

## OBITUARIES

**Arnie Robinson (USA)**, \*7 April 1948 in San Diego, California; †1 December 2020 in San Diego. After taking the 1970 NCAA long-jump title while attending San Diego State, Arnie Robinson won many more major titles. Only DeHart Hubbard in 1920s and Ralph Boston could match his record of six AAU titles. Robinson won the Pan American title in 1971 as well as the first World Cup long-jump championship in 1977 and the silver medal at the 1975 Pan American Games.

In 1972 he earned the Olympic bronze medal at Munich and with winning the gold medal in 1976, Robinson set a career best of 8.35 m. He was still in the top flight of long jumpers in 1980 when he placed sixth at the Final Olympic Trials. (BM/WR)

**James Price McLane, Jr. (USA)**, \*13 September 1930 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; †13 December 2020 in Ipswich, Massachusetts. In 1944, Jimmy McLane became the

youngest-ever men's AAU swimming champion by winning the long-distance event at the age of 13. At the 1948 Olympics, as a 17-year-old, he won two gold medals in the 1,500 m freestyle and as a member of the 4×200-metre freestyle relay. He also earned a silver for his second-place in the 400 m freestyle. Four years later, at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, Finland, McLane finished fourth in the 1,500 m and seventh in the 400 m free. He gained his third Olympic gold in the freestyle relay. In a long career, which ended with his retirement in 1955, he won, in addition to his Olympic medals, three golds at the 1955 Pan American Games, 21 AAU titles and, while attending Yale, he won two NCAA championships in 1953.

McLane joined the Army after graduating from Yale in 1953, and served for two years, working with Army intelligence during the Korean Conflict. He then worked for *Life Magazine* and then General Mills in mergers and acquisitions. McLane stayed active throughout his life, swimming recreationally, until he

was forced to stop from declining health, due to multiple sclerosis. He was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in 1970. (BM/WR)

**Wojciech Zabłocki (POL)**, \*6 December 1930 in Warsaw; †5 December 2020 in Warsaw. Zabłocki was a four-time fencing Olympian who won three medals in team sabre competitions, silvers in 1956 and 1960, and a bronze in 1964. He was a nine-time medallist at the World Championships with four gold medals, all in team sabre in 1959 and 1961–63.

Zabłocki married well-known Polish actress and activist Alina Janowska (1923–2017), who participated in the Warsaw Uprising. He was an architect who designed several sports facilities, and also worked as a watercolour artist. For his achievements in fencing and architecture he earned many honours, including being made a Knight of the Kalos Kagathos medal (1985) and a member of its chapter. He was awarded the Medal for Outstanding Sports Achievements,

the Knight's Cross (1960), the Officer's Cross (1996), and the Commander's OOP, as well as the Olympic Laurel of the Polish Olympic Committee, and the IOC Medal of Sport and Science (1992).

In the 1990s, Zabłocki promoted organising the Olympic Games in Warsaw, along with his colleague Ryszard Parulski. He was responsible for the architectural concept of the project, which failed to materialise. (BM)

**Ernesto Canto (MEX)**, \*18 October 1959 in Mexico City; †20 November 2020 in Mexico City. Canto was the next Mexican race walking star after Daniel Bautista (Olympic gold in 1976) and Raúl González. Canto came into prominence after winning the 20 km walk at the 1981 IAAF World Race Walking Cup. After winning the 20 km at the inaugural IAAF World Championships in Athletics in 1983, as well as the 20 km gold at the 1983 Pan American Games, and 20 km silver at the 1983 IAAF World Race Walking Cup, he was considered the favourite for the 20 km walk gold at

the 1984 Olympics. Canto did not disappoint, winning the gold medal comfortably seven seconds ahead of compatriot González, who was better known as a 50 km walk specialist.

