

Fact Sheets

on Hungary

Hungarian sport

Hungarians in sport



Go Hungary!

Our publication does not intend to provide an exhaustive list of the past and present achievements of Hungarian athletes worldwide. Instead, by recalling the past and presenting the future we would like to show how alongside world-famous scientists, doctors and artists, Hungary has been adding to the number of most successful athletes for more than a hundred years.

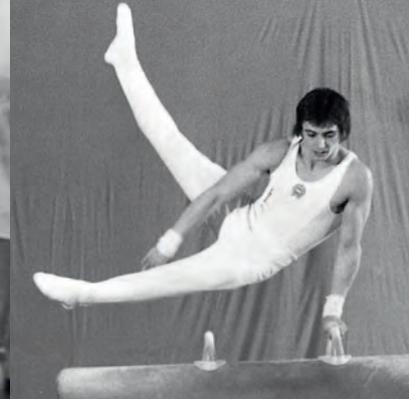
Sports still offers the same opportunity of breakout, advancement and success for strong and talented youth as it did in 1896, when the modern Olympic Games were revived upon the idea of Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Alfréd Hajós, the swimmer already won a gold medal for Hungary in 1896 with Hungarian athletes

ranking sixth in the medal table at the first Olympics.

The number of our champions multiplied with the passage of time. Since the first official match of the Hungarian national football team on 12th October 1902, stadiums sold out fast in the 1950s and 1960s upon the news

that our football players were coming to play: beside the Golden Team, heralded by the name of Ferenc Puskás or the only Hungarian Golden Ball winner, Albert Flórián, many other excellent players awed their audiences.

There is hardly any traditional Olympic discipline in which Hungarians



did not excel on numerous occasions, even as trainers of teams and athletes that they led to victory.

A good example of a fulfilling and exceptional athletic career is that of two-time fencing Olympic champion Pál Schmitt, who upon leaving the piste, went on to become the Secretary General and later the President of the Hungarian Olympic Committee, served as the Vice-President of the International Olympic Committee and between 2010 and 2012 he was the President of the Republic of Hungary.

Probably even science could not provide an exhaustive answer to the secret behind the will power and perseverance of Hungarian athletes, the true essence of their achievements lies in the core of their souls. The Government of Hungary is dedicating special attention to sports, recognizing it as one of the most important tools to promote awareness about healthy lifestyle. Stadiums and sport facilities have been built, school gyms constructed, every possible instrument is utilized to motivate young people to exercise regularly. Only few become champions, but the majority will experience probably one of the greatest gifts of human life, health. Let us not forget that a nation not only needs champions, but also wholeheartedly and enthusiastically cheering fans, sitting on the tribunes and chanting: **"Go Hungarians!"**



The best goal scorer of the 20th century

*His name has become synonymous with football and with Hungary from England to Australia. **Ferenc Puskás** (1927–2006), who scored fantastic goals with his left foot, was the captain of Kispest AC, later-on Budapest Honvéd and the Hungarian national team, also known as the Golden Team, who also became famous as a Hungarian player of Real Madrid.*





Ferenc Puskás scoring the seventh goal in the 73rd minute of the England vs. Hungary return match

He was the best goal scorer of the 20th century (IFFHS) based on all indicators. He is the third most successful goal scorer of the 20th century with 533 goals in the Hungarian and 511 in the Spanish championship. The only player in the world, to have scored at World Cup, Olympic, European Cup, European Champion Clubs' Cup and Intercontinental

Cup finals as well. He also worked as a national coach of the national teams of Saud-Arabia and Hungary. With Panathinaikos FC he played the finals of the European Cup and the Intercontinental Cup final and won the Greek championship, also winning it with AEK Athens FC, while becoming Australian champion and cup winner with South Melbourne FC.

Three-time World Cup winner, Brazilian football player Pelé said that one needs to be a good man to become a talented player, a good singer or artist and that Puskás was testament to this, "because beside being a prolific player, he was also a very good man".

Puskás grew up in the Kispest-district of Budapest, where his father



Ferenc Purczeld Sr. received a job and a semi-professional contract as a football player from the city. They lived in one of the modest single-room and kitchen service flats directly adjacent to the football pitch. Growing up next door was József Bozsik, who was a year and a half older later and played with Puskás both in Kispest and the national team.

