

## OBITUARIES



**Matti Nykänen (FIN)**, \*17 July 1963 in Jyväskylä; †4 February 2019 in Joutseno. Nykänen was the winner of a record four Olympic gold medals for ski jumping, and is still considered one of the greatest ski jumpers ever. At the 1984 Winter Olympics he won the large hill competition and placed second on the normal hill behind Jens Weißflog (GDR). In 1988, he won both events and captured a third gold medal in the newly introduced team event.

In 1982, he was the world champion on the large hill and then, from 1984 through 1989 won four World Championship golds in a row in the team. He won silver in 1985 on the normal hill, bronzes on the large hill in 1985 and 1989 and in the team event in 1982 at the World Championships. The Finn competed at the World Ski Flying Championships, winning a gold in 1985, silver in 1990, and bronzes in 1983, 1986 and 1988.

In all, he won a total of 46 World Cup competitions (more than any other ski jumper through 2009). He gained the overall World Cup title four times between 1983 and 1988. He also won the Four Hills tournament twice (1982–83 and 1987–88) and won at the Holmenkollen Ski Festival in 1982 and 1987. In 1987, he was awarded the Holmenkollen Medal. Nykänen won

13 Finnish titles in ski jumping and was Finland's Athlete of the Year in 1985 and 1988.

In 1991, after retiring from sports, Nykänen launched a career as a pop singer. His first album *Yllätysten yö* (The Night of Surprises) was recorded in 1992 and sold over 25,000 copies. Five years later, in 1996, he tried his hand in politics for a short while, when he was elected to the Uuranen City Council. Beset by financial difficulties at the end of 1990s, Nykänen worked, among other things, in a striptease act. In 1999, he met sausage millionaires Mervi Tapola; they were married in 2001. In 2002 he made a comeback as a singer.

Throughout his personal life Nykänen had a violent streak. He was sent to prison for domestic violence as well as for stabbing a patron at a bar. After his last prison sentence it seemed that Nykänen had made some effort to stay out of trouble. He started ski jumping again, winning the 2008 World Senior Championships, and, in 2009, had his own cooking show on Finnish television. But on Christmas Day 2009 Nykänen was arrested again, under suspicion of stabbing his wife Tapola and trying to throttle her with a bathrobe belt, only to be released three days later when his wife dropped the charges. It was later revealed that the couple had filed divorce petitions on 14 separate occasions during the summer of 2009, but they were always withdrawn a few days later.

Yet it cannot be overlooked that Nykänen was arguably the greatest of ski jumpers. (TK)

**Yurik Vardanyan (URS)**, \*13 June 1956 in Leninakan/ARM; †1 November 2018 in USA. Although he won only one Olympic medal, gold in 1980, Vardanyan was, throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the world's most dominant weightlifter. He took up weightlifting in 1970 under the tutelage of his uncle

Sergey Vardanyan. He won his first senior world title in 1977 in the middleweight class. Moving up to light-heavyweight, he added six more world titles: 1978–81, 1983 and 1985. He won the light-heavyweight gold at the 1980 Olympics, with a total of 400.0 kg, which, at the same Olympics, would have been sufficient for him to win gold at two higher classes as well as a bronze in heavyweight class. Vardanyan would almost certainly have won another gold medal in 1984 were it not for the Soviet boycott. In 1982 he won silver in the middle-heavyweight class at the World Championships.

Vardanyan also won one European middleweight title in 1977, four light-heavyweight titles in 1978, 1980–81 and 1983 and middle-heavyweight silver in 1982 and light-heavyweight silver in 1984. During his career, Vardanyan set 42 world records, five as a middleweight (three in snatch, one in clean & jerk and one in total), 29 as a light-heavyweight (nine in snatch, 11 in clean & jerk and nine in total), and eight as a middle-heavyweight (three in snatch, three in clean & jerk and two in total).

His final light-heavyweight world record total of 405.0 kg set in 1984 stayed unbeaten until 1992 when the IWF reconstructed the weight classes. Even after the reconstruction, when 2.5 kg heavier athletes were allowed to compete as light-heavyweights, his record has not been surpassed.



In 1985 Vardanyan was elected to the Armenian SSR Supreme Soviet parliament, and decided to retire from weightlifting to concentrate on politics. In 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union, he immigrated to the United States, settling in Los Angeles. He returned to his home country in 2009, and served as the advisor to former Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan. In 2014, he became the Armenian ambassador to Georgia and served until 2017.

