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## Lynch Cooper: the first Aboriginal World's Sprinting Champion

On this day, February 24th, in 1929, Lynch Cooper, the son of prominent Aboriginal rights campaigner William Cooper, became the first Aboriginal sprinter to win the World's Sprint Championship.

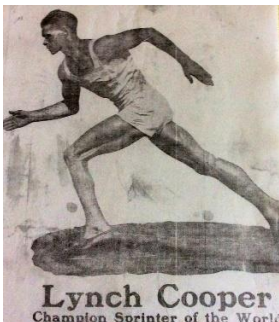
By Luke Pearson



Lynch Cooper (<https://kbonreflection.wordpress.com>)

There is a long history of successful Aboriginal runners in the sporting world; from Robert Kinnear, the first Aboriginal runner to win the Stawell Gift in 1883, and Bobby McDonald, who is credited with being the first person to ever use the crouch start in a race in 1887; through to modern champions like Cathy Freeman and Kyle Vanderkyp.

Lynch Cooper, a Yorta Yorta man, was born in the early 1905 at Moira Lake near Tocumwal and was educated at Mulwala State School. He was a gifted runner from an early age, but did not run professionally until he turned 21. He also had a strong passion for Indigenous rights thanks to the influence of his father, renowned Aboriginal rights campaigner, William Cooper, who established the Aborigines' Advancement League, famously petitioned the king of England for Indigenous rights, and also [campaigned against Nazi Germany](#). Lynch acted as Secretary for his father's Victorian Aboriginal Society, and later in life became president of the Aborigines' Progressive Association.



Winning many local and state races in his early career, he aspired to win the Stawell Gift, commonly known as 'Australia's richest footrace'. This goal alluded him for several years until he was finally successful in 1928. He won a prize of 250 pounds for his win, but is [reported to have won around 3000 pounds](#) in bets he placed on himself.

Cooper continued to run for many years after this, although never again reaching the heights of his world title victory. After his retirement he remained active in sport training a number of runners and football players.

He was an original inductee in the [Aboriginal Sports Hall of Fame](#) and is believed to be the first Aboriginal person to win a world title in any sport.

Lynch Cooper passed away in 1971.