Entry of the two teams,
Wembley, 25 November 1953

The winning Hungarian team:
Hungary vs England 7-1



Despite being characterized by the cult of personality years of Stalin and Mátyás Rákosi in 20th century Hungarian history, the fifties were considered to be the most successful period of Hungarian sports history. Everybody remembers Puskás as being someone

7:1 in the People's Stadium.

Historians consider that the mass outcry and public unrest, which erupted after the 2:3 defeat to the West-German team in the 1954 World Cup final in Switzerland was a precedent to the 1956 revolution and freedom fight.



who would try to help everybody through his contacts. Hungarian athletes won 16 gold medals at the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki. After winning the gold medal in Helsinki, the Golden Team (Grosics – Buzánszky, Lóránt, Lantos – Bozsi, Zakariás – Budai, Kocsis, Hidegkuti, Puskás, Czibor) beat England 6:3 at the “match of the century” at Wembley on 25th November 1953, with Puskás and his team also winning the return match

While the battles raged in the streets of the capital, Budapest Honvéd was touring Spain, where the players played with a black armband of mourning and then travelled on to a South-American tour without the approval of the official sports administration. Puskás, Sándor Kocsis and Zoltán Czibor did not return

Ferenc Puskás, the best goal scorer of the 20th century, Budapest, 1996

home after this and after a petition of the Hungarian Football Federation they were banned from playing by FIFA for a total of 18 months. After his suspension was lifted, Puskás shed 18 kg-s of excess weight and stayed in the top ranks of football as a player of Real Madrid.

The largest stadium in Hungary, once known as the People's Stadium and the Pancho Arena in Felcsút both bear his name. Felcsút has a Football Academy named after him and there is an elementary school under his name in Kispest, while several settlements in Hungary and Australia have streets named after him.

The Hungarian National Football Team in 1954



With a Ferencváros heart for Barcelona



Football poster, 1913

The Kubala and the Kocsis family knew each other well, both fathers were fanatical supporters of FTC. “My father was a huge Ferencváros supporter, that is why I also started playing at Fradi in early 1945.” – recounts Kubala. – “I spent an unforgettable year and a half there. It was partly due to our influence that Sanyi Kocsis also became a player there.”

*They shared a love for football and Ferencváros, one of the districts of Budapest, the football team of which (FTC) they all played in. Their fans say they all had a “Ferencváros heart”. They found a new home in Spain, all of them continued their professional careers in FC Barcelona. The names of **László Kubala** (1927–2002), **Sándor Kocsis** (1929–1979) and **Zoltán Czibor** (1929–1997) are still revered in Spain and Hungary alike.*

Kubala first played in FTC on the first national championship match after World War II. He scored exceptional goals as a forward, which meant that he got a lot of offers from other teams. After the death of his father he signed for a brief period from 1946 with SK Bratislava, then returned to Budapest and played in Vasas Sports Club from 1948 to 1949. He then crossed illegally across the border: played in Italy, then in 1950 he signed the contract that was to

be a turning point in his life with FC Barcelona. From then on, the Catalan team won some kind of trophy almost every year. The Camp Nou, the new stadium completed by 1957, had to be built, because the old facility could not accommodate the crowds interested in Kubala and his teammates.

The period between 1958 and 1961 was the golden era of the football team. It was during those years that Sándor Kocsis and Zoltán Czibor were also

playing in the jersey of FC Barcelona after Kubala invited them there. Both Kocsis and Czibor were members of the Hungarian national side, the Golden Team that won the Helsinki Olympics (1952) and came second at the World Cup in Switzerland.

Fans called Sándor Kocsis the “Golden Head” (Cabezas de Oro). He was able to score with both feet and with his head. His head play placed him way above the international standard. He was extremely young, a mere 16,5 years old when he first got a place on the adult team of FTC. He played 68 matches between 1948 and 1956 in the Hungarian national team, scoring 75 goals. “My father was a cabinetmaker in Budapest, one of the first football fans, if anybody asked him, which city he knew, he would say he only knew one, the one where the FTC stadium was. Just like me.” – recalled Sándor Kocsis. – “Why did I go to Spain, when I did? Kubala told me to go to Spain, that I would find a second home and a fantastic club, FC Barcelona there. I thought this was good advice. I would not leave this country now, because the mindset of the people is the same as in my homeland. I still consider Hungary to be my homeland.”

