

Obituaries



Eva Šuranová (TCH), *24 April 1946 in Ózd/HUN; †31 December 2016 in Bratislava/SVK. Eva Šuranová remains the only female athlete from Slovakia to have won an Olympic medal. The Munich Games in 1972 proved to be the competition of her life. She produced lifetime bests in a great contest with home favourite Heide Rosendahl and Diana Yorgova from Bulgaria. On her second attempt, she set a new Czechoslovak record 6.60 m and improved this to 6.67 m in the fourth round.

Two years later Šuranová enjoyed another starry moment. She won European Championship silver in Rome, leaping 6.60 m behind the Hungarian Ilona Bruzsenyák (6.65 m). She also took part in the Montreal Olympics, but failed to qualify for the final.

She had her greatest international successes in the long jump, yet she was actually national champion in four disciplines – eight times in long jump, but also once each in pentathlon, 100 metres hurdles and 100 metres. In all, she set 25 Czechoslovak records. In 2014, she was named “Sports Legend” by Slovak sports journalists. (ZL)

Jean Vuarnet (FRA), *18 January 1933 in Le Bardo/TUN; †2 January 2017 in Sallanches. The son of a doctor, he achieved his first significant alpine skiing success at the Coup Emile Allais in 1956. Yet France’s chief coach James Couttet refused to select him for that year’s Olympic Winter Games in Cortina. In 1957 Vuarnet achieved his first two national titles. He was destined to win seven in all. The following year he won World Championship bronze in the downhill and in the combined.

Vuarnet’s greatest success came in 1960 at the Winter Games in Squaw

Valley. He became the first Alpine Olympic champion to use a metal ski. He played an important part in the further development of a more aerodynamic ski technique, which was described as the tuck (“œuf”). He was also an author.

After his retirement he dedicated himself to building up winter sports area. From 1968 to 1972 he was manager of the Italian team, which included Olympic champions Gustavo Thöni and Piero Gros. After two disappointing years as Vice-President of the French Ski Federation (1972–1974), he founded a sports clothing and accessories company. The sunglasses collection which bore his name became best known of all.



Vuarnet was married to Edith Bonlieu, an Alpine skier who took part in the 1956 Games. The sister of 1964 giant slalom champion François Bonlieu (1937–1973) was a member of the Order of the Solar Temple and died in 1995 along with her son Patrick at a mass suicide in Switzerland. (VK)

Paul Bert Elvstrøm (DEN), *25 February 1928 in Hellerup; †7 December 2016 in Hellerup. One of only seven Olympians who won four consecutive gold medals. Elvstrøm got his first gold as a 20 year old in the Firefly class at the 1948 Games. Further Olympic victories followed in the Finn dinghy in 1952, 1956 and 1960. A reserve in 1964, he made the team again in 1968 and 1972. After an



interval of twelve years he returned to the Games in 1984. This time he competed alongside daughter Trine in the Tornado and finished fourth (They remain to date the only father/daughter combination in Olympic history). He had farewell at the 1988 Seoul Games when at the age of 60 he finished 15th in the Tornado.

Altogether he took part in the Games on eight occasions. He won 13 world titles in ten different classes of boats. His sailing career spanned 40 years during which he brought home 20 medals from international championships. In 1996, on the occasion of the centenary of the Danish Sports Federation, he was elected “Sportsman of the Century”.

Elvstrøm also reached the top in business. In 1954 he founded his own firm of sailmakers became a leader in the field. His technical innovations also enriched the sport of sailing and he also published a series of books about sailing. (VK)

Wim van der Voort (NED), *24 March 1923 in 's-Gravenzande; †23 October 2016 in Delft. He won speed-skating silver at the 1952 Oslo Winter Olympics in 2 min. 20.6 sec. He finished only 0.2 seconds behind the great Norwegian Hjalmar Andersen.

