

NSA PHOTOSEQUENCE #16: 100M HURDLES – YORDANKA DONKOVA

Photosequence by Helmar Hommel (© Hommel AVS 1990), Commentary by Judy Vernon.

Judy Vernon was Commonwealth Games Champion in the 100 meter Hurdles in 1974. She is now a National Coach for the Great Britain Junior team.

The sequence shows Yordanka Donkova at the eighth hurdle in the first round of the 100 meters Hurdles at the Games of the XXIVth Olympiad, Seoul, 1988. Donkova won the race in a time of 12.89.

Yordanka Donkova (BUL)

- Born: 28 September 1961
- Height: 1.75m
- Weight: 67 kg
- Best time: 12.21 sec. (1988)
- European Champion 1986; Olympic Champion 1988; World Record holder.

Yordanka Donkova is a tall and powerfully built woman, a real asset to a sprint hurdler. In studying these frames, it was obvious to me that she has worked very hard to obtain such a high level of skill and fluidity over the hurdles. She runs with great aggression, an absolute must for a hurdler.

Photos 1 to 7 show Donkova's second stride off the hurdle. This is her longest stride. Photo 3 shows a long drive with the left leg. She has a high arm action, with the left arm slightly crossing the midline of the body, and excellent knee lift. Her head is focused forward, looking directly at the next hurdle. She runs tall, on the balls of her feet, with high hips.

Photos 8 to 12 show her third stride, which prepares her to clear the hurdle. This is the shortest of the three strides between the hurdles. The knee lift is slightly

lower, with a correspondingly low arm movement. Her upper body is still quite upright, and she is still running tall, her hips driving forward towards the hurdle.

In photo 13 one can see Donkova preparing to cross the hurdle. The heel of her right leg is beginning to tuck up to her backside, preparing for a hard drive at the hurdle with her knee. Photo 14 shows how her heel is now completely folded in,

with her knee lifting vigorously towards the hurdle. Her left arm is driving across her body, which is leaning forwards into the hurdle.

Photos 15 to 19 show her crossing the hurdle. She has good shoulder drive and her upper body is lowered to allow a low flight path across the hurdle. Photo 16 shows how the heel of the lead leg is now coming forward to complete the lead leg movement. Gradually the lead leg straightens, with the opposite arm reaching forwards. One can also see how well her trail leg moves through a full range of movement. First it extends hard against the ground, propelling her forward and across the hurdle. Then it begins to fold up into a lateral position, with the heel tucking neatly up beneath her backside. It is easy to see how important good hip mobility is at this stage.

Donkova hurdles the barrier very efficiently. The lead leg is driving forward across the hurdle with no sideways deviation. Her balance is excellent.

In photos 20 to 24 she begins the downwards movement of her hurdling. The trail leg, having completed the forward drive across the hurdle, pulls through with the thigh parallel to the barrier. It works actively across the hurdle, with the foot cocked at an ankle to avoid hitting the barrier. As the lead leg lowers quickly to the ground, her body becomes more upright. Her head is always looking forward to the next hurdle.

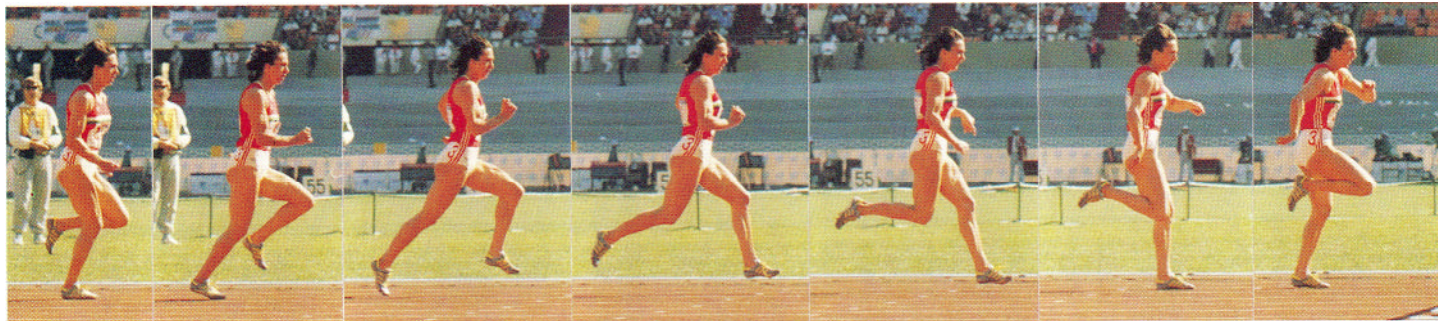
Photo 24 shows the moment of contact with the ground. Her body weight is in front of her lead leg, and her trail leg is pulling hard and high to the midline of her body. A good point to notice is how square her hips and shoulders are to the hurdle. There is no evidence of twisting as the arms work in opposition to the legs to maintain balance.

