

seized up, his face wracked in pain, before then hopping and finally collapsing to the ground and rolling over in his lane. Meanwhile his fellow competitors raced on with the British team just edging out the Americans to record a surprise win in front of a home crowd. But even a predominantly British crowd would have had mixed emotions having seen the drama unfold in front of them. On the one side they saw their home team strike gold. On the other, they did not see the man they had flocked in their thousands to experience finish one of the greatest sporting careers in history with a final win.

Bolt refused a wheelchair and instead rose to his feet before limping down the track and across the finish line aided by his three Jamaican teammates who later blamed a combination of the late running of the final and the cold for their talisman's dramatic denouement.

A final sprint relay gold might have been a satisfying manner to end the most stellar of careers but, in truth, the 2017 World Championships were just an after-thought, a farewell roadshow for a man who had nothing to prove with a brand, a record and a reputation that could not be tarnished by defeat.

Three successive Olympic gold medals in both the 100 and 200 metres, four world golds in the 200 metres and a further three in the 100 metres, plus all the relay titles and world records in both sprints. It did not matter a jot.

The sight of Usain Bolt in agony as he lay on the London track may have been disturbing, but not as disturbing for track and field as the thought that the world had just witnessed the end of the career of a man who had almost single-handedly thrust the sport into the global spotlight.

He was, in every sense, irreplaceable. And although Bolt has flirted with other sports since his retirement and embraced some of his other interests – not least music and entrepreneurship – he remains an icon of athletics and of sport, a man who sits at the top table of the greatest sportsmen and women in history, and arguably the most popular entertainer of them all. Now that is some legacy.

