

Track and Field



Wolfgang Schmidt



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The Apollo of the Discus

Those who accord some importance to the saying "like father, like son" will see in the career of Wolfgang a perfect example. His father was a discus thrower, and a discus thrower he was to be too. An excellent thrower and also a good decathlonian, Ernst, having become chief trainer of the throwers, was in fact the East German record-holder in 1954 with a throw of 46.24 m. It was in that year that Wolfgang was born. At 14, he was sending the 1.5 kg discus 38.64 m and already at 17 had easily overtaken his father with the senior discus: 54.40 m. In 1973, the year in which he became European champion in the discus and runner-up in the shot put, he achieved 61.30 m. As he was of an equally good standard in the shot (19.19 m) he had to choose between the two, and decided once and for all on the discus.

Spurred on by stiff competition within his own country (his compatriots Siegfried Pachale and Norbert Thiede are not far beneath his standard), he has progressed from year to year without losing his splendid Apollo-like figure. It is enough of a rarity, in these days of obese throwers, to be worth mentioning. Still very young, Wolfgang, who has already given proof of his ability on many occasions, has the

whole future before him. A long enough perspective, anyway, to hope to defeat that obstacle of stature, Mac Wilkins.

At a competition in East Berlin, where Wolfgang is a qualified workman in an electronics factory, the two men met and became very friendly. This was clearly seen at the Montreal Olympics where, thanks to the advice of the American, Schmidt took the silver medal from another American discus-thrower, John Powell, at his final attempt. He was the only man to have beaten Wilkins twice in 1976.

WOLFGANG SCHMIDT

Born Jan. 16, 1954, in East Berlin

AWARDS AND RECORDS

- 1973 Junior ECH: gold medal in the discus with 58.16 m and silver medal in the shot put with 18.45 m
- 1976 OG: silver medal in the discus with 66.22 m
- 1978 ECH: gold medal in the discus with 66.82 m
- European discus record-holder with 68.60 m, on May 21, 1978 at Cologne
- World discus record-holder with 71.16 m, on Aug. 9, 1978 in East Berlin
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Will Wolfgang Schmidt be on the top step of the rostrum in Moscow in 1980?