

Track and Field



Al Oerter



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Four Consecutive Olympic Golds

The American Al Oerter's outstanding achievement is unique in the history of Olympic athletics: he won the discus gold medal for four games in a row.

His most impressive victory was undoubtedly the last one, in Mexico in 1968. He was almost 32 years old at the time and was handicapped by constant pain in his neck. Before the Games, his performances in competition had been relatively mediocre with only 4 throws past the 60 m mark. He had set his personal best (63.22 m) as far back as 1966, and his fellow American Jay Silvester had just beaten the world record with 68.40 m.

When it came to the final, held on a rainy day, Oerter's thorough preparation, both mental and physical, over the last thirteen months, was a deciding factor. He and the Czech Ludvik Danek (bronze medalist) were the only finalists to improve on their personal bests. Oerter clinched the gold with his third throw of 64.78 m; two other throws also improved on his 1966 best.

Of course, weight training and a massive number of training throws (he has

notched up more than 33,000 of them during his 16 years in the sport) have helped Oerter, but more important is his psychological preparation which is the basis of his long sporting success. After his fourth Olympic victory, he remarked: "I have been thinking of this final for months. I anticipated everything that might happen and rehearsed in my mind what I should do if it rained or was windy. My opponents were not so well prepared in this area. When I took the lead in the competition in the third round, they were unable to react."

AL OERTER

Born Sept. 19, 1936, in Astoria, New York

AWARDS AND RECORDS

Discus record

OG 1956: gold medal with 56.36 m

OG 1960: gold medal with 59.18 m

OG 1964: gold medal with 61.00 m

OG 1968: gold medal with 64.78 m

His 4 world records:

61.10 m May 18, 1962

Los Angeles

62.45 m July 1, 1962

Chicago

62.62 m April 27, 1963

Walnut

62.94 m April 25, 1964

Walnut

In 1977, he could still throw 62.20 m

Al Oerter: he has promised himself that he will be on the medal rostrum at the 1980 Moscow Games