

Track and Field



Rosemarie Ackermann



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Over her Head

Sixty-five years after the American George Horine first achieved this feat, a woman athlete jumped as high as 2 meters (6' 6¾") on August 26, 1977, in West Berlin, the East German Rosemarie Ackermann was the first woman to clear this height. In only one try, she bettered the world record, by 3 cm, which she held since 1974, improving it to 1.97 m twelve days earlier at the European Cup finals.

Being skilled in the straddle technique, Rosemarie jumped 25 cm above her own height, which constitutes another world record. Her feat came as a surprise to her: "I thought that the first woman to clear 2 meters would be taller than I."

It was not without difficulty that Rosemarie Witschas, who became Rosemarie Ackermann on her marriage in 1974 to a pentathlon athlete, reached the top in her field. In 1970 she was forced to stop training for several months following an attack of viral hepatitis.

Her international career as a matter of fact began with the Munich OG in 1972, when she finished 7th with 1.85 m. Since then, she has gone ahead in leaps

and bounds, improving the world record from 1.94 m to 2 m between 1974 to 1977. And ten years had elapsed before Romanian Yolanda Balas's record (1.91 m in 1961) was beaten by one centimeter.

In March 1977, an injury sustained at the European Indoor Championships at San Sebastian forced Rosemarie to stop, thus losing her European title. Once again, this enforced break was a beneficial one: by the time she returned to the international scene on July 3, 1977, in Dresden, she had matched her own world record, clearing 1.95.

ROSEMARIE ACKERMANN

Born April 4, 1952, in Losha, East Germany

AWARDS AND RECORDS

Olympics 1976: gold medal
European Cup 1974: gold medal
European Cup indoor: gold medal 1974, 1975, 1976
World Cup winner in 1977 at Düsseldorf
Progress:
1968 (16 years old): 1.71 m; 1969: 1.76 m; 1970: 1.77 m; 1971: 1.81 m; 1972: 1.85 m; 1973: 1.88 m; 1974: 1.95 m; 1975: 1.94 m; 1976: 1.96 m; 1977: 2 m
World records:
1.94 m (equalled) in 1974; 1.95 m in 1974; 1.96 m in 1976; 1.96 m, 1.97 m and 2 m in 1977

And yet Rosemarie Ackermann is only 1.75 meters tall