After his Olympic triumph, Canto continued competing, but with less success. He won bronze in the 5K walk at the 1987 World Indoor Championships, but was disqualified at the 1988 Olympics. Canto also won the 20 km silver at the 1988 Ibero-American Championships, and won the 20 km at the 1990 Pan American Race Walking Cup. His last major win came at the 1990 Goodwill Games, where he won the 20 km track walk. (PT)

**Rafer Lewis Johnson (USA)**, \*18 August 1934 in Hillsboro, Texas; †2 December 2020 in Sherman Oaks, California. Johnson made his decathlon debut in 1954 and the next year won the Pan American Games title and set the first of his three world decathlon records. Johnson won the AAU decathlon in 1956, 1958, and 1960 and after placing second to Milt Campbell at the 1956 Olympics,



never lost another decathlon. He was injured at the 1956 Games, which forced him to withdraw from the Olympic long jump, for which he had also qualified.

His three world decathlon records were set in 1955, 1958, and at the 1960 US Olympic Trials. Johnson's Olympic gold medal was won dramatically in the final 1,500 m over his UCLA college roommate, C. K. Yang of Chinese Taipei, who took the silver medal. Yang was close after nine events and was a better 1,500 m runner, but Johnson followed closely behind him throughout the race, and would not let Yang pull away, enabling Johnson to win the gold.

After his retirement in 1960 he acted in a few movies, and served for many years as a commercial spokesman for many products. The plaintiff cry, moments after Robert Kennedy's assassination, was "Get the gun, Rafer!" and it was Johnson to whom the voice beckoned. Johnson and football star Rosey Grier were rabid Kennedy supporters and were standing next to him that fateful night, and they helped disarm the shooter.

In 1984, Rafer Johnson was chosen to light the Olympic Flame at the Opening Ceremony of the Los Angeles Olympics. He also became a big supporter of the Special Olympics, leading the Southern California chapter.

His younger brother, Jimmy, played NFL football for 16 years with the San Francisco 49ers and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall

of Fame in 1994. Rafer's daughter, Jenny Johnson-Jordan, competed in beach volleyball at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. (BM/WR)



**Boris Gurevich (URS)**, \*23 February 1937 in Kyiv (UKR); †12 November 2020 in Chicago, Illinois (USA). At an early age, Gurevich lost his father, who had served in Budyonny's cavalry army. Then, during, and after the Second World War, he suffered from malnutrition and rickets. But as he grew stronger, he became a member of the Kyiv Army Sports Club and competed exclusively in freestyle, taking up wrestling in 1953. He was selected for the Soviet team in 1960 and made his international debut at the 1961 World Championships, where he won silver in the light-heavyweight division. He also competed at the 1962 World Championships, where he was fourth in the middleweight category. Due to fierce competition inside the Soviet team, his next international appearance was not until the 1967 European Championships, where he won gold as a middleweight.

Gurevich also won the 1967 world middleweight title and went to the 1968 Olympics as a favourite for the freestyle middleweight title. He did not disappoint at the Olympics, capturing the gold medal, and also won gold at the 1969 World Championships. Gurevich last competed internationally at the 1970 European Championships, where he also won middleweight gold.

Domestically, Gurevich won six Soviet titles: in light-heavyweight in 1957–58 and 1961 and in middleweight in 1965–67.

The famous Russian sculptor Yevgeny Vuchetich (1908–1974) discovered Gurevich among hundreds of athletes as a model for his anti-war memorial, *Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares*, which was donated to the United Nations by the USSR and is installed in front of the UN headquarters in New York. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the former army officer emigrated to the United States, living in Chicago. (TK/VR)

**Giuliana Chenal-Minuzzo (ITA)**, \*26 November 1931 in Vallonara di Marostica; †11 November 2020 in Aosta. Giuliana Minuzzo's first success in skiing came at the 1949 Italian championship, placing third in downhill. The same year she won the Femina Cup, an international women's downhill and slalom competition. Within a few years she established herself as one of the best skiers at the international level, winning the Femina Cup twice more.

