

Iolanda Balas - 154 wins in a row

compiled by Stuart Mazdon

I thought that it would be a difficult task to try to find all of the generally accepted 140 performances in the win streak of Iolanda Balas. Luckily I had a rare copy of Romanian Athletics 1912-62 which, together with the START list (down to 1.77) and the ATFS Annuals, unexpectedly gave a list of 145. To this I added the WAAA championships victory of 1963 - her equal lowest win of the 60's. Miroslav Ondruska provided four extra marks from the notebooks of Jan Popper, along with many corrected dates.

This list was first published in Track Stats Vol. 29 No. 4, December 1991, as "Iolanda Balas - 150 wins in a row". In this new version, there are 4 additions to the list of 150. I have found additional wins, one from 1963, at Stockholm, and one in 1964, which is also an extra international, against Italy, and two minor meetings from 1965. So the total is now 154.

There may be further marks missing from this list, but I hope that it is the most accurate yet published. One question that remains is where the figure of 140 came from.

The 154 competitions do not include any qualifying competitions or exhibitions and the figure still seems unlikely ever to be beaten. Jodie Williams won 151 races in a row as a junior from 2005 to 2010, but this total included qualifying, i.e. heats and semi-finals, was not against world-class opposition, and included runs at several different events.

Iolanda Balas is the only high Jumper to merit a chapter in T&FN's "Track's Greatest Women" and was voted the number 3 female athlete of all time in a 1975 poll of world experts, behind only Szewinska and Blankers-Koen. She held the world record for a total of 13 years and 8 months, and her record in major meetings is given below. Also given is a list of the averages of her best marks compared with those of her successor as world record holder, Ilona Gusenbauer. Gusenbauer used the more efficient straddle technique to jump 1.92 over 10 years after Balas had managed 1.91. Admittedly Gusenbauer had a shorter career, but Balas is generally only 1cm behind.

		Balas	Gusenbauer
OG	2/3		
EC	2/3	10	1.886
EI	1/1	20	1.871
Balk	9/9	30	1.864
WSG	5/6	40	1.858
WUG	3/3	50	1.8523
EP/sf	1/1	60	1.8450
Ints	22/24	70	1.8386
<u>Total</u>	<u>45/50</u>	80	1.8338
Ints-j	6/7	90	1.8300
NC	16/16	100	1.8257
RomIC	8/11		1.8279

Some cynics have suggested that Iolanda's retirement neatly coincided with the introduction of mandatory sex tests by the IAAF in 1967, as was the case for certain athletes, but this is nonsense. She had passed previous sex tests and married her coach Ion Söter at the end of 1967. Her retirement at the age of 30 was due to injury and finally being beaten after more than a decade.

Sources: O Jumatate Secol de Atletism Rominesc 1912-1962
Notebooks of Jan Popper 1956-62
START 4/70
ATFS Women's Track & Field Handbooks 1963, 66, 70 & 74
ATFS Annuals 1953-67
Women's Track & Field World Annuals 1967-74
Leichtathletik 1963-66
Article in Atletica (Ita - date unknown)

N.B. London venues are all White City and Poiana Brasov = Orasul.

Many thanks to Miroslav Ondruska and Luigi Mengoni.

Iolanda Balas

Born 12.12.36, Timisoara. Height 1.85m / Weight 72kg

	176	175	174	173	172	171	170	169	168	167	166	165	164	163	162	161	160	Oth	Tot	Wins	Qual
53																	1				
54												2	3	5	6	8	11				
55								1	1	1	2	5	7	7	9	10	14				
56		1	1	2	2	3	9	10	10	13	14	15	15	15	16	16	16	1	17	14	1
57	1	1	1	2	2	2	6	7	8	11	13	14	14	14	14	14	14	0	14	14	

	191	190	189	188	187	186	185	184	183	182	181	180	179	178	177	176	175	Oth	Tot	Wins	Qual
to 57																1	2				
58									1	2	3	6	6	8	11	11	16	6	22	22	
59								1	1	2	3	12	12	13	13	13	17	1	18	18	
60						1	3	5	9	9	10	13	13	13	13	14	15	2	17	16	1
61	1	2	2	3	4	6	12	13	13	13	13	17	17	17	18	18	18	0	18	18	
62					1	1	5	9	12	12	13	16	16	16	16	16	16	1	17	16	1
63				1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	8	8	8	8	10	10	3	13	12	1
64		2	2	3	5	5	7	7	7	7	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	2	11	10	1
65						1	2	2	2	2	3	9	10	10	10	12	17	2	19	19	
66								1	2	2	2	4	4	4	5	6	9	0	9	9	
67																		1	1	0	
Total	1	3	0	3	4	4	15	10	9	2	6	37	1	3	5	7	19	129		154	
Sum	1	4	4	7	11	15	30	40	49	51	57	94	95	98	103	110	129				