Photos 25 to 27 give a great example of driving off and away from the hurdle. The trail leg completes its drive through to the midline of her body. The lead leg pushes her away from the hurdle, as she uses it as a pivot point. Her arms are working powerfully to maintain her drive off the hurdle. In photo 26 one can see her driving away from the hurdle with full extension of her leading leg.

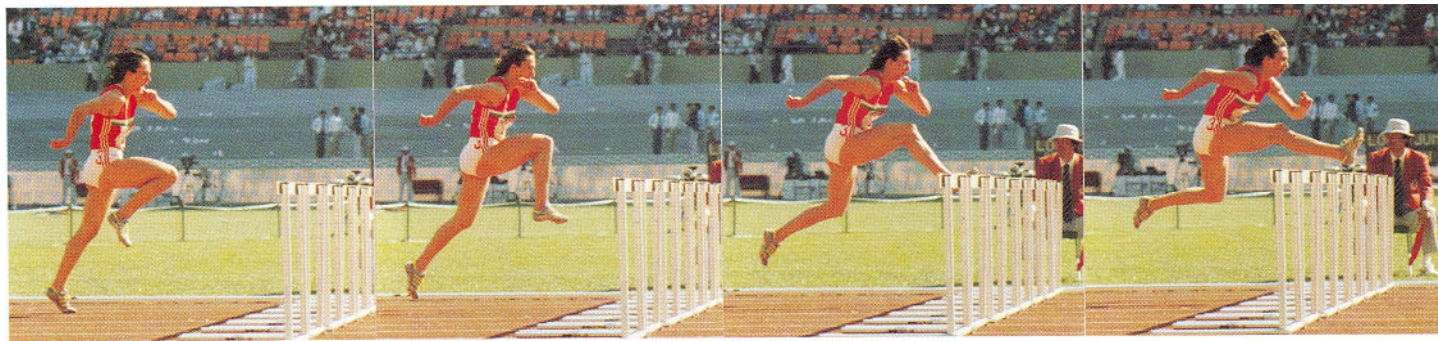
The remaining photos of this sequence mirror photos 3 to 6. Donkova is very consistent in her movements: it is obvious to me that many hours of technical training have gone into the perfecting of her skill, because the frames are so exactly matched. She again shows the second stride as being a long powerful movement. She truly is a great hurdle technician.



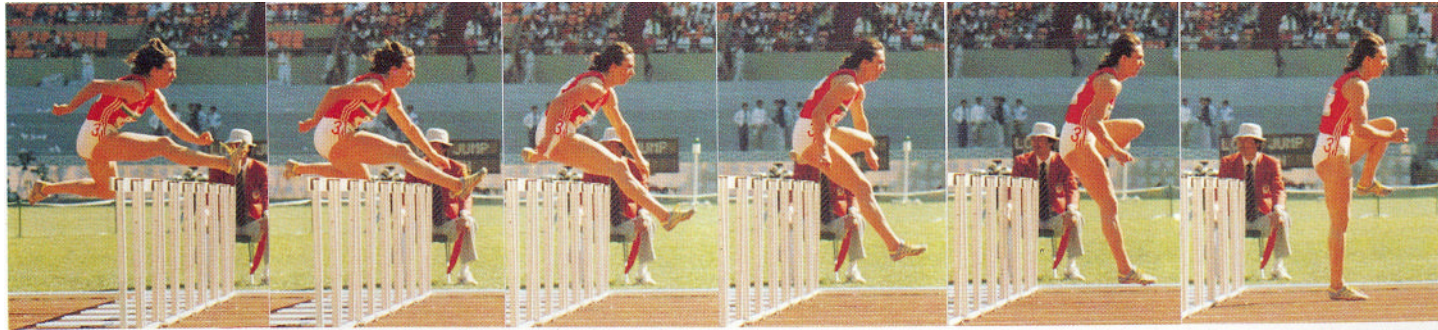
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