

## *Jesse Holt, Jr.*

### *Biography*

Jesse Holt, Jr., the oldest of seven children of Jesse and Roberta Holt, was born in 1943 in a southwest Georgia, country town (Shellman, GA.). His early years were spent in a one-bedroom, concrete-block home that his father built, all by himself. He was born during World War II while his father was away serving in the US Navy, fighting in the South Pacific. When he returned from the war, he built his family that home.

Jesse's family moved from Shellman, Georgia to Miami, Florida in 1953. Jesse Jr. grew up in Miami's Overtown. He attended Dunbar Elementary and still remembers the school's song. At Miami's Booker T. Washington Jr. and Sr. High School, he excelled in football, and in Track & Field, and especially in the sprint dashes. Jesse ran the 100 yard dash in 9.5 seconds and as a result of his speed and dedication to the sport, he amassed many First Time Honors in the process. In 1960, he became the first African American athlete allowed to compete in Age Group Track & Field competitions against Whites in South Florida while running for the famous Florida Athletic Club. In 1961, Jesse also became the first African American to make the All-Dade County High School Track Team. Jesse was one of the fastest runners in the world.

He won an athletic scholarship to Grambling State University in Louisiana, where he competed against some of the best known sprinters in the world. Athletes like: Bob Hayes, the 1964 Olympic Champion and the World's Fastest Human; Jim Hines, the 1968 Olympic Champion; Olympians Charlie Green, Mel Pender, George Anderson, Stone Johnson and Richard Stebbings; and in 1964, Jesse competed in the United States Olympic Trials. In 1965, he graduated from Grambling State and returned to Miami, Florida. In 1967 – 69, Jesse played for the Oakland Raiders and the Boston Patriots of the American Football League.

While at Grambling State, Jesse also met his wife, Claudette. They raised four children: Alan, a graduate of the University of Minnesota; Reggie, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and a former member of the Green Bay Packers; Darren, a graduate of Florida International University; Neferteri, a graduate of Kaiser University in Miami, Florida.

In 1976, Jesse founded the Miami Northwest Express Track Club and began hosting the annual "Northwest Track and Field Classic." This Track Meet is a major amateur sports event that is sanctioned by the USA Track and Field Association and involves more than 2000 age group participants each year from the US, the Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Mexico, Puerto Rico, West Germany and the US Virgin Islands.

On October 16, 2016 Jesse Holt died and passed the legacy and tradition on to his sons, Alan, Reginald and Darren Holt.

**Special Honors, Awards and Recognition**

South Florida Track & Field Association "Coach of the Year" 1995-1999  
National Age Group Track & Field Association "Coach of the Year" 1990; 1995-1998  
Black Role Model of the Year; March 5, 1993  
The Miami Herald Spirit of Excellence Award; September 11, 1990  
Florida Athletic Congress "President's Award" September 23, 1989  
Rotary International Award; June 1987  
Coordinated the US and West Germany Cultural Exchange Project for 23 youth; 1982