

Track and Field



Micheline Ostermeyer



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Varied Performances

At the age of 25, Micheline Ostermeyer won two gold medals during the 1948 Olympics when she threw the shot 13.75 m and the discus 41.92 m. She also won a bronze medal in the high jump (1.61 m). Two years earlier, this tall, impressively-built girl had obtained first prize for piano at the Paris Conservatoire. A most unusual lady.

During the winter which preceded her triumph at the London Olympics, Micheline Ostermeyer had suffered a nervous breakdown due to the large number of concerts she was giving. For five years, her varied talents, which dated back to 1926 in the case of music, but which did not come to the fore until she was 23 in the case of athletics, had to be catered for side by side. Sometimes this was relatively simple, sometimes not. When asked how playing the piano had helped her sporting career, she replied that it had given her strong biceps.

"Nowadays, women shot putters train by lifting weights. My piano is my weightlifting exercise. I could control my muscles so well that I could have thrown equally well with the left hand." And what did sport do for her piano-

playing? 'It helped me rest my mind. Sometimes I used to have a workout just before a recital so as to arrive relaxed.' A pianist who omitted more dynamic works from her repertoire, Micheline Ostermeyer was not wholly accepted by the music-loving public, but she none the less practised the piano for five hours daily. The same number of hours, but weekly, she spent in physical training. She was a brilliant all-round athlete and did equally well in the pentathlon. She trained simply for the pleasure of it and remains to this day the only Frenchwoman to have won an Olympic gold medal in either the shot-put or the discus events.

MICHELINE OSTERMEYER

Born Dec. 23, 1922, at Rang-du-Fliers, FRA

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1948 OG: gold medal in shot put with 13.75 m
gold medal in discus with 41.92 m
bronze medal in high jump with 1.61 m

Universities champion in shot-put and high jump, 1947

9 times winner of French championship
19 times French record holder (once for high jump, once in the 80 m hurdles, 4 times in discus event, 10 times in shot-put, 3 times in pentathlon)
Improved French shot-put record from 11.88 m to 13.78 m, and that for the discus from 41.92 m to 44.40 m)