

Track and Field



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In the Best Polish Tradition

In the 1972 Olympics Annelie Ehrhardt of East Germany won the 80-m hurdles in the new world record time of 12.59 sec, finishing way ahead of her rivals. Performances like hers are the inspiration and the despair of younger athletes. "I never thought I could produce a performance like that" admitted Poland's Grazyna Rabsztyń. But on 10 June 1978 she set a new world record. On the fast track at Furth in West Germany she bettered Ehrhardt's time by 0.11 sec (12.48 sec.).

Rabsztyń began her hurdling career in 1967 at the age of 15 (13.4 sec in the 80-m hurdles). In 1970 she became European junior champion in Paris. In the 1975 indoor European Championships at Katowice in Poland, she trounced the invincible Ehrhardt and within months had beaten her twice more out of doors. Her chances in the 1976 Olympics looked rosy with her East German rival beginning to fade. In June 1976, in the run-up to the Olympics, Grazyna turned in a time of 12.69 sec, faster than any of her Olympic rivals. But when the testing time came, she finished fifth with a time of 12.96 sec. The reason was not far to

seek: on five occasions earlier in the year her training schedule had been interrupted by attacks of angina, and Montreal coincided with a sixth attack.

Grazyna, unembittered by her disappointment, decided to give up competing for a while and devote her intelligence to statistical engineering. Returning to competition in the World Cup at Düsseldorf she beat the Olympic champion, which augurs well for Moscow, though in the final of the European Championship in Prague in 1978 the gremlins intervened yet again—Grazyna lost her balance over the seventh hurdle and fell into the adjacent lane in the path of Morgulina (USSR), for which she was disqualified. The 80-m hurdles final was re-run the following day without her.

GRAZYNA RABSZTYŃ

Born Sept. 20, 1952, in Wrocław, Poland

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1972 OG: 8th in 80-m hurdles in 13.44 sec

1976 OG: 5th in 80-m hurdles in 12.96 sec

World record: 12.48 sec on 10 June 1978 in Furth

Grazyna Rabsztyń (right): bad luck at Montreal and again in Prague