Van der Voort not only had to race against Andersen in the Bislett Stadium but also contend with the snow that just fell before he started. The previous year, Andersen had beaten him in the

World Championship in the same stadium. In the final race against each other, Andersen fell and van der Voort crossed the line first. But he agreed to skate again and this time Andersen prevailed. The Dutch coach and national federation were unsuccessful in their appeal against the organisers' decision. (BVH)



Faina Melnik (URS), *9 June 1945 in Bakota, Khmelnytskyi Oblast/UKR; †16 December 2016 in Moscow. A farmer's daughter, she took up athletics during her studies at the Institute of Physical Culture in Kiev. From 1968 she lived in Erevan, Armenia, where she was coached by Kim Bukhantsev, himself an Olympian in discus from 1956 to 1964. In 1971 after four invalid throws she produced a world record 64.22 m in the last round to take European Championship gold.

Melnik set ten more world marks, finally extending the record to 70.50 m (1976). Her sequence as world record holder was only briefly interrupted by the Romanian Argentina Menis who threw 67.22 m thirteen days after finishing second to Melnik at the Munich Olympics.

Melnik was undefeated in competition for a three year period. She defended her European title in 1974 but was unexpectedly beaten into fourth place at the 1976 Olympics. In the fifth round she did achieve 68.60 m, which would have been enough for silver, but the throw was disallowed because she had started her turn twice contrary to the rules. At the 1980 Games her

53.76 m in the qualification round was not enough to reach the final.

From 1977 to 1979, she was married to the Bulgarian discus thrower Velko Velev. She subsequently worked as a coach and looked after the Olympic shot put champions Natalya Lisovskaya (1988) and Svetlana Krivilyova (1992). After studying medicine in the 1980s in Moscow she also worked as a doctor. (VK)

Heinz Ulzheimer (FRG), *27 December 1925 in Frankfurt-Höchst; †18 December 2016 in Bad Sooden-Allendorf. Rudolf Harbig, who on 12th August 1939 had run a world record over 400 m in 46.6 sec, thereafter visited Ulzheimer's school in Höchst, where he distributed signed cards. From then on he was Ulzheimer's hero, who began serious sport in 1944 – in that year, Harbig died on the Eastern Front.

Ulzheimer had to wait a long time before he could prove his running talent. The Germans were excluded from the 1948 Games. When they were permitted to start in 1952, the almost 27 year old suspected that these would be his only Games. And he knew how to take advantage of his chance: in the 800 m he came third in a personal best (1:49.7 min) behind Malvin Whitfield (USA) and Arthur Wint (JAM). After the Second World War this was the first German Olympic medal at Summer Games.

The Frankfurt car mechanic, who secured a second Olympic bronze in Helsinki in the 4x400 m relay, was subsequently invited to the indoor season in the USA. There he was the first foreigner to win over 1000 yards in Madison Square Garden. With a further bronze in the 4x400 m relay at the 1954 European Championships ended his sporting career.

He did his examination as motor vehicle service technician and opened a petrol station. In his last 15 years of employment he looked after the Frankfurt Sports Museum, which was closed when the stadium was rebuilt. (VK)

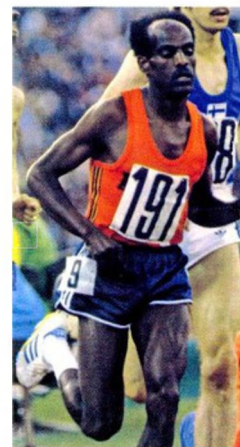
Muruse Yefter (ETH), *15 May 1944 in Awsaja, Province of Tigre; †23 December 2016 in Toronto, Ontario/CAN. Although only 1.61 metres tall, Yefter was a very great runner. Called up to the air force to Addis Abeba, he met his sporting hero Abebe Bikila, who was preparing for his third Olympic Games in 1968.

