

# Track and Field



*Udo Beyer*



# Track and Field



## Udo Beyer

### *A Precocious Shot Putter*

At 14 Udo Beyer was big for his age—height 1.82 m (6 ft), weight 78 kg (172 lb)—too big for soccer, the sport he preferred above all others. So he was encouraged to step off the soccer field and into the throwing circle where, as the centimeters and kilos gave him added height and muscle, he began to show great promise. At 16 he became East German shot putt champion in his age category with 18.59 m (61 ft) with a weight of 5 kg (11 lb) discus champion with 57.10 (187 ft 4 in) with a discus of 1.5 kg (3 lb 4 oz) and hammer champion with 64.86 m (199 ft 8 in) with a hammer of 5 kg (11 lb). He also continued to play handball.

By 1972 he was specializing in putting the shot. Since then he has climbed to the world to spot. In 1973, still aged only 18, he took the European record, 19.65 m (64 ft 6 in) and became European Junior Champion. In 1974 he broke the 20 m barrier for the first time with 20.20 m (66 ft 3 in), a new European Junior record. In the following year he broke clear of the formidable East German line-up of Harmut Briesenick, Hans Peter Gies and Heinz Joachim Rothenburg by out-throwing Briesenick for the first time: 20.97 m (68 ft 9 3/4 in) against Briesen-

nick's 20.96 m (68 ft 9 1/4 in). In April 1976 he made a throw of 21.12 m (69 ft 4 in). Shortly afterwards he injured his right hand, which put paid to training for a month, and threatened his chances of competing in the Olympic Games. Undeterred, Beyer managed to convince the East German selectors, whose attitude was more or less "try again in four years time," that he had regained his fitness and form. They were probably very glad they listened to him, for Beyer won the gold medal in the 1976 Olympics.

No-one, not even the American prodigy Randy Matson, had ever done better than that.

Udo Beyer looks as if his reign in the shot put will be as long as Matson's. In addition to the advantages of early success, he is no mean athlete in other disciplines: 11.03 sec in the 100 m, 1.95 m (6 ft 4 1/2 in) in the high jump and 195 kg (430 lb) in the clean and jerk in weightlifting.

#### **UDO BEYER**

Born Aug. 9, 1955, in Leipzig, East Germany

#### **AWARDS AND RECORDS**

1976 OG: gold medal with 21.05 m (69 ft 1in)  
1978 ECH: gold medal with 21.08 m (69 ft 2in)  
World shot put record: 22.15 m (72 ft 8 in), July 6, 1978, in Gothenburg

*Udo Beyer: a little on the bulky side for soccer*