In 1952, she participated at the Olympic Winter Games in Oslo in all three events, becoming the first Italian woman to win a medal at the Winter Olympics, with a bronze medal in downhill. Four years later, at the Cortina Winter Olympics, she became the first female in Olympic history to recite the Olympic Oath on behalf of the athletes. Even though she did not win an Olympic medal, she took a bronze medal in the combined event, which only counted as a world championship. At her



third Olympic participation, Squaw Valley in 1960, she added another medal, winning bronze in the giant slalom. She continued competitive skiing until 1963, when she won her ninth Italian title (in slalom) and finished third in giant slalom. Altogether, she won 16 medals at Italian Championships.

After Chenal-Minuzzo retired from competition, she opened a sports shop in Cervinia, which closed in 2011. In 2006, 50 years after the Cortina Winter Games, she was again part of the Olympic Oath ritual at the Opening Ceremony of the Torino Winter Games, holding the flag while the oath was recited by alpine skier Giorgio Rocca. (OM)

**Willie Smith (USA)**, \*28 February 1956 in Rochester, Pennsylvania, † 7 November 2020 in Sylacauga, Alabama. Smith was a 400 m runner who won a gold medal in the 4x400 relay at the 1984 Olympics. He was only used in the preliminary and in the semi-finals.

Smith also won gold medals in the 4x400 m at the 1979 and 1981 World Cup. Individually, in the 400 m, he gained a silver at the 1977 Universiade, and a bronze at the 1979 Pan American Games. He ran in college for Auburn University, after being named *Track & Field News* male high school athlete of the year in 1974. He later became a television news director. (BM/WR)

**Fernando Atzori (ITA)**, \*1 June 1942 in Ales, Oristano; †9 November 2020 in Florence. Despite an injury above an eye, Atzori won the Olympic flyweight boxing title in 1964, defeating the Pole Artur Olech with a 4–1 decision. He was born in a small town in Sardinia where sport was practically non-existent. There was no gym, and he trained in an improvised boxing ring in a small room. To improve his boxing skills, he moved to Florence where he worked as a house painter. He lost part of a finger in a carpentry accident as a

youngster, but it did not prevent him from going on to become a two-time military world champion, and a Mediterranean Games gold medallist in 1963, beating the Yugoslavian Branislav Mirković in the final.

Atzori's amateur record was 37 victories, three defeats, and three draws. As a professional, he became the European flyweight champion in 1967, beating the Frenchman René Libeer. He defended his title nine times before losing it in 1972 to Switzerland's Fritz Chervet (KO). He regained it in 1973 against another Frenchman, Dominique Cesari (KO), and lost it once and for all in the same year, again to Chervet (KO). Atzori retired in 1975 with a professional record of 44 victories (13 by knockout), six defeats, and two draws.

Atzori was awarded the Gold Medal of the Italian Olympic Committee for his boxing achievements. In 2015, he received the Collare d'Oro for sporting merit. He died after a long illness. (SB)

### **Walter Francis "Buddy" Davis (USA),**

\*5 January 1931 in Beaumont, Texas; †17 November 2020 in Port Arthur, Texas. A severe attack of polio as a child took a heavy toll on Buddy Davis and it took him seven years of continual exercise before he was able to walk properly. By the time he enrolled at Texas A&M in 1948, where he also played basketball, much of the strength had returned to his legs and by 1951 he was a good enough high jumper to rank second in the world with a best of 2.05. In 1952 he won the AAU at 2.09 m, the second highest jump to that time, and then set a new Olympic record in taking the gold medal in Helsinki.

Davis set his personal best with a world record jump of 2.124 m at the 1953 AAU championship. It has been claimed he was the first person to jump 7 feet, which it is said he did in exhibitions.

Later, Davis was an outstanding basketball player at Texas A&M and



after the 1952 Olympics signed with the Philadelphia Warriors of the National Basketball Association. He then had a good pro basketball career, playing five years. Davis was a Jefferson County (Texas) Sheriff's Deputy in the off-season.