Yefter first drew attention to himself in an USA vs. Africa match in North Carolina. He won over 10,000 metres. At the 1972 Olympics in Munich he took bronze over the same distance behind the Finn Lasse Viren and Belgian Emiel Puttemans. He might well have could have been successful also over 5000 metres, but he arrived too late for his heat. An overzealous steward had prevented him from entering to the stadium.

Yefter missed the 1976 Olympic Games, when Ethiopia were one of 15 black African NOCs to boycott the Games. The following year he achieved the 5000 m/10,000 m double at the inaugural IAAF World Cup and repeated his success in 1979. The same year he also won 5000 and 10,000 m at the Soviet Spartakiade. The following year he returned to Moscow for the Olympics.

By now 36 and a captain in the army, he celebrated his greatest triumph with gold over 5000 and 10,000 m. His dream of ending his career in 1984 with an Olympic marathon victory remained unfulfilled. Ethiopia boycotted Los Angeles and also stayed away from the 1988 Games in Seoul.

The father of seven children, he moved to Canada in 1990 to work as a coach. He had always been known throughout the Western world as "Miruts Yifter" and nicknamed "Yifter the Shifter" because of his finishing speed. In fact he confirmed to the author in a long interview that the correct spelling should be Muruse Yefter. His handwritten confirmation is in the archive. (VK)





Frank Isaac Spellman (USA), *17 September 1922 in Malvern, PA; †12 January 2017 in Gulf Breeze, FL. He started weightlifting in 1940 and within two years he had won the junior middleweight title. In the same year he enlisted in the US Army. He took part in the Normandy Invasion in 1944. When peace returned, he finished third in the World Championships and a silver the following year as a prelude to Olympic gold in 1948. His career was a short one but he also took 1946 and 1948 AAU titles and in 1950 a gold medal at the Maccabiah Games.

In 1961, at the age of 39, he came out of retirement and won another AAU Championship. He made his career as a professional photographer and was also considered an accomplished artist, musician, and woodworker. *(PT/VK)*

Nadezhda Fyodorovna Olizarenko (URS), *28 November 1953 in Bryansk/RUS; †17 February 2018 in Odessa/UKR. The Russian began in 1967 with athletics. From 1972 she concentrated on the 800 m. Under her maiden name of Mushta she came second in 1978 in the European championship behind her compatriot Tatyana Providokhina.

In the following year she married the Ukrainian steeplechase runner Sergey Olizarenko. After she had set a world record on 12th June 1980 with 1:54.9 min, she was considered top favourite for the Moscow Games,

a role she lived up to. She became Olympic champion and improved her world record in the race to 1:53.43 min. Over 1500 m she won the bronze medal.

After Moscow she retired to have a baby. But her plan to end her career in 1984 in Los Angeles with a second gold failed due to the Soviet Olympic boycott. For that reason she postponed her retirement to the next Games, which was only partly successful. She did become European champion in 1986, but at the Games in Seoul she was eliminated in the semi-final. *(VK)*

Yury Mikhailovich Poyarkov (URS), *10 February 1937 in Kharkiv/UKR; †10 February 2017 in Kharkiv. Poyarkov from Burevestnik Kharkiv played with the Soviet team from 1960–1972 and was the captain from 1965 to 1972.

He won two Olympic golds (1964, 1968), two World Championships titles (1960, 1962), two European Championships titles (1967, 1971) and a World Cup in 1965. He also won bronzes at the 1972 Olympics, 1966 World Championship, 1963 European Championship and 1969 World Cup.

After finishing his sporting career, Poyarkov worked as a professor of Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, being the head of sport games department. He was also active with Ukrainian Volleyball Federation, being the member of their executive committee. He died on his 80th birthday. *(TK)*

William Norvall "Bill" Craig (USA), *16 January 1945 in Culver City, Cal.; †1 January 2017 in Newport Beach, Cal. Although Craig was rather below his best on the breaststroke leg of the medley relay at the 1964 Olympics, his USA team still became the first ever to swim below four minutes for the event. He had also been a member of the gold medal medley relay team at the 1963 Pan-American Games.

