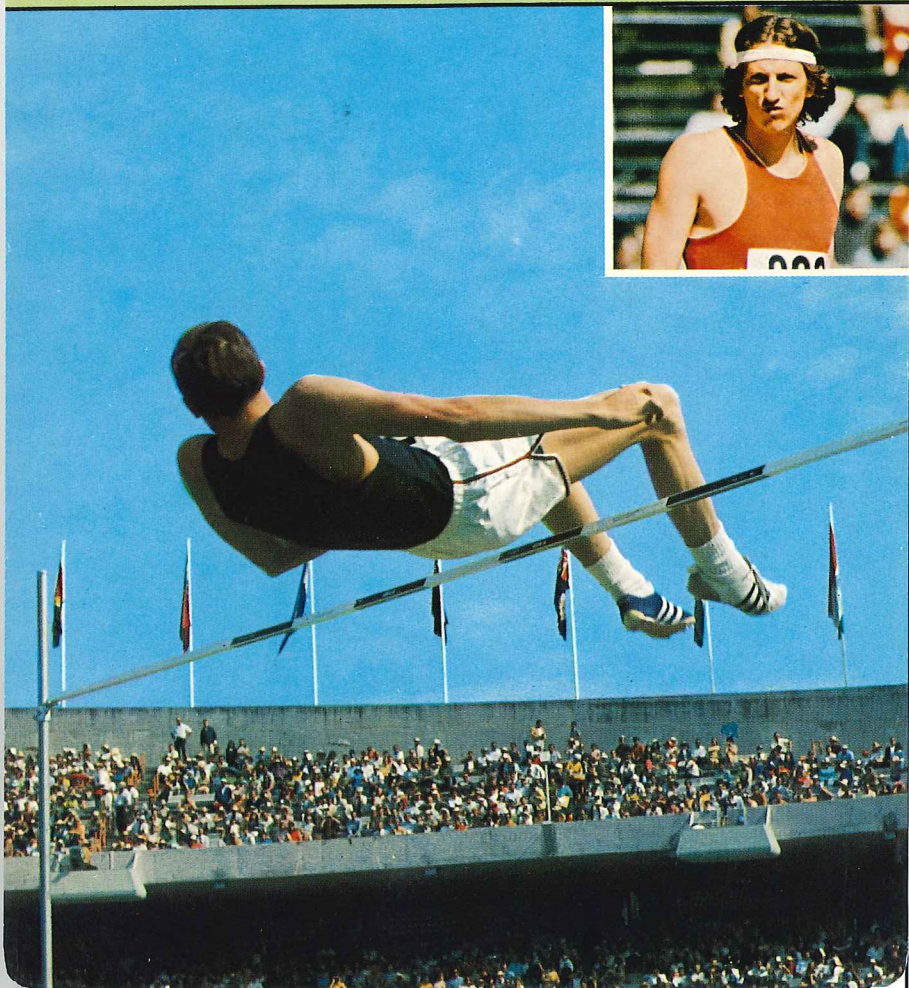


# Track and Field



*Dick Fosbury*



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## Dick Fosbury

### *Innovator as Well as Athlete*

High jumpers have traditionally tended to follow their natural instincts and jump facing forwards, but there have always been those seeking to improve their performance by adopting new styles. The best-known jumping styles are the scissors, Western roll, and the straddle, which is still frequently used in competition. But for a long time, techniques did not change very much. On Sunday, October 20, 1968 in Mexico City, the finals of the Olympic high jump event took place. Among the qualifiers was the American Dick Fosbury. He was known as an originator but was not always taken very seriously, although there were those who believed in his abilities. So, on this sunny Sunday, Dick Fosbury was about to astonish 80,000 spectators and many millions of television viewers into the bargain. The tall American (6 ft 4 in) had positioned himself on the run-up area facing the bar, and at some distance from it. The other competitors, who for the most part jumped using the classical straddle, started from either the right or the left side, depending on which they preferred. Then the jump-off began.

Clenching his fists, Fosbury begins his run-up with chest thrown back, as though about to deliver a speech; running fast, very fast, he approaches at a tangent and makes a half-turn onto his preferred foot (his right), clears the crossbar on his back, his body arched, head first, and drops, apparently onto his neck, on the thick foam mattress. Dick Fosbury cleared successively 6 ft 7½ in, 6 ft 10¼ in, 7 ft 0¼ in, 7 ft 1¾ in, 7 ft 2½ in and 7 ft 3¼ in, with his first jump. He finally jumped 7 ft 4¼ in with his third attempt. Fosbury was the new Olympic champion.

From that day on, Fosbury's name became synonymous with his particular style, the "Fosbury flop", a style which is now taught all over the world and which has enabled a great number of athletes, both men and women, to improve on their performance.

#### DICK FOSBURY

Born March 6, 1947, at Portland, Oreg.

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

1968 OG: gold medal in high jump, with 7 ft 4¼ in

*The introduction of a revolutionary high jumping style in Mexico City*