After he retired from basketball, he worked in banking for much of his life. He later became a civilian employee of the US Coast Guard, and then worked for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for almost 20 years. Davis was inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame in 1964. (BM/WR)

### **Mariya Itkina (URS),**

\*3 May 1932 in Roslavl; †1 December 2020 in Minsk (BLR). Mariya Itkina started athletics in Ivanovo, when she studied at an obstetrics school. After leaving school in 1954, she moved to Minsk, where she began to seriously engage in running as a sprinter. She won four gold medals at the European championships – with golds in 1954 in the 200 m and 4 x 100 relay, and in 1958 and 1962 in the 400 m. She also gained a bronze medal in the 200 m in 1958. She won 32 USSR championships.

After the end of her sports career in 1966, she headed the athletic team of the sports society for Dynamo Minsk. In 1991 she was inducted into the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame. She has the unfortunate distinction of having placed fourth at the Olympics the most times of any athlete, four, without ever winning a medal. (TK)

**Leon Spinks (USA),** \*11 July 1953 in St. Louis, Missouri; †5 February 2021 in Henderson, Nevada. The oldest of six Spinks children started boxing at the age of 13. He entered his first fight in 1969. His brother Michael (\*1956) became his sparring partner on his way up – from welterweight to light heavyweight in 1972/73. They were the first brothers to become Olympic boxing champions at the same Games – in Montreal in 1976.

Leon Spinks, who served in the US Marine Corps from 1973 to 1976 and made corporal, was AAU light heavyweight champion three times in a row. He won a bronze medal at the 1974 World Championships in Havana. He lost to Cuba's Orestes Pedroso in the final of the 1975 Pan American Games in Mexico City.

After his Olympic victory and 185 amateur fights, of which he won 178 and only lost seven, it was evident that Spinks would go professional in January 1977. He became Muhammad Ali's rival practically overnight, after only seven fights, five of which he finished early. He won the world heavyweight title on 15 February 1978 in Las Vegas in his first fight lasting 15 rounds against the 36-year-old Ali by winning more points. This victory was the peak of Spinks's career.

His second match against Ali at the Louisiana Superdome on 15 September 1978 went badly for Spinks. Ali won back his title in a unanimous 15-round decision.

Spinks boxed for another eight years with varying results. He retired at age 42 in 1995.

His 19-year-old son Leon Calvin was shot dead on the street in East St. Louis in 1990. Calvin was an aspiring light heavyweight pro boxer. (VK)

### **Billy Evans (USA),**

\*13 September 1932 in Berea, Kentucky; †22 November 2020. Evans was a 1.85 m guard for the University of Kentucky basketball team in the early 1950s. For him it was choice of whether to play basketball or tennis, as in high school he was twice Kentucky state

tennis champion. He eventually played three years of varsity tennis at Kentucky as well as basketball. Evans also played baseball at the University of Kentucky. After graduation in 1954 he remained at Kentucky for another year to earn a master's degree. He was drafted by the Rochester Royals in the fifth round of the 1955 NBA draft, but never played professional basketball. He then joined the US military service and was chosen for the winning 1956 Olympic team while playing for the Air Force All-Stars. In 1959 Evans was on the gold medal winning team at the Pan American Games, after which he went into business. He started with Phillips 66, but eventually became a vice president of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Evans was inducted into the State of Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame in 1988 and was a charter member of the University of Kentucky Hall of Fame. *(BM/WR)*

**Vladimir Kiselyov (URS)**, \*1 January 1957 in Myski, Kemerovo; †7 January 2021 in Kremenchuk (UKR). Although born in Russia, Kiselyov grew up in Kremenchuk where his family moved when he was five months old. Initially a cyclist, he took up athletics and shot put when he was 15 years old.

The apex of Kiselyov's career was at the 1980 Olympics, where he won a surprising gold medal. Before the Olympics, Kiselyov was quite unknown, having won the 1975 European junior title, a bronze at the 1979 European Indoors, and silver at the 1979 Soviet championships. But he opened with 21.10 m and then threw 21.35 m in the final round to win a gold medal.

