

Track and Field



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The Successor of Avilov

Olympic decathlon champion in 1972 in Munich, the Russian Nikolai Avilov had to be content with third place four years later in Montreal. It does seem, however, that the USSR is in a position to regain world supremacy thanks to Alexander Grebeniuk, by far the best European decathlon athlete in 1977.

A robust 6 ft 2 in (1.88 m) tall and weighing 207 lb (94 kg), Alexander Grebeniuk won the individual final of the European Cup in Lille. On that occasion, for the fourth time in the season he scored more than the 8,000 pts "barrier" (8,252) that he had cleared for the first time in 1972.

In 1975, an injury prevented him from taking part in any decathlon competitions, but this break was beneficial to him in the end since, in 1976, he gained his place in the team for the Olympics with 8,330 pts before improving Avilov's European record: 8,454 pts set at the Olympics in Munich. The 8,478 pts scored by Grebeniuk at Talence (France) were not, however, officially recognized, for the races had been timed manually. Grebeniuk's great strength is his steadiness in all the disciplines of the decathlon.

His best results in a decathlon have been 14.3 sec in the 110-m hurdles (926 pts), 4.70 m in the pole vault (981) and 73.04 m in the javelin (914). His only relatively weak point is the 1,500 m. He has never managed it in less than 4 min 27 sec while, when he established the world record, the American Bruce Jenner was credited with 4 min 12.6 sec, a difference of more than 100 pts.

The only shadow on the picture for Grebeniuk in 1977: he had to settle for second place, behind the American Fred Dixon, in the USA-USSR-Canada match at Bloomington (8,114 pts against 8,392, by electric timing).

ALEXANDER GREBENIUK

Born May 22, 1951, at Sochi, USSR

AWARDS AND RECORDS

EC 1977: gold medal with 8,252 pts
ECH 1978: gold medal with 8,340 pts
European records (with manual timing for the races, thus not officially recognized): 8,468 pts in 1976 at Talence, 8,478 pts in 1977 at Riga
His progress:
1969: 6,998 pts; 1970: 7,503 pts; 1971: 7,527 pts;
1972: 8,005 pts; 1973: 7,578 pts; 1974: 7,884 pts;
1975: injured; 1976: 8,468 pts; 1977: 8,478 pts

Alexander Grebeniuk (here throwing the discus): the 1,500 m is his only weak point