Year	Age	Best	World-Rank		>170	>165	Year	Age	Best	World-Rank		>185	>180
			Best	Merit						Best	Merit		
1948	11	1.28					1958	21	1.83	1	1		6
1949	12	1.35					1959	22	1.84	1	1		12
1950	13	1.40					1960	23	1.86	1	1	3	13
1951	14	1.51					1961	24	1.91	1	1	12	17
1952	15	1.53					1962	25	1.87	1	1	5	16
1953	16	1.60	10=				1963	26	1.88	1	1	1	8
1954	17	1.65	5=	3?		2	1964	27	1.90	1	1	7	9
1955	18	1.70	2	1?	1	7	1965	28	1.86	1	1	2	9
1956	19	1.75	2	2	9	15	1966	29	1.84	1	1		4
1957	20	1.76	2	1	6	13	1967	30	1.68	57=			

14 world records (including 1 WR equalling performance) and 1 indoor clearance equalling the outdoor world record.
4 world indoor records.

154 consecutive victories 1957-66 (finals only - excluding exhibitions & extra trials).

Unbeaten period: 02.12.56-10.06.67 = 10 years 191 days

36 Romanian records, National Champion 16 times.

In September 1964 held the 80 best performances of all time.

In the lists which follow the meeting abbreviations are as listed in recent ATFS Annuals plus the following:

AAU Amateur Athletic Union Champs - USA
- indoors in this case

HapG Hapoel Games

Harb Rudolf Harbig Memorial

WSG UIE World Student/Youth Games

WUG FISU Universiade

Competitions in which the bar was set at imperial heights have the metric equivalent to 3 decimal places, and the actual imperial height is also given.

The figures given with each year are the number of wins that year, and the running total

? 27.09.54: Listed as "Exhibition" in the 1955 ATFS annual, but it was during the same meeting as the performance at 1.63.

* 25.07.61: This mark appeared as 1.85 in the ATFS Annual of 1962, the ATFS WT&F Handbooks of 1963 and 1966 and START 4/1970. But it was given as 1.80 in Romania 1912-1962 and was omitted from the ATFS WT&F Handbooks of 1970 and 1974 which listed all marks at 1.85.