Zoltán Czibor was born less than a month before Sándor Kocsis, with whom their careers have become inseparable. His nickname was “Crazy Bird”, he was an extremely talented football

player, fast as lightning but unpredictable. His rare ability to score goals as a winger and his unpredictable dribbling made him one of the best in the world. Czibor played 43 national matches between 1949 and 1956, scoring 17 goals. He also became an FC Barcelona player on the urging of László Kubala.

“Everybody carries emotional scars in their lives, that others do not see” – said Zoltán Czibor. – “You have to understand other people’s problems, try to make them forget. We step onto the pitch and we all fight for one thing: victory. To protect the club, the jersey of which we are wearing.” He added that, whenever he played, he always played for ten million Hungarians, to bring happiness to them, so that they could be proud of the nation.

FC Barcelona fans voted László Kubala the best Barcelona player of the 20th century. His bronze statue was erected in 2009 at a prominent spot of their stadium, the Camp Nou.



Premiere of the documentary *Hungarians for FC Barcelona*, 2016



László Kubala, 1961

Inauguration of the Kubala statue, Camp Nou



The destiny and afterlife of a left hand

The national team has always played a prominent role in the history of Hungarian water polo. Hungarian water polo teams won a total of nine Olympic gold medals, world champions three and European champions twelve times.



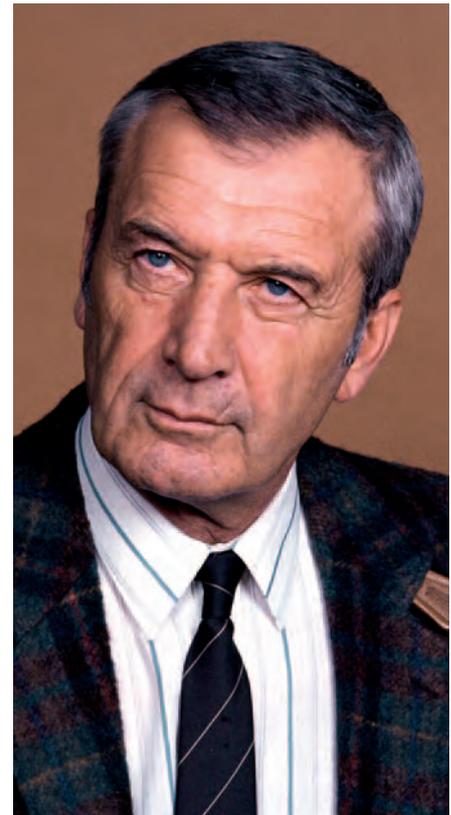


The most successful water polo player of all time was **Dezső Gyarmati** (1927-2013), who awed spectators with his left-handed goals at the Olympic Games between 1948 and 1964. He was a member of the silver medallist (London, 1948), the gold medallist (Helsinki, 1951 and Melbourne, 1956), the bronze medallist (Rome, 1960) Hungarian teams, only to win the gold medal again at the Tokyo games in 1964. He was the only water polo player to have played and won medals at five Olympics.

Dezső Gyarmati, who played the national team on a total of one hundred and eight matches, initially started boxing, played ice hockey and tried other sports before aligning himself with water polo for a lifetime. János Németh, an earlier two-time Olympic champion polo player, was among the first to realize the God-given talent in Dezső Gyarmati, who at the 1947 Universiade in Paris scored twenty-eight of the Hungarian team's 36 goals to win the competition with the team. János Németh, who was national coach at the time, sent a message to Gyarmati, who was living in London after the war: "Kid, if you come home, I will put you on the team!" Gyarmati said yes and this allowed him to participate at the 1948 Olympics, where the Hungarian team went as far as the final, but lost there, only winning the next Olympics in Helsinki four years later.

Their appearance was followed with special attention wherever they played. This was especially true for the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. A revolution and freedom fight erupted in Budapest in the autumn of 1956. The citizens took to arms against the Soviet troops occupying Hungary since 1945 and the Hungarian armed services serving the oppressive regime. By the time the Olympics started in Melbourne, the Soviet Army put a brutal end to the just cause of Hungarian freedom.

The Hungarians played with the Soviet team in the semi-final the Olympics. The match received exceptional attention due to the tragic historic events. The eyebrow of Ervin Zádor ruptured after a blow from Valentin Prokopov during the course of the match, the atmosphere of which was more tense than usual. The continued aggressive tactics of the Soviets made the international audience cheering for the Hungarians even more angry. The Soviet team was forced to almost flee





Water polo team, 1956



Water polo player Ervin Zádor, injured during the match against the Soviet Union, on the title page of *The Sun*, 1956

to the dressing room in order to avoid any harm to them at the end of the match, which the Hungarians won 4:0. The match is recorded in sports history

with the heading "Blood in the water". Winning an equally difficult final 2:1 against Yugoslavia, the Hungarian water polo team defended its Olympic title.

