

Track and Field



The Women's 200 m



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Irena and Marita

The women's 200-m race appeared in the program of the Olympic Games for the first time in 1948 in London. This was when the "Flying Dutchwoman", Fanny Blankers-Koen, achieved the 100 m and 200 m double, a feat which was repeated in 1952 (Marjorie Jackson), in 1956 (Betty Cuthbert) and 1960 (Wilma Rudolph). At the European Championships, the women's 200 m has been run since 1935, the year when a double win was recorded by Stanislawa Walasiewicz of Poland, the first women's world record-holder, in 23.6 sec. This record, set on 15 August 1935 in Warsaw, stood for almost 17 years. It was Marjorie Jackson of Australia, double Olympic champion in 1952 in Helsinki, who broke it. She equalled it first in the heats, before improving on it by 0.2 sec in the semi-final (23.4 sec). In the final, she made do with 23.7 sec, still leaving Bertha Brouwer of Holland, the runner-up, 0.5 sec behind.

The 200 m enabled another Polish woman, Irena Kirszenstein, who became Szewinska after her marriage, to show her talent to the full. On 13 June 1974 in Potsdam, she cover-

ed the distance in 22 sec (manual timing), but her performance was not officially recognized. Her only recorded time was 22.21 sec, which became the first electronically timed world record.

The role of the "Grand Lady" of Polish athletics was somewhat dimmed by performances by Marita Koch (East Germany). In just one week, the Rostock student twice beat the 200-m world record, the best time being 21.71 sec.

HISTORY OF THE WORLD RECORDS

23.6 sec	S. Walasiewicz	POL	Aug. 15, 1935
	M. Jackson	AUS	July 25, 1952
23.4 sec	M. Jackson	AUS	July 25, 1952
23.2 sec	B. Cuthbert	AUS	Sept. 16, 1956
	B. Cuthbert	AUS	March 7, 1960
22.9 sec	W. Rudolph	USA	July 9, 1960
	M. Burvill	AUS	Feb. 22, 1964
22.7 sec	I. Kirszenstein	POL	Aug. 8, 1965
22.5 sec	I. Szewinska-Kirszenstein	POL	Oct. 18, 1968
22.4 sec	Chi Cheng	CH	July 12, 1970
	R. Stecher	EGE	Sept. 7, 1972
22.1 sec	R. Stecher	EGE	July 21, 1973
<i>Electronic timing</i>			
22.21 sec	I. Szewinska-Kirszenstein	POL	June 13, 1974
22.06 sec	M. Koch	EGE	May 28, 1978
	M. Koch	EGE	June 4, 1978
22.03 sec	M. Koch	EGE	June 3, 1979
21.71 sec	M. Koch	EGE	June 10, 1979

Marita Koch (EGE) in 1978 became queen not only of the 200 m, but also of the 400 m