

# Track and Field



*Faina Melnik*



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## Faina Melnik

### *Is the Discus Too Light for Her?*

Ever since 1946, when the USSR made its first official entry into track and field competition at the European Championships in Brussels, the Soviets have almost completely dominated the women's discus. After Nina Dumbadse, Nina Ponomareva, and Tamara Press came Faina Melnik, who was the first to break the 70 m "barrier" with the discus, which weighs 1 kilogram (2.2 lbs).

While Tamara Press (5' 11" and 220 lbs) could not be described as being particularly feminine in appearance, she and her teammates have managed to impart a definite harmony of motion to their powerful performances. And Melnik has a similar grace. In fact, she makes it look so easy that some experts wonder if the present discus is too light for her. They estimate that with a discus of 1.5 kilograms (3.3 lbs), she could appreciably increase, by centrifugal force, the speed of the discus during the rotation that comes before the actual throw.

Of course Melnik gets plenty of mileage with the standard equipment and her progress has continued unabated since she set her first world

record, 64.22 m (70.64 yards), in 1971 at the European Championships in Helsinki. She threw the discus 70.2 m (77.22 yards) at the Zurich Letzigrund on August 28, 1975.

An Olympic gold medal winner in 1972, and a two-time European Champ, Melnik has stopped counting her victories. Yet her outbursts of joy after each win suggest that no accomplishment is definitive for her. Although she was a favorite at the 1976 Games, Faina was anything but joyful at Montreal. She suffered a case of nerves and only placed fourth, missing out on the bronze medal.

#### FAINA MELNIK

Born June 9, 1945, in Kiev, Ukraine, URS

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

European discus champion, 1971, 1974

1972 OG: gold medal in women's discus

Eleven world records—the latest, 70.5 m at Sochi on April 4, 1976