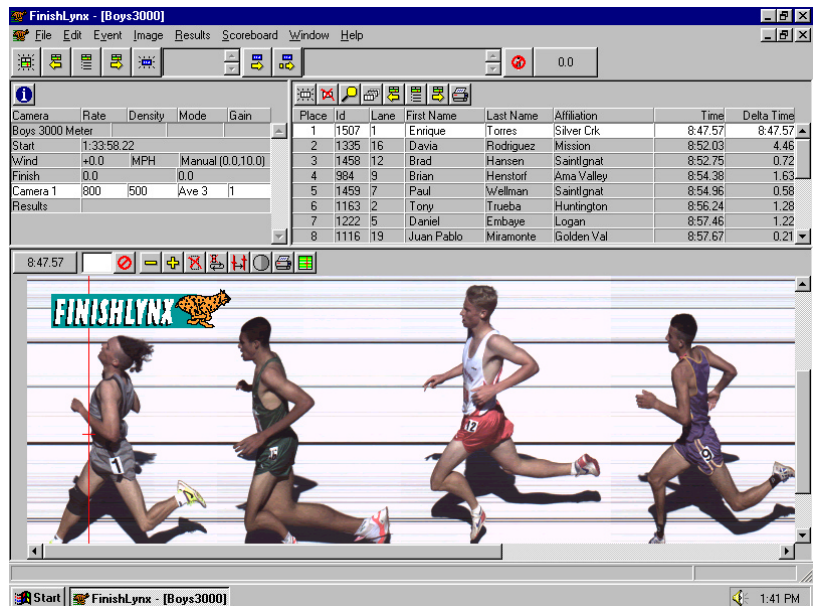
Athletics revolves around one elegantly simple question: "Who is fastest?" There are no marks for style - if there were, maybe Michael Johnson wouldn't be world champion. There are no marks for strategy - unless it gets you to the line first. "Who won?" and, "By how much?" are the issues that motivate athletes, officials and spectators around the globe.

So how does this new technology help answer these questions? Well, the latest and greatest versions of it give athletes accurate times within seconds of crossing the finishline; they help officials make tough calls, and resolve disputes; they provide fast results via scoreboards to spectators in the stands, and they can use the Internet to feed accurate results to followers of the sport across the country or around the globe.

Fast, accurate results - available anywhere. This is the power that the new digital sports timing technology has, and the incarnation of this technology which is most radically improving the landscape of sports events comes from Lynx System Developers, Inc..

Heads have been turning in this US-based company's direction ever since the debut in January of 1997 of EtherLynx2000. Etherlynx 2000 is the latest product from Lynx which has been a world leader in the field for years. Because of its power, reliability, and ease of use, EtherLynx 2000 is already the system of choice for the horse racing industry in Australia, and it has captured the attention of sports fans in other sports at all levels - from the smallest track clubs to the organizers of World Championships.

An EtherLynx 2000 system is the latest in photo-finish equipment. It uses a custom designed digital camera to take time-index images of the competitors crossing the finishline. These pictures are displayed instantly on a computer monitor. An operator simply assigns times and places to the competitors with a click of the mouse button. The system can produce times with a space-age precision of 5×10^{-4} sec, and with an accuracy of ± 1 part per million.



There are, however, other timing systems which claim to do the same things. So what sets the Lynx system apart? There are basically four factors: first, EtherLynx 2000 can do things which no other system can do; second, the system can display results instantly on scoreboards manufactured by more than a dozen different companies; third, it is really easy to operate; and fourth, (and - perhaps - the most important) it is affordable.

With its ability to handle multiple races taking place at the same time, one thing that an EtherLynx 2000 system is uniquely able to do relates to distance events. Too often athletes in the 10,000 meters have been denied the chance to compete because their race ties up the track for half an hour or so. With the Lynx system, a meet director can start the 10,000, cone off lanes one and two for that race, and then use the remaining lanes for sprint races - and still get Fully Automatic Times for all the races. Athletes get to compete, and spectators get non-stop action.

In spite of the initial outlay involved in purchasing a Lynx event management system, high school operators in the US have been recouping their investment in a hurry. Attached to a printer the system can produce images of the athletes; one US high school operator generated \$1,800 at a single meet. And in the process he provided many parents with a unique souvenir of their child's achievements.

Nobody knows what advances in sports technology the children in those pictures will see in their lifetimes, but anyone who has seen what is available *now* knows that the question, "Who was fastest?" can be answered with greater accuracy and speed than ever before.