

Track and Field



Evgeny Arzanov



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The Great Loser in Munich

Unlike the 5,000 m and 10,000 m specialists, who have a reputation for forging ahead with little regard for tactics, the Soviet 800 m runners had distinguished themselves above all by their wait-and-see attitude until the arrival of Yevgeny Arzanov. Incapable of taking the slightest initiative, as if paralyzed, left behind whenever the pace quickened and regularly beaten in sprints, they contented themselves with being mere followers. Things changed drastically when the man who was to hold complete sway over the world 800 m in 1970 and 1971 appeared on the scene.

Only 12th in 1966 on the list of the best Soviet juniors with a time of 1 min 56.4 sec, in the following year Arzanov was already top of that list thanks to a performance of 1 min 49 sec. A vivacious character who had already given proof of a remarkable technical intelligence, Arzanov had a relaxed way of running at top speed, which is the hallmark of a champion, and this had already been noticed. Unfortunately, in 1968 he sustained an injury. Despite a slow recovery, he still managed to get through the heats of the Mexico Olympic Games and was highly indignant when the doctor

from the Soviet delegation forbade him to take part in the semi-finals. He came fourth in the 1969 European Championships in Athens and began to assert himself from 1970 onwards.

Pulling away either at the bell, or at the beginning of the final bend, or on the home straight, or even on the opposite straight, he remained unbeaten in 1970 and 1971, the year when he easily became European champion in Helsinki. This track artist, who could have been a footballer and was a keen music-lover, collected victory after victory with a sort of detachment, almost casually. Arzanov committed his only tactical error in 1972 and, unluckily for him, it was in the Olympic final. Attacking 250 m from the finish, he completed the race totally exhausted, collapsed at the tape, while Dave Wottle of the USA beat him to it by a few inches. Traumatized by this defeat, Arzanov never recovered from the blow.

EVGENY ARZANOV

Born Feb. 9, 1948, in Kalouch, Ukraine, USSR

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1971 ECH: gold medal in the 800 m in 1 min 45.6 sec

1972 OG: silver medal in the 800 m in 1 min 45.89 sec

Arzanov (920) behind Adams (354) and Fernandez (165) in the 800 m in the Munich Olympics