

VALE HARTWIG GAUDER: 1952-2000

The walking world has been as one in the last week in paying honour to legendary German race walker Hartwig Gauder, the 1980 Olympic 50km champion, who died of a heart attack in Erfurt, Germany, on Wednesday 22nd April 2000 at the age of 65.



Gauder in 2003 after climbing Mt Fuji

Born November 10, 1954, in Vaihingen in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), Gauder moved with his family to the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) at age 5.

Gauder started in sports competition at age 12 with ski jumping and did not find racewalking until age 17. He turned out to be a natural at the sport, walking 10km in 53:00 in his first race with little training and improving to 49 minutes just three weeks later. His first international race was a year later (1972) when he won at a seven-nation meets in Pris. In 1973, he captured that European Junior title. His first 50 km wasn't until 1979 and was walked as a joke, he says. Some joke, as he did 4:01. The next year he finished third in the German trials with a 3:49 and then on to win the 1980 Olympic gold.¹

Standing just over 6 feet tall and weighing about 160 pounds, he was an outstanding walker for two decades.

He is one of the elite few to have won European Junior (10km 1973), European (50km 1986), Olympic (50km 1980) and World (50km 1987) outdoor titles. At the 50km walk he also won bronze medals at the 1988 Olympics (when he recorded his best ever time of 3:39:45), 1990 Europeans and 1991 Worlds, and was 4th in the 1982 Europeans and 6th at the 1992 Olympics, only prevented by the boycott of 1984 from competing at a fourth Olympics. At the World Cup he won in 1985 and was second in 1981 and 1987.

He concentrated on the 50km, but at 20km he had a best time of 1:20:51 in 1987 and was 7th in the 1978 Europeans, and he set a World Indoor 1 Hour Best with 14,906m in 1986.

He won GDR 20km titles in 1975-6 and in 1985-6; he won GDR 50km titles in 1979, 1982 and 1986 and won the German 50km title in 1993. He also set GDR 20km walk records in 1979 and four GDR 30km records, eventually lowering the standard to 2:12:11 in 1984.

His track PBs read impressively: 3000mW 11:20.0 (1984), 5000mW 18:59.67i (1988), 19:31.62 (1984); 10000mW 39:13.15i (1988), 40:13.36 (1990); 20000mW 1:22:47.47 (1990).

His medal count of 12 (6G, 4S and 2B) in major meet puts him up there with the very best - 3 Olympics (1G, 2S), 2 World Champs (1G, 1B), 2 European Championships (1G, 1B), 1 European Indoors (1G), 1 European U20 (1G) and 8 World Cups (1G, 2S)

1973 Euro U20	1	10,000m	44:13.6h	Duisburg (GER)	25/08/1973	DDR
1975 IAAF World Cup	16	20km	1:30:37	Grand-Quevilly (FRA)	11/10/1975	DDR
1977 IAAF World Cup	13	20km	1:29:51	Milton Keynes (GBR)	25/09/1977	DDR

¹ This information is from an article written by Jack Mortland in the November 1992 Ohio Racewalker magazine.

1978 Euro Champs	7	20km	1:25:16	Praha (TCH)	30/08/1978	DDR
1979 IAAF World Cup	7	20km	1:21:50	Eschborn (GER)	29/09/1979	DDR
1980 Olympic Games	1	50km	3:49:24	Moscow (URS)	30/07/1980	DDR
1981 Euro Indoors	1	5000m	19:08.59	Grenoble (FRA)	22/02/1981	DDR
1981 IAAF World Cup	2	50km	3:52:18	Valencia (ESP)	03/10/1981	DDR
1982 Euro Champs	4	50km	4:04:51	Athina (GRE)	10/09/1982	DDR
1985 IAAF World Cup	1	50km	3:47:31	St John's (IOM)	28/09/1985	DDR
1986 Euro Champs	1	50km	3:40:55	Stuttgart (GER)	31/08/1986	DDR
1987 IAAF World Cup	2	50km	3:42:52	New York City (USA)	02/05/1987	DDR
1987 World Champs	1	50km	3:40:53	Rome (ITA)	05/09/1987	DDR
1988 Olympic Games	3	50km	3:39:45	Seoul (KOR)	30/09/1988	DDR
1990 Euro Champs	3	50km	4:00:48	Split (CRO)	31/08/1990	DDR
1991 IAAF World Cup	6	50km	3:53:14	San Jose (USA)	01/06/1991	GER
1991 World Champs	3	50km	3:55:14	Tokyo (JPN)	31/08/1991	GER
1992 Olympic Games	6	50km	3:56:47	Barcelona (ESP)	07/08/1992	GER
1993 IAAF World Cup	8	50km	3:59:10	Monterrey (MEX)	24/04/1993	GER

Some years ago, I found the followed training program from 1983 50km World Champion Ronald Weigel of East Germany.² Weigel and Gauder were training partners so it is safe to assume that it is also a fairly true picture of the sort of training that Gauder did at that time. As an aside, Weigel was subsequently the Australian national walks coach for a number of years and coached the likes of Nathan Deakes and Jane Saville.

