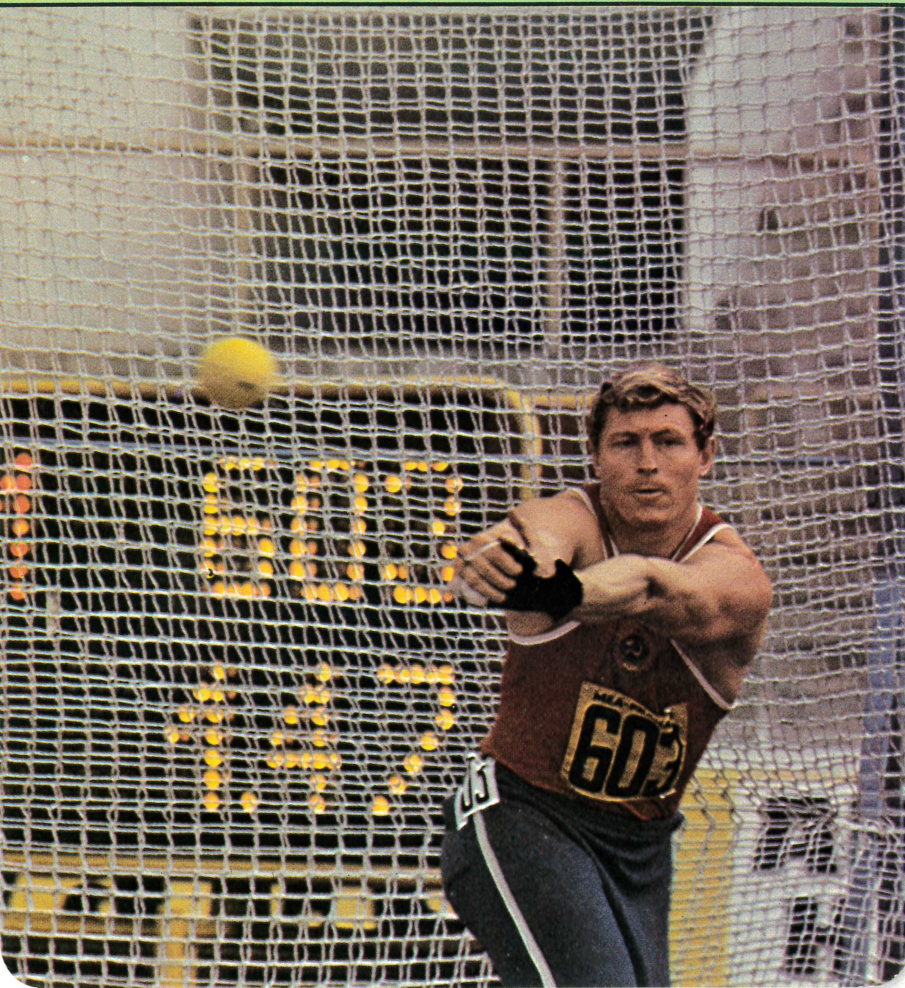


# Track and Field



*Boris Zaichuk*



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## Boris Zaichuk

### *An Historic Feat from a Complete Outsider*

The news that a completely unknown athlete had thrown the hammer farther than 80 m (262' 5 1/2'') dropped on various European sports desks on the evening of July 9, 1978 like a minor thunderbolt. The athlete in question was Boris Zaichuk, unknown because he had seldom participated in international athletics meetings, and the occasion was the Moscow Athletics Championships. Zaichuk, as athletic correspondents hastened to inform their readers, was nearly 31 and Vassili Voronkin was his trainer. Not that a new hammer record was entirely unexpected. East German, West German and Russian athletes had been nudging the magical 80 m mark too often for the odds not to be in favor of the hammer landing beyond it. But no-one imagined the feat would be performed by such a dark horse at Zaichuk.

With hindsight though Zaichuk's world-beating throw was not so surprising. In 1977 he was ranked third best hammer thrower in the world, with a throw of 76.50 (251'). No less than seven Russians appeared in the list of the world's top ten hammer throwers that year. In such a rich environment the

emergence of a world recordholder was predictable. In 1976 Zaichuk ranked a lowly eleventh in the world; the Soviet team actually did without him at the Montreal Olympics such was their excess of talent—all three medals in the hammer went to Russians. And in 1974 Zaichuk was not even in the world's top fifty hammer throwers. A classic example of the late developer, Zaichuk began his athletics career in 1964.

His first international selection was in 1977 for the USSR v. West Germany meeting. Compared with his fellow contestants, most of whom are gargantuan in stature, Zaichuk is a positive Tom Thumb (height 6 ft 1 in, weight 187 lb). He compensates this handicap by speed of execution.

#### **BORIS ZAICHUK**

Born Aug. 28, 1947, in Moscow

#### **AWARDS AND RECORDS**

1977 University Games at Sofia, Bulgaria: bronze medal with a throw of 74.50 m

World record: 80.14 m (262'11'') on July 9, 1978, in Moscow

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