

Track and Field



Ilona Gusenbauer



Track and Field



Ilona Gusenbauer



Better than Yolanda Balas

It was to take ten years of effort to beat the world record in the women's high jump which the Rumanian Yolanda Balas, who cleared 1.91 m (6 ft 3 in) on 16 July 1961 at Sofia, had raised to an inaccessible height. Ilona Gusenbauer managed it at her sixteenth attempt, and this was the chief claim to fame of the pretty Austrian girl, daughter of a Westphalian mother and a Hungarian father.

Having begun to work at athletics at the age of 18, she had never before done anything noteworthy in the great international contests. For though she was very gifted, she was also very temperamental. Eighth in the Mexican Olympics, she was still only seventh in the European Games at Athens. The victory she won at the European Games at Helsinki, shortly before beating Balas' famous record on 4 September 1971, at last rewarded her enormous talent. She was helped by the fact that the knee of her kick-off leg had stopped giving her pain and that she began to benefit from a greater emotional stability (it is said that she once brought her very small daughter with her to a tele-

vision interview although it was 10 o'clock at night, because her husband was unable to accompany her).

Though she was the holder of the women's world record in 1971, Ilona Gusenbauer was not the Olympic champion at Munich. But it was no disgrace to come third. Her career was to stop there. It had been a full career, built on strict training supervised by her husband, who declared, "I have succeeded in making her jump as well as she cooks." The perfection of her style was obvious. So was the perfection of her vital statistics, which compare with those usually seen in beauty competitions: 38-27-37 with a height of 6 ft (1.82 m).

ILONA GUSENBAUER

Born Sept. 16, 1947, in Vienna, Austria

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1968 OG: 8th, with 1.67 m
1972 OG: bronze medal, with 1.88 m
1969 ECH: 7th, with 1.77 m
1971 ECH: gold medal, with 1.87 m
1970 European Women's Indoor Champion, with 1.87 m
World record: 1.92 m on 4 Sept. 1971 in Vienna

Ilona Gusenbauer: sixteenth time lucky