In the United States, he worked as a weightlifting trainer, coaching his son, Norair, who won the US title as a middle-heavyweight in 2008 and participated in the 2012 London Olympics. (TK)

**Věra Růžičková (TCH)**, \*10 August 1928 in Brno; †24 November 2018 in Brno. At the 1948 London Olympics, Věra Růžičková had originally been a substitute on the Czechoslovakian women's gymnastic team, but was moved up to the first team when Eliska Misáková contracted a fatal illness. Růžičková then helped her team win a gold medal in the women's all-around.

She retired from active competition the following year and took up coaching and sports administration, remaining active into the 1970s.

Prior to World War II, Růžičková had been a swimmer and a diver. Following the war she played basketball. Her father had always encouraged her to lead an active physical life. (PT)

**Heinz Fütterer (FRG)**, \*14 October 1931 Illingen/Baden; †10 February 2019 in Elchesheim-Illingen. Fütterer, nicknamed 'The White Lightning,' was one of the top European sprinters in the early 1950s. He qualified for the 1952 West German Olympic team, but due to an injury was unable to take part in Helsinki.

The highlight of his career came in 1954, when he earned two titles at the European Championships in Berne over 100 and 200 metres.

In the same year he equaled the 100-metres world record in hand-timed 10.2 s, first reached in 1936 by Jesse Owens (USA) and then equaled by four other runners.

He was so popular in Germany that he was voted Sportsman of the Year in 1954 – in front of the famous Fritz Walter, the captain of the world champion football team. In 1956 at the Melbourne Games he won a bronze medal in the 4x100 m relay.

Fütterer was trained as a fisherman. He later worked as a self-employed representative for a large German sports manufacturer. (VK)

**Soslan Andiyev (URS)**, \*21 April 1952 in Vladikavkaz/RUS, †22 November 2018 in Moscow. Andiyev was the leading super-heavyweight freestyle wrestler of the 1970s. Gaining a spot on the Soviet team in 1973, he immediately showed his wrestling prowess by defeating American giant Chris Taylor at a World Cup meet.



His fame continued to rise, as the tall North Ossetian won four World Championships (1973, 1975, 1977–78), two Olympic gold medals (1976, 1980) and three European Championships (1974–75, 1982). He also won the World Cup in 1976 and 1981 and silver at the 1974 World Championships. He would have been a medal contender at the 1984 Olympics, had the Soviet not boycotted the Games. At the Soviet Championships, Andiyev gained seven titles (1973–78, 1980).

After finishing his sporting career, Andiyev worked as a wrestling coach in Vladikavkaz. From 1990–98, he

was Vice-President of the Russian NOC (ROC). Andiyev was inducted into the FILA International Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2006. (TK)

**Boris Kokorev (URS)**, \*20 April 1959 in Tbilisi/GE0; †22 October 2018 in Moscow. Kokorev was a five-time Olympian sports shooter, participating in 1988 for the Soviet Union, and in 1992 for the Unified Team (EUN). After the breakdown of the Soviet Union he competed for Russia, claiming the gold medal in the free pistol 50 metres event at the 1996 Atlanta Games. He then came back again as a competitor in 2000 and in 2004, but failed to medal. At the World Championships from 1985–2007 he earned 13 medals (6–4–3). By profession, he was a policeman. (WR)



**Yevgeny Zimin (URS)**, \*6 August 1947 in Moscow; †1 28 December 2018 in Moscow. Zimin started to play ice hockey with Lokomotiv Moscow in 1964. He joined Spartak in 1965 and played there until 1974. Playing with Spartak, he helped win two Soviet titles (1967, 1969) and was a runner-up at the 1970 European Champions Cup. From 1974–76 Zimin played with SKA Moscow Oblast before ending his career with Krylya Sovetov Moscow in 1976–77.

Internationally, Zimin won two Olympic golds (1968, 1972), was world champion three times (1968, 1969 and 1971) and European champion twice (1968, 1969). He also was a runner-up at the 1971 European Championships.

In 1972 Zimin took part in the legendary Summit Series between Canada and Soviet Union, playing in two games, scoring two goals, and making ice hockey history by scoring the first goal in the Summit Series. After retiring from active competition, Zimin worked as a coach with Spartak and was their head coach in 1984–85. He was also head coach for the hockey team Russian Stars, which won the Spartak Cup from 1994–99. (TK)

**Shinobu Sekine (JPN)**, \*20 September 1943 in Oarai; †18 December 2018 in Tokyo. Sekine was the judo gold medallist in middleweight class at the 1972 Olympics. He also won a bronze medal in the open class at the 1972 World Championships.



