



ROMANIAN SPORTS STARS

NATIONAL AND LOCAL PATHS

Sports in Romania are an important part of the country's culture. Romania has risen to prominence in a number of sporting areas in recent decades.

The most popular sports include football, handball, volleyball, basketball, rugby, tennis, and gymnastics. Many Romanian athletes have achieved significant success and have won World and European medals in numerous sports during the years. Romania participated in the Olympic Games for the first time in 1900 and has taken part in 21 of the 28 summer games. It has been one of the more successful countries at the Summer Olympic Games, with a total of 307 medals won throughout the years, of which 89 gold ones, ranking 15th overall. Almost a quarter of all the medals and 25 of the gold ones were won in gymnastics. Romanian athletes have also won gold medals in other Olympic sports, such as rowing, athletics, canoeing, wrestling, shooting, fencing, swimming, discus throw, weightlifting, boxing, and judo. They are the most successful nation in Balkan Championships in terms of medal-winning.

GYMNASTICS

The most common form of competitive gymnastics is artistic gymnastics which consists of (for girls) floor, vault, beam and uneven bars. For boys they have floor, vault, rings, pommel, parallel bars and horizontal bar.

Romania holds a long tradition in artistic gymnastics, especially in the ladies competition. Gymnastics is responsible for the majority of Romania's Olympic medals, gold, silver, and bronze.



NADIA COMĂNECI is a gymnast, winner of three Olympic gold medals at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal and the first female gymnast to be awarded a perfect score of 10 in an Olympic gymnastic event.

She is also the winner of two gold medals at the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow. She is one of the best-known gymnasts in the world.

In 2000 she was named as one of the athletes of the century by the Laureus World Sports Academy.

Nowadays she is active in many charities and international organizations. In 1999 she became the first athlete to be invited to speak at the United Nations to launch the Year 2000 International Year of Volunteers.

In the world of gymnastics, she is the Honorary President of the Romanian Gymnastics Federation, the Honorary President of Romanian Olympic Committee, Sports Ambassador of Romania, and a member of the International Gymnastics Federation Foundation.

She and her husband own the Bart Conner Gymnastics Academy, the Perfect 10 Production Company and several sports equipment shops.

ECATERINA SZABO is a former artistic gymnast won 20 Olympic, world and continental medals.



Although perhaps most notable for winning the all-around silver in the 1984 Olympics, she won gold medals in three of the individual events and contributed to the team gold. With her four gold medals and a silver medal, she was the most successful athlete at the 1984 Summer Olympics.

Afterward, she led her team to the world title at the 1987 World Artistic Gymnastics Championships.

In 2000 she was inducted into the International Gymnastics Hall of Fame.

FOOTBALL

Football is a family of team sports that involve, to varying degrees, kicking a ball to score a goal.

Football is the most popular sport in Romania.



GHEORGHE HAGI is a former footballer. He was one of the best attacking midfielders in Europe during the 1980s and 1990s and is considered the greatest Romanian footballer of all time.

He led the Romanian team to its best ever international performance at the 1994 World Cup. He still holds the record as

Romanian national team top scorer.

He is one of the few footballers to have played for both the Spanish rival clubs Real Madrid and Barcelona.

At Galatasaray, he was both successful and highly popular among the Turkish supporters.

In November 2003, to celebrate UEFA's Jubilee, he was selected as the Golden Player of Romania by the Romanian Football Federation as their most outstanding player of the past 50 years.

TENNIS

Tennis is a racket sport that can be played individually against a single opponent (singles) or between two teams of two players each (doubles). Each player uses a tennis racket that is strung with cord to strike a hollow rubber ball covered with felt over or around a net and into the opponent's court. The object of the game is to maneuver the ball in such a way that the opponent is not able to play a valid return. The player who is unable to return the ball will not gain a point, while the opposite player will. Tennis is an Olympic sport and is played at all levels of society and at all ages.

Romania reached the Davis Cup finals three times – 1969, 1971, 1972.

ILIE NĂSTASE is a former world no. 1 professional tennis player, one of the world's top players of the 1970s. He was ranked world no. 1 between 1973 and 1974.

