

August 2024



Time Travellers Club

Dear Club Members,

Known in the popular press as the “Flying Housewife” Fanny Blankers-Koen took the 1948 Olympics in London by storm. Aged 30, already with 2 children, she was the world record holder in 6 events, and went on to win four gold medals at the Olympics, the first woman to do so at a single Games.

She faced criticism for her decision to compete, in her first post race interview after winning gold she was questioning about leaving her children at home, and being away from them for so long. Tearful and emotional, she did offer to return, but her coach, and the children’s father (who faced no criticism for his decision to be away from them for the Games), encouraged her to stay and carry on competing.

She had competed in the 1936 pre-war Olympics in Berlin aged 18, where she competed in the High Jump and the 4 x 100m relay. Her speciality was the 800m, but this wasn’t in the Olympic programme for women as it was considered too demanding. At those games she gained the autograph of Jesse Owens, which became one of her most treasured possessions.

In 1938 she ran her first world record (11seconds in the 100 yard). She was due to compete at the 1940 Olympics in Helsinki, which was cancelled in May of that year due to World War II. One week later the Netherlands was invaded by Nazi Germany.

In August that year she married sports journalist, and coach of the Dutch women’s athletics team Jan Jankers. oddly for his position he actually thought that women shouldn’t be athletes. His attitude changed due to his relationship with Koen. In 1942 she had her first child, and it was presumed that her career would be over, but she restarted training just weeks after his birth. She set 6 new world records in German-occupied Holland, as races and competitions did continue during this time, but as food became scarce her training became harder.

The winter of 1944-45 was particularly hard, with huge food scarcity especially in the big cities. it was known as the *Hongerwinter* (hunger winter). She gave birth to a daughter, Fanneke, in 1945 and in contrast to her previous post-birth activities she took seven months off from sport.

By 1948 she’d resumed training, and competed in London at the 1948 Olympics, she won four of the nine women’s athletics events, competing in eleven heats and finals in eight days. A ruling at the time limiting women to 3 individual events meant she had to drop high jump and long jump, events in which she was also the world leading. She was also pregnant at the time.

She continued in athletics until the age of 37, before then serving as team leader of the Dutch Athletics Team, and eventually retiring from public life. She was awarded Female Athlete of the century in 1999, her incredible achievements helped to change public opinion about female sporting prowess and motherhood. She died in 2004.

Your fibre this month had to be orange! An homage to the dutch national colour, with a rare inclusion of the gold sparkle that Fanny achieved. Some of the wool had to be Dutch, so we've got a bit of Zwartbles included.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label

13% Zwartbles

4% Stellina

13% Tussah Silk

70% Merino

Further Reading-

<https://theolympians.co/tag/fanny-blankers-koen/>

<https://olympics.com/en/news/fanny-blankers-koen-athletics>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Y_G0H-b3QE

<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/the-incredible-story-of-fanny-blankers-koen/-QUBaOFOrvonKw?hl=en>