

# Track and Field



*The Press Sisters*



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## The Press Sisters

### Sisters... or Brothers?

The sisters Tamara and Irina Press swept the board in the big international athletics meetings between 1959 and 1965. Between them, they took five Olympic titles at the Games in Rome and Tokyo. The elder, Tamara, was by far the larger in build. Specializing in the shot put and discus, she brought the world record from 16.76 m to 18.59 m in the former and from 57.04 m to 59.70 m in the latter. She was also three times European champion. Irina was much smaller and leaner in build. Competing in both the 80-m hurdles and the pentathlon, she excelled in both disciplines. In the first, she lowered the world record from 10.6 to 10.3 sec. In the second, she raised the best score ever achieved from 4,872 to 5,246 points. In short, whenever the Press sisters entered a stadium, the other competitors were left with only the crumbs. Up to the day, that is, when it was announced that a strict sex test for competitors was henceforth to be introduced in international meetings. Just as the first of these was to take place at the European Championships at Budapest in 1966, the Press sisters suddenly had a grandmother who was seriously ill. This grandmother was

never to recover, for the two Russian girls disappeared for ever from the sporting scene. That year, which saw the disappearance of the athletes whom an English journalist called the Press 'brothers', marks the beginning of the decline of women's athletics in the USSR.

#### TAMARA PRESS

Born May 10, 1937, in Kharkov, USSR

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

- OG 1960: gold medal in the shot put with 17.32 m  
OG 1964: gold medal in the shot put with 18.14 m  
gold medal in the discus with 57.27 m  
ECH 1958: gold medal in the discus with 52.32 m  
bronze medal in the shot put with 15.33 m  
ECH 1962: gold medal in the shot put with 18.55 m  
gold medal in the discus with 56.91 m

Last world records:

Shot put: 18.59 m on Jan. 19, 1965, in Kassel  
Discus: 59.70 m on Aug. 11, 1965, in Moscow

#### IRINA PRESS

Born March 10, 1939, in Kharkov, USSR

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

- OG 1960: gold medal in the 80-m hurdles in 10.8 sec  
OG 1964: gold medal in the pentathlon with 5,246 pts

Last world records:

80-m hurdles: 10.3 sec on Oct. 24, 1965 in Moscow  
Pentathlon: 5,256 pts on Oct. 16 and 17, 1964 in Tokyo

*Irina (on the left) and Tamara Press: five Olympic titles between them*