He is one of the five players in history to win more than 100 ATP professional titles (57 singles and 45 in doubles).



He won seven Grand Slam titles: two in singles, three in men's doubles, and two in mixed doubles. He also won four Masters Grand Prix year-end championship titles and seven Championship Series titles (1970–73)

He is the second male player to win a Grand Slam without dropping a set and the first one to achieve this feat at the French Open (1973).

He was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1991.

In 2005, *Tennis magazine* ranked him as the 28th-best player of the preceding 40 years.



ION ȚIRIAC first appeared on the international sports scene as an ice hockey player at the 1964 Winter Olympics. Shortly after that he switched to tennis as his main sport.

With fellow Romanian Ilie Năstase he won the men's doubles in the 1970 French Open and reached the Davis Cup finals several times in the 1970s.

After his retirement, he served as coach and manager for players such as: Ilie Năstase, Guillermo Vilas, Mary Joe Fernández, Goran Ivanišević and Marat Safin. He managed Boris Becker from 1984 to 1993. In 1998 he became president of the Romanian National Olympic

Committee. Although tennis is now a small part of his portfolio and occupies only 5% of his time, he has taken particular pleasure and pride in making Madrid Tennis Open a combined men's and women's event with €7.2 million in total prize money.

In 2013 he was elected into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

SIMONA HALEP is a professional tennis player. The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) ranked her world No. 1 in singles on two separate occasions between 2017 and 2019. In total, she has been No. 1 for 64 weeks, which ranks tenth in the history of female tennis. She is currently ranked world No. 2 on the WTA Tour, and has won 18 WTA singles titles.



She started playing tennis at the age of four, in emulation of her older brother. At age 6, she was practicing daily. At age 16, she relocated to Bucharest to further her tennis career. She started the year 2008 playing in junior competitions, reaching the final in Notting Hill and at the Roland Garros Junior Championships, she entered the main draw as the 9th seed.

She was given the award of "Honorary Citizen" of the city of Bucharest in 2018.

BASKETBALL

Basketball is a team sport in which two teams, most commonly of five players each, opposing one another on a rectangular court, compete with the primary objective of shooting a basketball (approximately 24 cm in diameter) through the defender's hoop (a basket 18 inches (46 cm) in diameter mounted 3.048 m high to a backboard at each end of the court) while preventing the opposing team from shooting through their own hoop.

Basketball is a very popular sport among Romanian youth.



ANDREI MIHALACHE is a professional basketballer who plays for CSM Oradea as team captain.

HANDBALL

Handball is a team sport in which two teams of seven players each (six outcourt players and a goalkeeper) pass a ball using their hands with the aim of throwing it into the goal of the other team. A standard match consists of two periods of 30 minutes, and the team that scores more goals wins.

Handball is the second most popular sport in Romania, after football.



CRISTINA NEAGU is a professional handballer who plays as a left back for CSM București and the Romanian national team. Often considered the best player in the world and rated by many in the sport as the greatest of all time, she is the only female handball player in history to win three IHF World Player of the Year awards (in 2010, 2015 and 2016). She also won EHF Player of the Year award in 2017 and 2018 (another record). She is an

All-EHF Champions League first teamer in the last four editions (2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018). A prolific goalscorer, Cristina Neagu is the European Championship's all-time leader in goals scored (237). She was given the award of "Honorary Citizen" of the city of Bucharest in 2017.

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GABRIELA SZÜCS is professional handball player for HC Dunărea Brăila and the Romanian national team. She started to play handball at the age of eleven, and whilst in school she already had seven trainings a week. At the age of fourteen she was signed by DVSC (Debreceni Vasutas Sport Club), where she spent the next ten seasons. During this time she developed to a quality left back both on domestic and international level. With the Hungarian national team she won bronze medal on the European Championship in 2004, and a year later on the World Championship as well. She was also member of the team which finished fourth on the Olympic Games in Beijing. In 2009, she moved to Romanian top club CS Oltechim Râmnicu Vâlcea, where she spent two season before re-joined her old club DVSC.