Phase	Transition	Preparation	Competition
Period	September-December	January-April	May-August
Monday	25 km Walk at 70% 10km Run + 1h PPG	30 km Walk at 70% 10km Run + 1h PPG	30-35km Walk at 85% 15km Walk at 70%
Tuesday	10km Walk at 80% 15km Walk at 70% + 1h PPG	20km Walk at 80% 15km Walk at 70%	25x400m Walk at 105% 10km Run + 1h20 PPG + play
Wednesday	25km Walk at 70% 2h PPG + play	30km Walk at 70% 10km Run + 1h20 PPG + play	30-35km Walk at 85% 10km Walk at 70%
Thursday	10km Walk at 80% 15km Run + 1h PPG	15km Walk at 85% 3x2000m Walk à 90%	25km Walk at 70% 10km Run + 1h20 PPG + play
Friday	15km WalkM at 70% 2h PPG + play	20km Walk at 70% 2h PPG + jeux	5x2000 Walk at 95% 10km Walk at 70%
Saturday	30km Walk at 75%	30km Walk at 75%	35-40km Walk at 85%
Sunday	15km Run	10x1000 Walk à 100%	10-15km Walk at 95%

* PPG = Physical Training

The East Germans were big on volume and that is evident from the table above. Training twice per day was the norm and second sessions were often done when in a state of “training specific tiredness”. This is high risk, and not for everybody and probably only succeeded in the DDR context because of the huge Sports Science monitoring of their athletes. Long walks were often done while in a fatigued state and it was common practice to do long walks on consecutive days, with the longer walk being on the second day. Note that this is NOT something that I recommend for our aspiring Australian walkers! But it did produce the goods for Gauder and Weigel.

During the 1980s, the names Hartwig Gauder and Ronald Weigel became synonymous with 50km excellence and they were at their zenith when they traded one-two finishes at the 1987 World Cup and World Championship races. Weigel won the Cup race in New York, but Gauder came back later in the summer to beat him in the World Championships race.

2 This was amongst the many gems on Dominique Guebey's website (<http://www.dg77.net/marche/>)



Gauder (left) and Weigel (right) in the 1987 50 km World Champs – Gauder won in 3:40:53 and Weigel was second in 3:41:30

Gauder had 12 years ranked in the world top ten at 50km, second only to Jesús Ángel García (15 years), and followed by Robert Korzeniowski (11 years). He had four years ranked Number 1, compared to García's 1, with Korzeniowski the leader at 7 and Raúl González at 5.

Year	Best	WL	WR
1979	4:01:20	58	-
1980	3:48:15	7	1
1981	3:46:57	2	2
1982	3:49:44	12	7
1983	3:43:23	3	5
1984	3:41:24	2	2
1985	3:43:33	5	1
1986	3:40:55	2	1
1987	3:40:53	2	1
1988	3:39:45	3	3
1989	retired		
1990	3:47:08	9	4 (3)
1991	3:49:10	12	4 (4)
1992	3:56:47	30	6 (7)
1993	3:52:46	17	-

WL = position on annual world list, WR - Track & Field News world ranking position (PJM)³

Gauder's championship records lasted a generation – his winning times of 3:40:55 at the 1986 European Championships and 3:40:53 at the 1987 World Championships were only beaten by Poland's Robert Korzeniowski, in the early 2000s.

Quite rightly, he was inducted into the German Sports Hall of Fame in 2016⁴.

Gauder suffered from health complications after retiring in 1993 and was diagnosed with a bacterial heart infection. He initially received an artificial heart and in 1997 he underwent a heart transplant. From then on he worked tirelessly with various organ donation organisations, completed the New York Marathon as a walker in 1999 with his transplanted heart and even climbed the highest mountain in Japan, Mount Fuji, in 2003.

³ Statistics by Peter Matthews, a member of the National Union of Track Statisticians (N.U.T.S.)

⁴ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany%27s_Sports_Hall_of_Fame



Gauder climbs Mt. Fuji with a transplanted heart to appeal to the people to become donors for internal organ transplantation, in Yamanashi Prefecture, 18 July 2003 (photo Getty Images)

In January, Gauder suffered kidney failure and was again in need of a donor. That transplant wouldn't come to pass.

Tim Erickson
Monday 27 April 2020

Sources:

- IAAF obituary: <https://www.worldathletics.org/news/news/hartwig-gauder-obituary>
- European Athletics obituary: <https://www.european-athletics.org/news/article=german-race-walking-great-gauder-passes-away-the-age/index.html>
- Insidethegames: <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1093497/hartwig-gauder-olympic-champion>
- Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hartwig_Gauder
- Emailed obituary from Peter Matthews, a member of the National Union of Track Statisticians (N.U.T.S.)
- Marciadalmondo: http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=3789