

YEVGENI ROMANOVICH GRISHIN

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The man they dubbed the "Greyhound on Ice": Olympic Speedskating Champion Yevgeni Romanovich Grishin [Евгений Романович Гришин] has died.

He suffered a heart attack during the summer and passed away on July 9th 2005 in Moscow. He was 74. From the 1954 World Championships in Sapporo (JPN), he had been the pre-eminent Soviet skater over the shorter distances and won four Olympic gold medals as well as a clutch of other titles.

He was born on March 23rd, 1931 in the city of Tula, about 200 kilometres south of the Russian capital. At the age of 14 he had decided to concentrate on Ice Skating in the *Central Army Sports Club* (ZSKA) of Moscow. Earlier he spent his free time skiing, tobogganing and skating on the frozen lakes. Furthermore he was a very good cyclist.

In 1946 GRISHIN became apprenticed to an engravers in Moscow where he later worked as goldsmith.

By 1947 he was already taking part in domestic youth tournaments and became member of the national speed skating team. He performed well especially at 500m and his international breakthrough finally came during the World Championships in Sapporo on January 16th and 17th, 1954 as he beat his compatriot Juri SERGEYEV and took the bronze medal.

International rules dictated for the all-round competition which was part of the World and European Championships that the athletes qualified for the final 10,000m-race according to their preliminary ranking after 5,000m - a clear disadvantage for the sprinter GRISHIN. In all-round competitions he was always victorious in the 500m-race but lost ground later

On January 10th, 1955 GRISHIN set a new 1500m World Record: 2.09.8 min on the Medeo Track in Kazakhstan's Alm Ata beating the mark set by Valery CHAIKIN, USSR. Two days later, he lowered the Finn Clans THUNBERG'S 1,000m record to 1.22,8 min.

At the VIIth Olympic Winter Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo Yevgeni GRISHIN was a member of the outstanding Russian team which took three of four speed skating gold medals. GRISHIN and his team-mates became the "greyhounds on ice": On the floating ice disc of Misurina Lake GRISHIN skated on January 28th, 1956 over the 500m-leg to the gold medal: 40.2 seconds and new World Record! He was more than half a second faster than second place Rafael GRACH, also USSR, in 40.8 sec. With this he equalled his own record set on the natural Misurina lake track only six days before. At 25 many thought GRISHIN too old but he

shared the gold medal with World Record holder Juri MIKHAILOV, USSR. They set a new World Record time of 2.08,6 min over 1,500m.

At the 1956 European Championships on February 25th and 26th in the Helsinki Olympic Stadium he won his one and only title in all-round competitions. There he demonstrated his outstanding qualities as a sprinter but also his shortcomings at the longer distances.

In 1957 he took part in European and World Championships but did not win a medal at either. Also at the World Championships in Davos (SUI) 1960 success eluded him with the consolation of first place after 500m. Not until the VIIIth Olympic Winter Games in Squaw Valley 1960 did GRISHIN remount the victor's rostrum. He added to his personal collection of Olympic medals with two gold. First he won on the 400m long artificial ice track of the Blyth Memorial Arena on February 24th, 1960 over 500m in 40.2 sec against William Dale DISNEY (USA) (40.3 sec) and on February 26th, followed a second success. This time he recorded the same time as the Norwegian Edgard Roald AAS 2.10 min. In subsequent years GRISHIN still competed in all-round competitions but failed due to his performance over 5,000m. At the World and European Championships between 1961 and 1963 he was victorious on the first leg but dropped back later in the overall ranking. Twelve times he would have been awarded gold medals for his performance over 500m, six times each at European and World Championships and another two over 1,500m.

In the national championship he dominated for the best part of a decade over 500m, winning at 500m from 1956 to 1965, with the exception of those in 1958 and 1960. On January 27th, 1963 the spectators at the Medeo Complex bore witness to the first man to complete the distance in under 40 seconds. Yevgeni GRISHIN skated 500m in 39.6 sec and improved his own World Record. This wasn't enough: The following day, January 28th, 1963, he beat his World Record again an improved mark of 39.5 sec. This record was to last for exactly five years until it was improved by Germany's Erhard KELLER.

