

# Track and Field



*Harald Norpoth*



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## Harald Norpoth

### *An Exceptional "Motor"*

When the third man in the final of the 1973 European Cup 5,000 m crossed the finish line, his West German teammates rushed forward to shake his hand. This was the end of the racing career of Harald Norpoth, which had lasted more than ten years. The champion had warned them before this last race, "I'm tired of running for results. I want to run for pleasure. I'm through."

Norpoth, who had been second in the 5,000 m at the Tokyo Olympic Games, outdistancing the American Bill Dellinger and Michel Jazy, was the last person anyone expected to run for pleasure. His whole career had seemed like torture.

Although he was alarmingly skinny, Harald Norpoth had extraordinary physical capacities: the volume of his heart, 73.2 cubic inches, was twice the norm, and his lung capacity was about 7 quarts. And so on. But parts of him were not up to this exceptional "motor": his liver, his stomach, his knees. Norpoth was never altogether well. This did not keep him, however, from winning race after race, almost always using the same tactics: follow the field, then pass it on the last lap. These were not tactics which made

him very popular, but they were tactics for which he was very well prepared. His training, under Dr Van Aaken, had consisted of hours and hours of running at a gentle pace. "Given the competitive edge of the American Steve Prefontaine, Harald could have been the first to run the 5,000 m in under 13 minutes," said Van Aaken.

#### HARALD NORPOTH

Born Aug. 22, 1942, in Munster, Germany

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

- 1964 OG: silver medal for the 5,000 m in 13:49.6  
1968 OG: 4th in the 1,500 m in 3:42.5  
1972 OG: 6th in the 5,000 m in 13:32.6  
1966 ECH: silver medal for the 5,000 m in 13:44.0  
bronze medal for the 1,500 m in 3:42.4  
1971 ECH: bronze medal for the 5,000 m in 13:33.8

Personal best performances:

- 1:49.3 in the 800 m, 3:37.8 in the 1,500 m, 13:20.6 in the 5,000 m  
36 national titles
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*Harald Norpoth (387) in the 5,000 m final in Munich*