The 1.86i on 18.03.61 included 3 world indoor records, at 1.80, 1.83 and 1.86

Career Record					1.67	1	RomIC	Bucuresti	02.10		
1948					1.60	1	Harb	Dresden	09.10		
1.28	1		Timisoara	28.06	PB			Sofia	04-06.11		
1949					1956						
1.35	1		Timisoara	02.06	PB	1.62	1	Bucuresti	06.05		
1950					1.69	1		Bucuresti	12.05		
1.40	1		Cluj	21.08	PB	1.67	1	Bucuresti	19.05		
1.40	3	vSU	Bucuresti	21.10	=PB	1.66	1	Bucuresti	02.06		
1.40	2		Timisoara	05.11	=PB	1.67	1	Kuso	Warszawa	09.06	
1.30	4		Ploiesti	09.11		1.71	1		Bucuresti	16.06	NR
1951					1.70	1	vITA,TCH	Napoli	24.06		
1.47	1		Timisoara	19.05	NJR	1.70	1		Beograd	30.06	
1.49	1		Timisoara	31.05	NR	1.75	1		Bucuresti	14.07	WR
1.50	1	vBUL	Sofia	10.06	NR	1.73	1		Budapest	04.08	
1.45	3	vURS,POL	Moskva	14.07		1.70	1	NC	Bucuresti	19.08	
1.51	1	vHUN-J	Ploiesti	30.07	NR	1.70	1	vFRA,AUT	Paris	02.09	
1.48	1	NC	Cluj	06-09.09		1.70	2	RomIC	Bucuresti	17.09	
1.40	4	RomIC	Bucuresti	23.09		1.70	1	Harb	Dresden	29.09	
1.40	3		Bucuresti	30.09		1.65	1	vNOR	Bucuresti	13.10	
1952					1.58	Q	OG	Melbourne	01.12		
1.50	1		Leipzig	-01.06		1.67	5	OG	Melbourne	01.12	
1.52	1		Oradea	13.07	NR	1957 (14/14)					
1.43	3	vHUN-J	Budapest	19.08		1.70	1		Bucuresti	19.05	
1.53	1	NC	Bucuresti	05.09	NR	1.68	1	Kuso	Warszawa	08.06	
1.53	1	RomIC	Bucuresti	22.09	=NR	1.64	1	Ros	Praha	-16.06	
1953					1.65	1	vTCH, ITA	Bucuresti	23.06		
1.55	1		Timisoara	14.06	NR	1.66	1	vGDR	Aue	30.06	
1.56	1		Cluj	03.07	NR	1.66	1	WSG	Moskva	31.07	
1.57	1		Bucuresti	06.07	NR	1.67	1		Bucuresti	12.08	
1.58	1		Cluj	18.07	NR	1.73	1		Bucuresti	21.08	
1.60	1		Bucuresti	27.07	NR	1.65	1	Balk	Athinai	01.09	
1.50	8	WSG	Bucuresti	05.08		1.66	1	WUG	Paris	06.09	
1.57	1	vHUN-J	Ploiesti	26.08		1.70	1	NC	Cluj	29.09	
1.58	1	vBEL	Bucuresti	29.08		1.70	1		Bucuresti	09.10	
1.55	1	NC	Bucuresti	06-10.09		1.76	1		Bucuresti	13.10	=WR
1.59	1	RomIC	Bucuresti	02.10		1.70	1		Bucuresti	19.10	
1954					1958 (22/36)						
1.60	1		Bucuresti	16.05	=NR	1.70	1		Bucuresti	20.04	
1.60	1		Budapest	29.05	=NR	1.70	1		Bucuresti	03.05	
1.62	2		E.Berlin	06.06	NR	1.74	1		Bucuresti	11.05	
1.64	1	vHOL	Bucuresti	19.06	NR	1.70	1	NarM	Sofia	23.05	
1.65	1		Bucuresti	01.07	NR	1.75	1		Bucuresti	31.05	
1.61	1	vSUI	Bucuresti	11.07		1.78	1		Bucuresti	07.06	WR
1.63	1	vBUL-J	Bucuresti	19.07		1.70	1	Kuso	Warszawa	14.06	
1.61	1	WSG	Budapest	09.08		1.75	1		Cluj	21.06	
1.50	Q	EC	Bern	25.08		1.80	1		Cluj	22.06	WR
1.65	2	EC	Bern	28.08	=NR	1.77	1	vTCH,ITA	Brno	05.07	
1.63	1	RomIC	Bucuresti	27.09		1.77	1	NC	Bucuresti	10.07	
(1.66	extra trial?		Bucuresti	27.09)		1.75	1		Poiana Brasov	26.07	
1.60	1	NC	Bucuresti	13-17.10		1.81	1		Poiana Brasov	31.07	WR
1955					1.75	1	vDEN	Köbenhavn	10.08		
1.60	1		Pardubice	11.05		1.77	1	EC	Stockholm	21.08	
1.63	2	Ros	Praha	-09.06		1.80	1		Ploiesti	07.09	
1.65	1	Kuso	Warszawa	19.06	=NR	1.78	1	RomIC	Bucuresti	16.09	
1.65	1		Moskva	25.06	=NR	1.75	1	Balk	Sofia	21.09	
1.66	1	vBUL-J	Sofia	11.07	NR	1.70	1	Harb	Dresden	28.09	
1.70	1	vNOR	Oslo	25.07	NR	1.82	1		Bucuresti	04.10	WR
1.66	1	WSG	Warszawa	05.08		1.80	1		Bucuresti	12.10	
1.60	1	vFRA	Bucuresti	20.08		1.83	1		Bucuresti	18.10	WR
1.66	1	vPOL-J	Krakow	04.09		1959 (18/54)					
1.62	1	NC	Cluj	09-11.09		1.75	1		Bucuresti	19.04	
1.60	1	vURS-J	Ploiesti	19.09		1.75	1		Bucuresti	03.05	
						1.80	1		Beijing	14.05	
						1.80	1		Shenyang	18.05	

