

Track and Field



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Lucky 13

After winning her third Olympic gold medal in Montreal, Irena Kirszenstein Szewinska of Poland decided to end her athletic career and devote herself to motherhood. She was beginning to feel that her son Andrei, born in 1970, was being somewhat neglected by parents who had become part of the athletic jet set. But before she turned in her track shoes, Irena took advantage of her Olympic momentum to rack up just one more world record. On Aug. 6, 1976, at Edinburgh, she ran the 440-yard dash in 51.71 seconds.

Tall and lanky, with periwinkle blue eyes peering out from under a mop of brown curls, Irena performed all over the world during her 12-year career. She made her competitive debut at the age of 15, and three years later she gained the title of European Junior Champion in the 200 m at Warsaw. In 1968 she married news photographer Janusz Szewinska, a former 400 m competitor, and he became her coach in 1972.

Although Irena garnered a total of 13 gold medals in international com-

petition, the high point of her career came at Montreal in 1976. There she not only won an Olympic gold medal in the 400 m, but did it in an incredible world-record time of 49.29 seconds.

IRENA SZEWINSKA

Born May 24, 1946, in Leningrad, USSR
in a refugee camp

AWARDS AND RECORDS

- 1964 OG: gold medal in the 4 x 100 m relay
silver medal in the 200 m
silver medal in the long jump
- 1968 OG: gold medal in the 200 m
bronze medal in the 100 m
- 1972 OG: bronze medal in the 200 m
- 1976 OG: gold medal in the 400 m

European Championships:

- 1966: gold medals in the 200 m, long jump, and
4 x 100 m relay
silver medal in the 100 m
- 1971: bronze medal in the 200 m
- 1974: gold medals in the 100 m and 200 m
bronze medal in the 4 x 100 m relay

World Records: 100 m in 11.1; 200 m in 22.5; 400 m
in 49.29; 440 yards in 51.71; 4 x 100 m in 43.6

She ran the 200 m in 22 seconds on June 13, 1974,
in Potsdam, but this world record was unofficial
because of problems with the timing