

JERZY KLEMPPEL †

24 April 1953 - 28 May 2004

Jerzy KLEMPPEL an Olympic bronze medallist in Handball at the Montreal Games has died at the age of 51 after a long illness.

KLEMPPEL enjoyed his greatest success in Handball but he had started his sports career in Ice Hockey. At the age of 15 he helped win the Polish Junior Championships with *Odra Opole*. However two years later he changed to handball after visiting a training session at *Gwardia Opole* in 1970. He made his debut in the second game in the Polish premier league when he scored 20 goals for *Zagonia Zabrze*. Soon after this match he played for *Ślask Wrocław* and was soon chosen for the national team, playing the same position (right wing) that he occupied for his club.

His own idols were Gheroghe GRUIA of Romania and GDR player Reiner GANSCHOW. His powerful scoring technique made the best of his height. At 1.92m he shot goals from a metre above his opponents. Additionally he was able to stay long enough in the air to delay his shot and



fool the opponent team's goal keeper. His first international success was the World Championships in 1974. The Polish team was built around him and came fourth. Two years later he took

part in the Montreal Olympic Games. The USSR team participated for the first time in the Olympic handball tournament and took gold beating Romania 19:15. The Polish team were only defeated by the eventual silver medallists Romania as they qualified for the bronze medal match against the Federal Republic of Germany KLEMPPEL inspired Poland

to a 21:16 victory for the bronze medal and in doing so became the tournament's leading scorer. At the 1978 World Championships Poland placed sixth, two years later at the Olympic Games in Moscow seventh. On both occasions KLEMPPEL scored most of the goals (47/44). After the World Championships in 1982 where his team became third KLEMPPEL left Poland for the Federal Republic of Germany and started playing for *Frisch Auf Göppingen*, a team that was

struggling against relegation from the Premier league. The *Polish handball federation* released the left-hander for various "monetary and performances in kind" and he accepted a two-year contract. One of his greatest achievements was to help keep his new club in Premier league handball. After the *German Handball Federation* (DHB) received information about irregular payments KLEMPER was suspended by the DHB and FA Göppingen relegated to second league. Nonetheless he kept up playing handball: Until 1987 He remained in the national squad until 1987 and with his club he achieved promotion to the premier league. He was Göppingen's leading scorer throughout his time there (1982-89) as he shot up to 44 % of all goals. In one match against TuS Hofweiler in 1984 he made a miracle come true: he shot one goal every three minutes on average and 19 altogether but his team still lost.

Three seasons in row KLEMPER was top-scorer (85/86, 86/87, 87/88), his records remain intact,

most goals (19) and most field-goals (16) during one (and the same) game.

Away from sport KLEMPER trained as a car mechanic and also as a businessman, but made more money out of his sports contracts but did not pay taxes and was arrested in 1989 for tax evasion as he tried to cross the German border in 1989.

Later he decided to go back to Poland and became coach and later manager of *Slask Wrocław*. With more than 240 international matches and more than 1,700 goals Jerzy KLEMPER is one the greatest handball players ever.

He passed away in a Wrocław hospital on May 28th 2004 not far away where he was born April 23rd 1953. He leaves behind his wife Barbara and his son Bartosz.

Thomas Zawadzki