After the Olympics, Kiselyov missed a season due to a hand injury and then won his first Soviet title in 1982. In 1984, Kiselyov won his second national title, but was unable to defend his Olympic title due to the Soviet boycott. Instead of the Olympics, Kiselyov competed at the Friendship Games, and finished third

in the shot with his personal best of 21.58 m, which was 32 cm better than the mark made by Alessandro Andrei in the Olympic final.

Kiselyov finished his sports career in 1985 and later worked as an athletics coach in his hometown of Kremenchuk. In 2002, he became head of the physical education department of Kremenchuk Institute of Dnipropetrovsk University of Economics and Law. *(TK/WR)*

**Margitta Gummel, née Helmbold (GDR)**, \*29 June 1941 in Magdeburg; †13 February 2021 in Wietmarschen, Lower Saxony. The East German shot putter attended a children's and youth sports school and trained at the DHfK Leipzig sports club from 1959. She finished fourth at the GDR championships in 1960 and 1962 and was runner-up in 1964 behind Renate Garisch-Culmberger. She qualified for the All-German Olympic team in Tokyo in 1964, where she finished in fifth place.

In early 1966 she married Jens Gummel, a medical student from Leipzig who later became a professor. From then on, she was the top shot-putter in East Germany. She won all the national championship titles up to and including those of 1972, with the exception of 1967 and 1970, when she did not compete.

At the international level, the Russian Nadezhda Chizhova became her most significant rival, against whom she lost three times – in 1966 (silver), 1969 (silver), and 1971 (bronze) – at the European Championships. The definitive boost to her performance came in 1968, when she improved her own world record by 20 cm at the Mexico Olympics and became winner with a throw of 19.61 metres. At the end of her sporting career, she won another silver medal coming behind Chizhova in Munich in 1972 with 20.22 metres.

After that, she became the first East German Olympic champion to earn a doctorate in sports science. She moved to Berlin, where she

served as general secretary of the Student Sports Association until 1990. She was a personal member of the East German NOC from 1977 to 1990 and of the NOC for Germany from 1990 to 1993. *(VK)*

**Ivan Gavrilovich Bogdan (URS)**, \*29 February 1928 in Dmytro-Bilivka, Kazanka Raion (UKR); †25 December 2020. Bogdan, a Soviet Army officer from Ukraine, took up wrestling quite late, in 1950 when he was already 22 years old and made the national team in 1958, when he won his first Soviet Graeco-Roman heavyweight title.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Bogdan was the most dominant Graeco-Roman heavyweight in the world, winning the World Championships in 1958 and 1961 and Olympic title in 1960. Domestically, besides his 1958 title, he won two more Soviet titles in 1959 and 1961, silvers in 1955 and 1956 and a bronze in 1960. After finishing his sporting career, Bogdan worked as a wrestling coach in his native Ukraine. *(TK)*

**Bernd Kannenberg (FRG)**, \*20 August 1942 in Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia); †13 January 2021 in Münster. At the beginning of 1945, Kannenberg was evacuated from East Prussia on the S.S. Wilhelm Gustloff together with his grandmother and a cousin at the end of the war. But the ship was sunk by a Soviet submarine during the treacherous voyage. Kannenberg was among the nine percent of passengers who were rescued.

Kannenberg was raised in Thuringia and later in Bavaria. He first became involved in competitive walking during his time in the German Armed Forces. He was assigned to the German Armed Forces Sports School in Sonthofen, where he emerged as the best West German walker in the early 1970s. He finished in ninth place in the 20 km race at the 1971 European Championships.

After he set a new world best time (3:52:44.6 h) in the 50 km national race against Great Britain on 27 May 1972, the Sergeant also lived up to his role as a favourite at the Olympic Games in Munich. Kannenberg also competed in the 20 km event before the 50 km race, but failed to finish, just like in Montreal in 1976. He won the silver medal in the 20 km race at the European Championships in 1974.