FENCING

Competitive fencing is one of the five activities which have been featured in every modern Olympic Games, the other four being athletics, cycling, swimming, and gymnastics.

Fencing as a sport was introduced in Romania in the 19th century by French, German, Hungarian and Italian masters. The first national fencing competition was held in 1921 and the Romanian Fencing Federation was created in 1931. The first Romanian fencer to reach

the podium in a major international competition was **Maria Vicol**, who earned a silver medal at the 1956 Junior World Championships in Luxembourg.

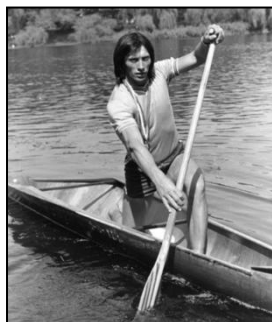
ANA MARIA BRÂNZĂ (current name Ana Maria Popescu) is a Romanian épée fencer. She earned the silver medal in the individual épée event at the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and the gold medal in the 2013 European Fencing Championships. She won the women's épée World Cup series a record-equalling



three times (2007–08, 2008–09, and 2012–13), with thirteen World Cup titles to her name. With the Romanian team she was twice World champion (2010 and 2011) and six-times European champion (2006, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2014, and 2015). In the 2004–05 season she reached her first podium in the Fencing World Cup with a silver medal at the Budapest Grand Prix. In the 2004–05 season she reached her first podium in the Fencing World Cup with a silver medal at the Budapest Grand Prix.

CANOEING

Canoeing is an activity which involves paddling a canoe with a single-bladed paddle. Canoe sprint is a sport in which athletes race canoes or kayaks on calm water.



IVAN PATZAICHIN is a canoe racing coach and retired sprint canoeist. He took part in all major competitions between 1968 and 1984, including five consecutive Olympics, and won seven Olympic and 22 world championship medals, including four Olympic gold medals. This makes him the most decorated Romanian canoeist of all times. He later worked as a canoeing coach, attending five more Olympics in this capacity. In 1990 he was awarded the Olympic Order, and in 2006 a nationwide poll included him on the list 100 Greatest Romanians of all time. He took up canoeing in early age inspired by his grandfather. In 1967, aged 18, he moved to the capital Bucharest, where he joined the club Dinamo. Already in 1968 he was included to the national team and won an Olympic gold medal. At the 1972 Olympics, Patzaichin broke his oar and placed last in the singles heats. Yet he managed to finish the race, paddling with a piece of wood that he removed from the floor of his canoe, and was included to the repechage. He won the repechage and the final race

WATER POLO

Water polo is a competitive team sport played in the water between two teams. The game consists of four quarters in which the two teams attempt to score goals by throwing the ball into the opposing team's goal. The team with the most goals at the end of the game wins the match. Each team is made up of six field players and one goalkeeper. Water polo is typically played in an all-deep pool meaning that players cannot touch the bottom.



NICOLAE DIACONU is a professional water polo player, performing at CSA Steaua București. He was part of Romania's national polo team at the 2012 Summer Olympics.

RACING

The competitors in a race try to complete a given task in the shortest amount of time. Typically this involves traversing some distance. Records are kept of the best performances in specific events, at world and national levels, right down to a personal level.

ILEANA BEREȘ is a master runner participates in Masters Athletics* – a class of the sport of athletics for veteran athletes. In 2010 she won the European Champion for Veterans** at Nyiregyház, Hungary and the National championship in 2016. In



2016 she won two silver medals at the Balkan Veterans Athletics Championships in Bucharest. The next year, in 2017, she won three gold medals at the Romanian Veterans Championships. At the Balkan Veterans Athletics Championships held in Celje (Slovenia – 2018) Ileana Bereș won five gold medals. In January 2019 she took part in the National Veteran Championship and established a new national record.

**Masters Athletics is a class of the sport of athletics for veteran athletes in the events of track and field, road running and cross country running master athletic*

***The European Veterans Athletics Championships are the biannual championships for masters athletics events.*