

THE BARTON SERIES

BARTON AND THE HOUSE OF GREEN



BY

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(Ages 8 and over)

BARTON AND THE HOUSE OF GREEN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STORY	PAGE
(1) THE DAY OF THE CHAMPIONS	9
(2) THE OPENING	14
(3) THE MANAGER	20
(4) HOP, SLIP AND JUMP	29
(5) THE CALCULATION RACE	37
(6) ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL	48

HOP, SLIP AND JUMP

The sports events at Barton's school were keenly contested. As the day of exciting races and other events progressed, each House held the lead for short periods. Then, they succumbed to another House shortly after. This trend continued throughout the day, and which was now about one-quarter of the way through. However, the see-saw position of leadership only added to the great anxiety, hope, and expectations, among both the spectators and the competing athletes.

Only one of the events for which Barton had been entered had gone so far. In this event, he had won the gold medal in the prestigious 'Boys one hundred metre race.' Barton's self-appointed coach and manager, Kwame, had kept his company for most of the day so far.

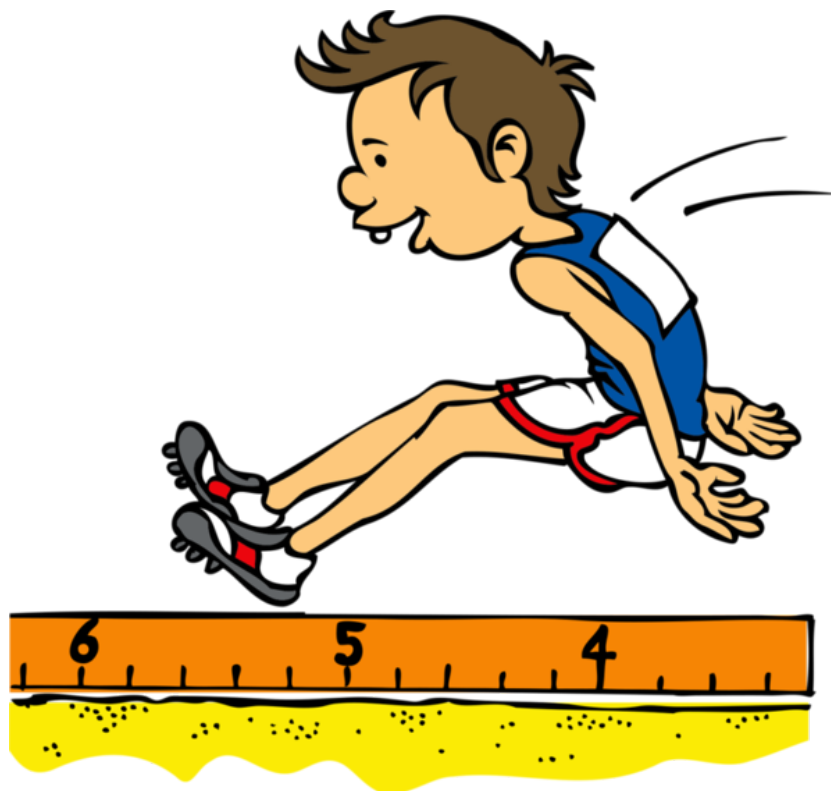
Together, they watched the sack race and some of the junior running events. They cheered and encouraged the younger athletes as they sought pride and glory for themselves and their respective houses.



There were also a few running races for only girls and a few other events that were for a mixture of both boys and girls. The entire crowd of happy and well-entertained onlookers cheered loudly after each event and there seemed to be no shortage of supporters in any event. Members of all the Houses were exemplary and congratulated and cheered the winners of the other Houses when they won or placed.

Barton's House of green fluctuated from the top position and down to the fourth place and which at this time they now held. However, only a few points separated all of the four Houses on the regularly changing standings. Barton and the rest of the supporters of the 'Green House' were rather anxious to see their standing improve. Maybe something positive might take place at the next event, they thought.

The long jump event was announced and Barton was carded as one of the participants. He had practised long and hard for this event and all of it under the keen eyes of Coach Kwame. Barton was considered one of the favourites to win and he certainly was quite confident. Quietly, both coach and athlete walked across to the starter, who gave the final instructions.



“Each of the five competing athletes will have three jumps,” she said. “The score, which determines the top three positions, will be based on their total measure on all three jumps, that is, the cumulative or total distance covered.”

All the participants knew this to be the rule, but each nodded in full agreement and understanding when reminded of it.

As the long jump event was about to begin, many of the spectators came down from the stands to witness it from a closer vantage point. The athletes were numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, with Barton bearing the number 2. The athletes would perform their jumps in the same order as their number.

The crowd stood nearby and clapped each jump made. Kwame followed nearby gesticulating and shouting, but he was barely audible above the sounds made by the other spectators. It was unsure as to whether or not Barton could hear him, but Kwame continued nonetheless.

“Leap at an angle of forty-five degrees to the ground,” he would tell Barton during training. “You would get the longest leap.”

The truth was that Kwame had read this fact in a science book. Though he did not quite understand why this was to be, he insisted on imparting this valuable bit of knowledge to Barton. The rule, though, seemed to bring reward and Barton was glad to know about it.

Kwame was indeed turning out to be a rather good coach, thought Barton. Never would he have guessed this about his portly friend, especially as Kwame generally showed little interest in sports.

Barton’s first jump was a distance of 3 metres and 40 centimetres. Kwame jumped up and down in glee. He laughed and clapped, for this distance was even a greater distance than Barton ever attained during the practice sessions.