A chronic groin strain forced Kannenberg, who was a member of the LAC Quelle Fürth team sponsored by the Schickedanz mail-order company in his later years, to retire in 1978. After that, he worked as a national coach until he became disabled due to a hip condition. (VK)

**Kevin Burnham (USA)**, \*21 December 1956 in Hollis, New York; †27 November 2020. Burnham competed in the 470 sailing class at the 1992, 1996, and 2004 Olympics, winning a silver in 1992 and a gold in 2004. He also won a gold medal at the 1986 Goodwill Games.

He was a sailor who competed in virtually every type of race. In big ocean racing, he competed in the Sydney–Hobart Race, The Rolex Transatlantic Challenge, and the Newport-to-Bermuda Race. He also won the 1989 Worrell 1,000 mile race. He was an 11-time US champion in various boats.

Burnham later turned to coaching, working with US sailors, as well as the Israeli and Czech Republic national teams. He also coached Paralympian sailors. (BM)

**Lothar Metz (GDR)**, \*16 January 1939 in Meerane; †23 January 2021 in Rostock. Metz grew up in Auerbach/Vogtland in Saxony, where Graeco-Roman wrestling has a long tradition as a working man's sport. He became East German runner-up at the age of 19 and unexpectedly won a bronze medal at the World Championships.

After the trained painter volunteered for the People's Navy in

1959, he quickly developed into a world-class wrestler at the Rostock Army Sports Club. Metz competed four times at the Olympic Games in the middleweight category: after silver in Rome in 1960, he also won bronze in Tokyo four years later. He became an Olympic champion with the GDR team in Mexico in 1968. He concluded his career by wrestling in the light heavyweight division in Munich in 1972, where he was eliminated in the third round. He was also runner-up in the European Championships twice (1967 and 1970).

The qualified physical education teacher worked as a junior coach in Rostock from 1973 onwards, but due to his increasing hearing loss, he was forced to take early retirement as a corvette captain in 1985. (VK)

**Yury Petrovich Vlasov (URS)**, \*5 December 1935 in Makeyvka (UKR); †13 February 2021 in Moscow. Vlasov was the son of a Soviet military journalist who also served as Consul General in Shanghai and Ambassador to Burma. At the age of 10, Yuri entered the Suvorov military school in Saratov, a cadet training school, from which he graduated with a medal in 1953. This set the stage for him to continue his military career at the Zhukovsky Air Force Academy in Moscow, where he took up weightlifting in 1956.

Vlasov's first successes came in the spring of 1957, when he beat national heavyweight records in the snatch and clean and jerk. Nonetheless, he remained in Alexey Medvedev's shadow for the next two years. He became the Soviet, European, and World champion for the first time in 1959. He kept these titles for five years.

His greatest success was winning the 1960 Olympics in Rome, where he achieved world records in all three disciplines. He was hailed as the "Strongest Man on the Planet" for his world-record performance in the triple medley (537.5 kg). He set a total of 32 world records.



It was not until the 1964 Tokyo Games that Vlasov was dethroned by his 20 kg heavier compatriot Leonid Zhabotinsky, whom he later accused of using tactical tricks. Although Vlasov was disappointed with his silver medal, he continued his career until 1967.

After that, Vlasov, who had been writing poetry and short stories since 1959, turned his attention to literature. His first work, entitled *Overcoming Yourself*, was published as an autobiography shortly before the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. In 1973, he published his father's diaries, entitled *The Vladimirov Diaries: Yenan, China, 1942–1945*, which have since been translated into six languages. His literary work includes more than 15 novels, most notably the *Flaming Cross* trilogy (1991–93).

Vlasov's criticism of the Soviet system grew during the "perestroika" phase of the 1980s. He was elected as a territorial deputy to the Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow in 1989. He was elected to the State Duma of the Russian Federation in 1993 during the Yeltsin era, where he drew attention for his nationalist and anti-Semitic speeches. He ran as an independent candidate for president of the Russian Federation in 1996, but withdrew from politics after receiving only 0.2% of the vote. (VK)

BM = Bill Mallon, OM = OlyMADMen,  
PT = Paul Tchir, SB = Sven Buren,  
TK = Taavi Kalju, VK = Volker Kluge  
WR = Wolf Reinhardt

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