The Olympic Winter Games in Innsbruck 1964 brought GRISHIN'S last Olympic Medal, which was also to prove his last success at international level. On February 4th, 1964, Richard MCDERMOTT from the USA set a new 500m Olympic record 40.1 sec to take the gold. GRISHIN, Vladimir ORLOV, USSR, and Alv GJESTVANG, NOR, all recorded the same time of 40.6 sec and shared the silver medal.

In the 1,500m on February 6th GRISHIN could only place 11th.



Yevgeni Grishin and Juri Mikhailov, 1956

He made his international farewells at the 1968 Winter Olympic Games in Grenoble and this Russian Army Officer almost did so in style. This time only a tenth of a second separated him from another Olympic silver medal.

The race itself went to new World Record holder KELLER (FRG) but the silver was shared by Terry McDERMOTT(USA) and Norwegian Magne THOMASSON in 40.5 sec.

After the 1967/1968 season GRISHIN retired from an active athletic career and became employed as a coach for cycling and speed skating at his home club ZSKA Moscow. He supervised the Junior National Team and the Olympic Team for Sapporo 1972 and Innsbruck 1976. Among his proteges was multiple world champion and Olympic medallist Valery MURATOV.

For his excellent achievements Yevgeni GRISHIN was awarded the title "Merited Coach of the USSR" and the Lenin-Order. In 1969 he published his first book *500 Metres*, followed by *Either Or* and *Years of Triumphant Victories* in 1999 and lastly in 2001 with *This is not Forgotten*.

Facts and Figures

Olympic Games

Cortina d'Ampezzo (ITA) 1956: 1st in 500m and 1,500m
 Squaw Valley (USA) 1960: 1st in 500m and 1,500m
 Innsbruck (AUT) 1964: 2nd in 500m, 11th in 1,500m
 Grenoble (FRA) 1968: 4th in 500m

World Championships (All-Round)

Sapporo (JPN) 1954: 3rd
 Moscow (URS) 1955: participated but did not qualify for the 10,000m
 Oslo (NOR) 1956: 3rd
 Ostersund (SWE) 1957: 15th

Davos (SUI) 1960: participated but did not qualify for the 10,000m
 Goteborg (SWE) 1961: participated but did not qualify for the 10,000m
 Moscow (URS) 1962: participated but did not start in the 10,000m
 Karuizawa (JPN) 1963: participated but did not qualify for the 10,000m

European Championships (All-Round)
 Davos (SUI) 1954: 11th
 Falun (SWE) 1955: 9th
 Helsinki (FIN) 1956: 1st
 Oslo (SWE) 1957: 5th
 Helsinki (FIN) 1961: participated but did not qualify for the 10,000m
 Oslo (SWE) 1962: 7th

Russian Championships/Championships of the USSR
 1956: 1st in 500m, 3rd in All-Round
 1957: 1st in 500 and 1,500m, 3rd in All-Round
 1959: 1st in 500m
 1961: 1st in 500m
 1962: 1st in 500 and 1,500m
 1963: 1st in 500m
 1964: 1st in 500m
 1965: 1st in 500m

World Records

10 January 1955 in Alma Ata (Medeo Track): 2.09,8 min (1,500m)
 12 January 1955 in Alma Ata (Medeo Track): 1.22,8 min (1,000m)
 22 January 1956 in Cortina d'Ampezzo (Misurina Lake): 0.40,2 min (500m)
 28 January 1956 in Cortina d'Ampezzo (Misurina Lake): 0.40,2 min (500m)
 30 January 1956 in Cortina d'Ampezzo (Misurina Lake): 2.08,6 min (1,500m)
 27 January 1963 in Alma Ata (Medeo Track): 0.39,6 min (500m)
 28 January 1963 in Alma Ata (Medeo Track): 0.39,5 min (500m)

by Thomas Zawadzki