Craig later owned a restaurant, 'Billy's at the Beach', in Newport Beach, California. This was a Hawaiian style eatery based on concepts he found in the Hawaiian Islands, his favorite place. He also worked in other roles, including finance and teaching. *(BM)*



Jan Szczepański (POL), *20 November 1939 Małecz; †15 January 2017 Warsaw. A lightweight boxer, he won Olympic gold at the 1972 Games in Munich in what was essentially his second career.

He had been national champion in 1962 and 1963 but was then arrested for alcohol and drug abuse. Released in 1968, he set about rebuilding his career and won national titles again from 1969 to 1971. He won European Championship gold in 1971 before his victory in Munich. The following year he retired and worked as a boxing coach. He also appeared in a number of Polish films. *(WR)*

Vasily Kudinov (RUS), *17 February 1969 in Ilyinka, Astrakhan Oblast; †11 February 2017 in Astrakhan. A left backcourt player, Kudinov started his professional career with local Dynamo Astrakhan in 1987. After winning gold at the 1989 World Junior Championship, he was selected to the Soviet team in 1990 and played with them (and later Russian) for 14 seasons until the 2004 Olympics. He won the Olympic



golds in 1992 and 2000 and bronze in 2004, while being fifth at the 1996 Olympics.

Kudinov was also the world champion in 1993 and 1997 and European champion in 1996. He was the top goalscorer with 50 goals at the 1994 European Championship and was selected to the all-star team as the best left backcourt player at the 1994 European and 1997 and 1999 World Championships.

From 1993–1997 he played in France with US Ivry and won the French title in 1997 and French Cup in 1996. From 1997–2001, Kudinov played in Germany, first with VfL Hameln until 2000 and then one season with SC Magdeburg. With Magdeburg, Kudinov won both the German title and EHF Cup in 2001. From 2001 to 2004 Kudinov played in Japan, with Honda Suzuka and won three Japanese titles in a row from 2002 to 2004, before finishing his career again with Dynamo Astrakhan in 2004–2005 season.

After that he worked as a children's coach with Zarya Kaspiya in Astrakhan. His son Sergey belongs to the Russian team since 2014. (TK)

Samuel Lee (USA) *1 August 1920 in Fresno, Cal.; †2 December 2016 in Newport Beach, Cal. The Olympic champion in high diving of 1948 and 1952 as well as bronze medallist in London in the 3-metres springboard was the son of Korean immigrants. Although his father was qualified in civil engineering, he found no work in California, whereupon he opened a chop suey restaurant and market.

After the family had moved to Highland Park, a suburb of Los Angeles, Sammy Lee got the opportunity to take part in an "international day", where he was discovered for diving. Under the tutelage of the coach Jim Ryan, Lee in 1938 was the first diver to perform the two-and a half salto backwards and in 1940 the two-and a half Auerbach salto. In 1942 he became US champion for the first time.



After he had concentrated in the next years on his medical studies at the Southern California School, which he concluded with an MD in 1947, he managed a comeback. In 1946 and 1947 he won the national championships at the platform event.

Lee went to the US Army Medical Corps in Korea from 1953 to 1955, where he specialized in diseases of the ear. As a coach he looked after in 1960 the Olympic champion in high diving Robert Webster. He wrote a popular book about diving and in 1971 discovered Greg Louganis, at that time only eleven, whom he coached from 1975 to 1978 and who became four times Olympic champion. At the Games of 1956, 1964 and 1968, Lee was used as a judge. In Los Angeles' Koreatown there has been a Sammy Lee Square at the corner of Olympic Boulevard/ Normandie Avenue. See also: JOH, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 15–21. (VK)

(BM = Bill Mallon, BvH = Bep van Houdt, PT = Paul Tchir, TK = Tarmo Kalju, VK = Volker Kluge, WR = Wolf Reinhardt, ZL = Zdenka Letenayová)

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