However, it was athlete number six, who jumped 3 metres and 50 centimetres, that caused quite a stir among the crowd and especially Kwame.

And so, at the end of the first round, Barton was second and athlete number six was first. The atmosphere was tense as the second round started with all eyes focused on the two leaders.

Kwame rushed up to Barton and spoke with him as they walked back to the starting point.

“Barton,” he said, “I still think you could jump a greater distance.”

Kwame paused and looked at his friend, who did not respond. However, Kwame continued speaking to his silent gladiator.

“I think you need to increase the angle just a little bit more, the angle between you and the ground, I want it to be just about forty-five degrees.”

“I shall try,” was Barton’s short response.

An observant Kwame was poised on the side of the sandpit in which Barton would land after his jump. He watched Barton take off with great speed, run and leap into the air. The angle of Barton’s leap from the ground looked like forty-five degrees to Kwame. There was a loud sound of cheering from the crowd as the length of the jump seemed longer than that of the number six jumper who had previously leapt a distance of 3 metres and 50 centimetres.

Kwame walked closer to the judge who was measuring the distance. Barton sat quietly in the sand for a few seconds and waited.

“Three metres and seventy-five centimetres,” shouted the judge as the crowd roared and yelled.

Kwame shook his fist and grinned.

All looked on at the rest of the jumpers but waited on Barton’s now closest rival, jumper number six. All eyes were focused on him and the boy seemed rather nervous. He started his run, stopped suddenly and was allowed to restart.

“You will be disqualified if this occurs again,” said the judge at the starting point.

The boy who wore the number six nodded.

He took off again and jumped, landing in the soft sand and somersaulted a few feet away.

There were some cheers among the crowd, but there were mostly sighs of disappointment. The jump was three metres and ten centimetres. Kwame was seen with his notepad and pencil in hand.

The other four jumpers occupied the positions of third, fourth, fifth, and sixth. It was still a battle for supremacy between Barton and jumper number six.

Kwame's scores on his notepad read:

Jumper Number 1:-

Jump 1- 2 metres 80 cm

Jump 2- 2 metres 90 cm

Total = 5 metres 70 cm

Jumper Number 2: - My friend, Barton

Jump 1- 3 metres 40 cm

Jump 2- 3 metres 75 cm

Total = 7 metres 15 cm

Jumper Number 3:-

Jump 1- 3 metres 10 cm

Jump 2- 3 metres 05 cm

Total = 6 metres 15 cm

Jumper Number 4:-

Jump 1- 3 metres 00 cm

Jump 2- 3 metres 05 cm

Total = 6 metres 05 cm

Jumper Number 5:-

Jump 1- 3 metres 00 cm

Jump 2- 3 metres 00 cm

Total = 6 metres 00 cm

Jumper Number 6: - Barton's threat

Jump 1- 3 metres 50 cm

Jump 2- 3 metres 10 cm

Total = 6 metres 60 cm

Barton leads by: $7\text{ m }15\text{ cm} - 6\text{ m }60\text{ cm} = 0\text{ m }55\text{ cm}$, wrote Kwame. Now it was time for the third and final round.

“You lead by 55 cm, Barton,” informed Kwame.

Barton nodded with just a little smile, as he headed off to the starting point to await his turn.

Barton was quick off the block and had a beautiful start. He gained speed and approached the line from which he would make the leap for his final jump and which promised to be good. Then, Kwame looked on in horror at what he saw. Someone had accidentally spilt some water on the very spot where Barton's feet landed and from which he would make the final leap.

Barton's right shoe skidded and he lost much of his thrust power. Poor Barton landed almost out of the sandpit. His jump was not good and he knew it. The disappointment was shown on his face.

"Unfair, unfair," yelled Kwame. The judges looked at the spilt water and ordered a quick mopping up of it with some dry dirt. Sadly, they could not give Barton another try. The judge and the assistants apologised to Barton, as they measured the distance of his jump as being 2 metres 90 centimetres.

Kwame was livid and kept protesting but to no avail. Beads of sweat poured down his face and he sounded slightly hoarse. He grabbed his notepad and made a few calculations which he showed to Barton.

In their final turn, the total lengths attained by the other jumpers, numbers one, three, four, and five still fell below Barton's total.

"The challenge you have for gold is from number six, whom you led by 55 cm," said Kwame, watching his calculations as he spoke with a quiet Barton.

"He draws level with you with a jump of $2\text{ m }90\text{ cm} + 55\text{ cm} = 3\text{ m }45\text{ cm}$. He is defeated by you with a jump of less than $3\text{ m }45\text{ cm}$ and wins the silver medal, with you getting gold. He wins the gold medal with a jump of more than $3\text{ m }45\text{ cm}$ and with you getting the silver.

The loud crowd was reduced to a whisper as the number six athlete positioned himself at the starting point. He slowly and cautiously readied himself for his third and final jump. His concentration was deep and a few of number six's friends patted him gently on the shoulder before moving off.

The number six athlete catapulted from the starting block with grit and determination. It was a powerful run and a powerful leap from the line. There was no water spill to inhibit his great leap, like what had happened to Barton.

It was a great jump and Barton and Kwame could only look on and listen in dismay as the judges measured the distance.

"The length of the jump is 3 metres and 46 centimetres," they announced. Loud cheers erupted from the crowd as they heralded the champion of the long jump.

Barton was one of the first to congratulate him.

“You have done well,” he said to the boy, shaking his hand.

“Thanks,” replied the boy, as he held Barton’s hand and gave it a slight squeeze. “I was lucky and you were not.”