Sekine won two medals at the 1966 Asian Championships, a gold in middleweight and a bronze in open class. Sekine was known for his tai otoshi throw. He was a ninth Dan at the Kodokan Judo Institute.

Later he became President of the Judo Federation of Tokyo. He was a coach and advisor for the All-Japan Judo Federation, and served as an international referee, judging at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Sekine was also an instructor for the Tokyo Police Department and Heisei International University. (BM)



**Antal Bolvari (HUN)**, \*6 May 1932 in Kaposvár; †8 January 2019 in Budapest. Bolvári started his sports career as a swimmer, setting multiple Hungarian records as a youth. At the World Festival of Youth and Students in 1951, he won silver in both the 200- and 400-metre backstrokes and was also a member of the gold-medal Hungarian water polo team, thus achieving his greatest success as a water polo player.

Between 1952 and 1956, he competed for Honvéd and was a member of the Olympic winning team at Helsinki and Melbourne. He also helped win the European title in 1954. At the 1952 Olympics, Bolvári played in six games, scoring one goal. Four years later, at the

Melbourne Olympics, he played in four matches and scored two goals, including one in the infamous match against the USSR.

Bolvári returned to Melbourne after the Olympics to his bride. He played in Melbourne and Perth and then, in 1961, went back to Hungary. After coming home, he played for Vasas, Spartacus, and FTC, winning a national title with FTC.

After completing his athletic career in 1969, Bolvári worked as a trainer with Bp. Spartacus and then with Honvéd and Hungary's junior squad. In 1980, when Mihály Mayer became the national coach, he asked Bolvári to be his assistant. From 1979–88, Bolvári was head coach of Bp. Honvéd, and then, until 1992, he again worked for Bp. Spartacus, leading them to the final of the 1988 LEN Winners' Cup.

Bolvári was an officer in the Hungarian army, dedicated to sports. At the 50-year jubilee celebration of the Helsinki Olympics, Bolvári carried the Hungarian flag at the re-enactment of the Opening Ceremony. (RL)

**Raghubir Singh Bhola (IND)**, \*18 August 1927 in Multan/PAK; †21 January 2019 in New Delhi. Singh Bhola was a hockey player who competed for India at the 1956 and 1960 Olympic Games, winning a gold and silver medal, respectively. He also toured with the Indian squad in Singapore and Malaysia in 1954 and in 1959 took part in a 1959 European tour. He captained the Indian Air Force and Services teams from 1954–60 and helped win three Inter-Services Hockey Championships.

Singh Bhola also played on national champion teams twice. He later served Indian hockey as an international umpire, was a selector for the International Hockey Federation (IHF), managed the national team, and served as a television commentator at the Olympics, as well as a government observer. (BM)

**Hans Maier (NED)**, \*11 July 1916 in Madioen (Dutch East Indies/INA); †1 September 2018 in The Hague. Maier, a member of the Dutch water polo team that finished fifth at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, was, at age 102, the oldest living Dutch Olympian when he died.

Born the son of an army officer, he taught himself to swim. He never had an official swimming certificate. At age 18, he left the Dutch East Indies with his parents and returned to the Amsterdam to study economics. He played for the club Het Y as a member of the third team when he caught the eye of the national water polo coach Frans Kuyper. Maier was an extremely fast swimmer (record holder 100 metres breaststroke) and Kuyper needed such a player on his team.

In an interview in 2016, Maier said that he enjoyed the Games of Berlin and admired the organisation. In later years he realized how naive he had been: "But what did you know as a 20-year-old in 1936?" (JQH, Vol. 24, No. 2/2016, pp. 51–53). Yet he never regretted that he participated.

In his professional life Maier was financial manager of the chemical branch of Shell. (RP)

**Walter Krüger (GDR)**, \*11 April 1932 in Altenpleen; †28 October 2018 in Plehn. Raised as a farmer, Krüger began his competitive career as a handball player. In 1954, he took part in a German–Soviet course in which the well-known Russian coach Dmitri Markov (1904–1979) recommended to him that he switch to the javelin event.

Krüger was 27 years old when he made the East German national team in 1957. His first international success came two years later when he placed fourth at the international student competitions in Vienna.

