

Track and Field



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The Third Time Was the Good One

The statuesque Czech, Ludvik Danek, had to wait until he was well over 30 before he achieved his ambition—an Olympic gold medal for the discus. He also had to wait until the retirement of the American, Al Oerter, unbeatable four-time Olympic champion of 1956-60-64-68. From his first Games, in 1964, Danek, who is 6 ft 4 in (1.93 m) and weighs 230 lb (104 kg), seemed particularly well prepared to take the Olympic title from Oerter. Earlier in 1964 he had smashed his world record (64.55 m as opposed to 62.94 m). At Tokyo, he and Oerter were the only ones to exceed 60 m. But the American was 48 cm ahead (61 m as opposed to 60.52 m).

In 1965 Danek was the first to exceed 65 m with 65.22 m. In 1966 at Long Beach he breached the "wall" of 66 m with 66.07 m. But this performance was never officially ratified. At Mexico City in 1968 he was joint favorite with another American, Jay Silvester, the new world record-holder with 66.54 m. But it was still Al Oerter who won and Danek had to be content with third place.

Danek had his revenge at Munich in 1972, when he was over 35 years old. In the absence at last of Al Oerter, neither

Jay Silvester nor the Swede Ricky Bruch were able to stand up to him, and a margin of 90 cm decided it in his favor. Ludvik Danek only began his career with the discus at the age of 22. At that time he could only just get beyond 43 m. But he made rapid progress. At the age of 23 he achieved 50.38 m, and reached 60 m in 1963. A year later he was world-record holder with 64.55 m.

At the age of 39 Ludvik Danek took part again in the Montreal Olympic Games of 1976. This time he was forced to admit that his great days were over. With only three throws of more than 60 m he was forced to take ninth place.

LUDVIK DANEK

Born Jan. 6, 1937, at Horice, Czechoslovakia

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1964 OG: silver medal
1968 OG: bronze medal
1972 OG: gold medal
1971 ECH: gold medal
1974 ECH: silver medal

World records:

64.55 m on April 25, 1964, at San Antonio
65.22 m on Oct. 12, 1965, at Prague
Not ratified: 66.07 m on June 7, 1966, at Los Angeles

Ludvik Danek: dedication at more than 35 years old