



James Pinion, treasurer of the Jesse Owens Memorial Park board of directors, right, answers questions for an Alabama Public Television program about the life and career of Jesse Owens.

# On Track

## Grant may fund track for Owens Park

By Ginger Grantham  
News Editor

This year is the Years of Sports in Alabama. With the Summer Olympics being staged in China, there could be no better time to apply for a grant to honor Jesse Owens, one of the greatest track stars of all time, and a Lawrence County native.

James Pinion, treasurer of the Jesse Owens Memorial Park Board of Directors, said the directors have applied for a \$250,000 grant from U.S. Representative Bud Cramer's office to build a 400-meter track that will commemorate Owens' achievements.

Development on the Jesse Owens Park began in 1991 with Pinion and Oakville resident Thermon White helping raise more than \$2 million. The original plan for the park was designed by Auburn University tourism specialist Tom Chestnut. The only major part of

the plan not complete is the track.

Pinion says the park and museum draw thousands of visitors each year. People come from all over the world to visit the park and pay tribute to Owens. The guest register shows people visiting from Germany, the Ukraine and England, just to name a few.

The Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel funded the cost of a billboard on I-65 in Cullman which advertises the park, and that has increased visits this summer.

"People come because Jesse Owens is known all over the world for what he did in the 1936 Olympics," Pinion said in a 2006 interview with *The Advertiser*. "Owens' widow, Ruth, once said that Jesse comes alive again every four years when the summer Olympics are held because he is always remembered for his accomplishments."