At the Olympic Games in 1960 in Rome, in which he participated for the unified German team, he reached 79.36 m in his first attempt. At the beginning of the

second round gusty winds came up, making distance a matter of luck. Favorites such as world record holder Al Cantello (USA) and two-time European champion Janusz Sidlo (POL) were unable to place. Victor Zybuloenko (URS), who also scored his 84.64 m in the first round, won in the end. Behind him, in an upset, Krüger got a silver medal.

After his sports career he worked as a coach in Schwerin and Rostock. From 1980 to 1990 he was honorary deputy mayor in the village of Gross-Mohrdorf on the Baltic Sea. (VK)

**Eduard Alexandrovich von Falz-Fein (LIE)**, \*14 September 1912 in Havrylivka/UKR; †17 November 2018 in Vaduz. Falz-Fein was born in Russia, but fled with his family after the 1917 revolution to Berlin. In 1936, he opened a souvenir shop in the Liechtenstein community of Ruggell and worked as a journalist.



In 1935 the Baron founded the NOC of Liechtenstein (LOC) and ensured that a team competed in 1936 Olympics. Holding positions in the LOC, the International Luge Federation (FIL) and the Liechtenstein Cycling Association, he attended 16 Summer and Winter Games. At the Opening Ceremony of the 1972 Olympics in Munich, he was the flag bearer for his team (JOH, Vol. 26, No. 1/2018, pp. 26-29).

During a visit to Vaduz in February 2017, IOC President Thomas Bach presented Baron von Falz-Fein with the Pierre de Coubertin Medal in recognition of his long service to the Olympic Movement. (VK)



**Donald George Bragg (USA)** \*15 May 1935 in Penns Grove, New Jersey; †16 February 2019 in Oakley, Calif. The 1960 Olympic champion was the last of the great pre-fiberglass pole vaulters. He won the 1960 US Final Trials with a new world record of 4.80 and this remains a world 'best' with a metal pole. He had won the 1959 Pan American Games, the 1959 AAU outdoor and, after sharing first place at the AAU indoor in 1956 and 1958, he was an outright winner in 1959-1961. While at Villanova, he won the NCAA in 1955 and was IC4A champion, both indoors and out, for three successive years (1955-57).

Don Bragg earned the nickname 'Tarzan' as a result of his life-long dream to play that role in the movies. After his Olympic victory his plans were thwarted by injury, legal problems, and scandal. He did play the role in one movie but it was never released. After his dreams of movie stardom faded, Bragg became athletic director at Stockton State (NJ) College and the owner of a boys' summer camp near the school. (BM)

**Maximilian Reinelt (GER)**, \*24 August 1988 in Ulm; †9 February 2019 in St. Moritz/SUI. The rower was part of the German team that won the gold medal in the eight competition at the 2012 London Games. At the 2016 Olympics, he won the silver medal. In 2010 and 2011, he was world champion in the eight. From

2013 through 2016, he was a four-time European champion. Together with his team he won a record 36 consecutive races.

After the 2016 Olympics, Reinelt retired to focus on studying medicine. In 2019, he became the doctor for the Germany U23 rowing squad. During vacation in St. Moritz he died in a cross-country skiing accident. According to the Graubünden cantonal police, his death had a "medical cause". The following week, he had been scheduled to escort the U23 squad to their training camp in Spain. (VK)

**Nina Viktorovna Baldycheva (URS)**, \*18 July 1947 in Travino; †27 January 2019 in St. Petersburg. The Russian cross-country skier made her international debut at the 1970 World Championships, where she won gold in the relay and a bronze in the 5 km. She then competed at the 1972 Olympics, placing 10<sup>th</sup> in the 5 km, but was not selected to the relay team. At the 1974 World Championships she won her second title in the relay, while at the 1976 Olympics, Baldycheva again won gold in the relay, placing third in the 5 km and fourth in the 10 km.

She was not selected to the Soviet 1978 World Championships team and made her last international appearance at the 1980 Olympics, where she won silver in the relay and was fifth in 5 km and sixth in 10 km. Domestically, she won one individual Soviet title, at 5 km in 1971, and eight relay titles (1969-73, 1975-76, 1979). After her sporting career, Baldycheva (then Fyedorova) worked as a cross-country skiing coach in St. Petersburg. (TK)



BM = Bill Mallon, PT = Paul Tchir, RL = Rudolf Laky, RP = Ruud Paauw, TK = Taavi Kalju, VK = Volker Kluge, WR = Wolf Reinhardt

**The ISOH offers the families of the deceased its sincere condolences.**