

Israeli Athlete Ester Roth-Shahamorov

Framing this unit

In this unit we will learn about Israeli track and field athlete Ester Roth-Shahamorov, by taking a close look at a photograph of her retirement ceremony. Roth-Shahamorov inspired hundreds of young athletes and continues to be a role model to sportswomen who wish to combine a career with motherhood.

Ester Roth-Shahamorov - Ester Roth-Shahamorov is Israel's most famous track and field athlete, who also managed to achieve Israel's record athletics result in the Olympics. As a young girl, Roth-Shahamorov already demonstrated her running ability with successes in many international competitions. In the 1972 Munich Olympics, while narrowly missing the 100 meters final, she had already qualified for the 100 meters hurdles when she quit the games due to the murder of her coach, Amitzur Shapira, and 10 other members of the Israeli team by Palestinian terrorists.

Roth-Shahamorov's greatest achievement came at the Montreal Olympics in 1976, when she finished sixth in the 100 meters hurdles in 13.04 seconds. She continued to compete and win medals until her retirement in 1980 and held the Israeli 100 meters record until 2014.

In the photo, Roth-Shahamorov appears next to the world famous German athlete Ulrike Meyfarth, who came to the ceremony to pay tribute to this outstanding Israeli athlete. Roth-Shahamorov is sitting on the track next to her one-year-old daughter Michal.

Group Activity

Take a look at the photograph from [Esther Roth-Shahamorov's Retirement Ceremony, 1983](#) and read the information about it.

Write a short summary based on the following questions:

- Who was Esther Roth-Shahamorov?
- List her career highlights.
- What difficulties did she face during this time?
- Why did the Israeli national athletic association hold this ceremony in her honor? Do you think that every athlete is honored in this way?
- What were Roth-Shahamorov's feelings about the ceremony? Why did she say that she only agreed to the ceremony "for the sake of the wider public"?
- How do you think the Israeli public would have reacted to her retirement?
- In the 1972 Munich Olympic, Roth-Shahamorov qualified for the 100 meter hurdles semi-finals, but she withdrew from the games together with other members of the Israeli Olympic team.
- Why was this? What happened at the Munich Olympics?

Discussion

- Have you ever attended a retirement or farewell party or event?
- What were the feelings of the participants?
- Choosing to be a professional athlete can be even more difficult for women. Why?
- Are you an athlete? Are you interested in becoming professional? What challenges are you facing?

Creative Activity

Choose one of the following activities:

- Write a letter to Roth-Shahamorov explaining how inspirational she is to you.
- Choose a female athlete you know and admire. Write them a letter explaining why.
- Write an article about a female athlete you value, describing her achievements.

Primary sources in this lesson

- [Esther Roth-Shahamorov's Retirement Ceremony, 1983](#)
- ["Israel's Top Girl Athlete Touted as Olympic Medalist," The Sentinel, 22/07/1976, JPress](#)
- ["5 More Israelis to Olympic Games," The Sentinel, 03/06/1976, JPress](#)