1.80	1		Tianjin	22.05		1.83	1	EC	Beograd	14.09	
1.80	1		Shanghai	29.05		1.80	1	RomIC	Bucuresti	19.09	
1.80	1	Kuso	Warszawa	14.06		1.84	1	Balk	Ankara	30.09	
1.7?	1		Bucuresti	24.06		1.84	1		Bruxelles	06.10	
(1.79	extra trial		Bucuresti	24.06)		1.80	1		Siena	21.10	
1.80	1	Znam	Moskva	04.07		1963 (12/116)					
1.81	1		Budapest	12.07		1.80	1		Habana	06.04	
1.75	1	WSG	Wien	01.08		1.80	1		Bucuresti	04.05	
1.82	1	NC	Bucuresti	16.08		1.84	1		Galati	12.05	
1.78	1		Bucuresti	22.08		1.80	1		Helsinki	08.06	
1.75	1		Poiana Brasov	31.08		1.88	1		Oradea	22.06	
1.80	1	WUG	Torino	06.09		1.76	1	vPOL	Oradea	23.06	
1.84	1	Balk	Bucuresti	21.09	WR	1.600	Q	WAAA	London	06.07	5'3"
1.803	1		London (WC)	30.09	5'11	1.702	1	WAAA	London	06.07	5'7"
1.80	1	PO	Roma	11.10		1.70	1		Stockholm	09.07	
1960 (16/70)											
1.76	1		Bucuresti	16.04		1.76	1	vTCH	Praha	21.07	
1.75	1		Bucuresti	05.05		1.80	1	NC	Cluj	11.08	
1.80	1		Bucuresti	14.05		1.80	1	Balk	Sofia	15.09	
1.81	1		Cluj	25.05		1.80	1	PO	Tokyo	12.10	
1.85	1	RomIC	Bucuresti	06.06	WR	1964 (10/126)					
1.83	1	Kuso	Warszawa	11.06		1.81	1		Bucuresti	19.04	
1.72	1		Budapest	25.06		1.87	1		Ploiesti	02.05	
1.83	1	Znam	Moskva	02.07		1.88	1		Bucuresti	16.05	
1.86	1	NC	Bucuresti	09.07	WR	1.87	1		Hagen	31.05	
1.84	1		Oslo	27.07		1.70	1	vITA	Bari	21.06	
1.84	1		Göteborg	01.08		1.80	1	ASV	Köln	08.07	
1.83	1		Stockholm	03.08		1.85	1		Poiana Brasov	08.08	
1.65	Q	OG	Roma	07.09		1.90	1	NC	Bucuresti	19.08	
1.85	1	OG	Roma	08.09		1.85	1	Balk	Bucuresti	13.09	
1.83	1	Balk	Athinai	25.09		1.70	Q	OG	Tokyo	15.10	
1.80	1		Constanta	09.10		1.90	1	OG	Tokyo	15.10	
1.80	1	vITA,HUN	Napoli	16.10		1965 (19/145)					
1961 (18/88)											
1.77i	1		E.Berlin	26.02	WIR	1.765i	1	Mill	New York	11.02	5'9½
1.86i	1		Leningrad	18.03	(=WR)	1.816i	1		Los Angeles	13.02	5'11½
1.87	1		Bucuresti	15.04	WR	1.753i	1	AAU	New York	19.02	5'9
1.84	1		Bucuresti	29.04		1.803i	1		San Francisco	26.02	5'11
1.85	1		Bucuresti	20.05		1.791i	1		Cleveland	19.03	5'10½
1.866	1		Bucuresti	27.05		1.85	1		Bucuresti	20.06	
1.88	1	Kuso	Warszawa	18.06	WR	1.75	1		Dornbirn	26.06	
1.85	1	Znam	Moskva	01.07		1.75	1	NC	Köln	07.07	
1.85	1	WG	Helsinki	05.07		1.75	1		Timisoara	18.07	
1.90	1		Budapest	08.07	WR	1.76	1		Siena	25.07	
1.91	1	vBUL	Sofia	16.07	WR	1.80	1		Grosseto	27.07	
1.80 *	1		Stockholm	25.07		1.80	1	EP/sf	Constanta	22.08	
1.80	1		Göteborg	03.08		1.86	1		Bucuresti	02.09	
1.85	1	NC	Bucuresti	06.08		1.75	1	Balk	Piraeus	12.09	
1.85	1	RomIC	Bucuresti	27.08		1.80	1	vTCH	Timisoara	01.10	
1.85	1	WUG	Sofia	03.09		1.70	1		Timisoara	10.10	
1.80	1	Balk	Beograd	17.09		1.80	1		Bucuresti	17.10	
1.80	1	vITA,HUN	Timisoara	08.10		1.80i	1		São Paulo	22.10	
1962 (16/104)											
1.84	1		Timisoara	20.05		1.75	ex		Rio de Janeiro	27.10	
1.85	1	NarM	Sofia	25.05		1.70	1		Oradea	06.11	
1.85	1	Kuso	Warszawa	17.06		1966 (9/154)					
1.87	1	Ros	Praha	22.06		1.76i	1	El	Dortmund	27.03	
1.81	1		Liberec	24.06		1.75	1	HapG	Tel Aviv	02.05	
1.80	1	Znam	Moskva	30.06		1.80	1		Haifa	08.05	
1.829	1	WAAA	London (WC)	07.07	6'0	1.83	1		Bucuresti	14.05	
1.85	1	NC	Galati	15.07		1.77	1		Frechen	12.06	
1.85	1	vHUN,ITA	Diosgyor	22.07		1.75	1		Siena	25.06	
1.84	1		Helsinki	30.07		1.75	1		Grosseto	29.06	
1.83	1	vBUL	Bucuresti	11.08		1.80	1		Bucuresti	17.07	
1.67	Q	EC	Beograd	13.09		1.84	1	NC	Cluj	07.08	
1967											
						1.68	2	RomIC	Bucuresti	11.06	