"We owed this much to the country" – said Dezső Gyarmati decades later. "We played the real final against the Soviets among the final four, in the shadow of the crushed revolution. We did not hold any grudge against the players of the Soviet team; we were even friends with some of them, like the Georgian-bear Mshvenieradze. But that match was about life and death..." Following the Melbourne Olympics, Dezső Gyarmati travelled to the United States, but returned home later, because he felt he was not able to live his life abroad and without water polo. He was not only extremely successful as a player, but also as a trainer and national coach. He worked with several Hungarian and foreign teams. From 1992, he was the Vice Chairman and from 1996 the Co-Chairman of the Hungarian Water Polo Association.

"We are a small nation, but we must persevere, thus we can never give up," – said Dezső Gyarmati encouragingly in one of his last interviews. "We always have to strive to bring out the best, the most successful in us, whether it is sport, learning or work, because this is how this country can remain standing."

They always paddled among the best

*Kayak-canoe has become the most successful Hungarian competitive sport. We won our first Olympic medals in 1952 in Helsinki, the first victory came in Melbourne in 1956 thanks to the duo of **János Urányi – László Fábián**. The events of this sports discipline attract masses.*



Danuta Kozák with Olympic gold medal, 2012

The Hungarians won a total of twenty-five gold medals at the Olympic Games, while the medals at the World and European Sprint Championships attest to the fact that Hungarian kayak-canoe is still in the front lines of the world sport.

Danuta Kozák is the most successful among Hungarian kayak athletes, winning three gold medals in Rio de Janeiro and two gold medals at the London Olympic Games, while also winning a total of eleven world championship gold medals so far. With her five gold medals, she has caught up in the ranking to the swimmer Krisztina Eggerszegi and



Multiple Olympic and world champion duo Natasa Janics and Katalin Kovács



Tamás Wichmann, 1978

the gymnast Ágnes Keleti. Next in line is Natasa Janics with her three Olympic and nineteen world championship gold medals, then comes Katalin Kovács with three Olympic and thirty-one world championship titles, then Gabriella Szabó with three Olympic and nine world titles and Rita Kóbán with two Olympic and nine world championship gold medals.

The kayak athlete Zoltán Kammerer is the most successful among the men with his three gold medals. He also won the world title three times.

Although he never managed to win the Olympics, the world of sport has a great respect for the canoe athlete Tamás Wichmann, whose life and career are both rich in surprising twists and turns. Wichmann had to use a brace for a year because of a childhood car accident, despite this he started training in

a boxing gym and later decided to choose the canoe. He became nine-time world, three-time European champion, won two silver and one bronze Olympic medals. He won the most Hungarian championships of all time among canoe athletes: he stood on the top of the podium on a total of thirty-seven occasions. In 1978, he received the UNESCO International Fair Play Award for his unselfish help to the Yugoslav canoe athlete, Matija Ljubek. "I immediately said yes to his request, I did not care what nationality he was, I only knew he was a great athlete and that he wanted to be better. We paddled together, he lived at my place. We trained together for years, then in seventy-eight he beat me in a clean and fair match on his home turf at the World Championships in Belgrade. The journalists really liked our story, that is how I got the Fair Play Award.



Gabriella Szabó, Danuta Kozák, Katalin Kovács and Krisztina Fazekas, kayak four team, 2012

We were really good friends with Matija Ljubek, until his death." – Tamás Wichmann recalled the past.



Swimming kings and queens



Alfréd Hajós, the Hungarian dolphin, 1896

Alfréd Hajós (1878–1955) won the 100 m and 1200 m freestyle competition at the first Modern Olympics in 1896 in Athens, swimming in 11-degree cold, choppy seas. This meant he won the first and second Olympic victories of Hungarian sport.



Alfréd Hajós (farthest to the right) as a football player in BTC, Hungary's first champion team

He showed talent in many sport disciplines. He played at the first public match on 9th May 1897 in Budapest and five years he played on the first national football match as well. Later, he appeared as a referee and also served as the national coach. He was also a Co-Chairman of the Hungarian Football Federation, the Swimming Federation and the Gymnastics Federation, and was also a member of the Hungarian Olympic Committee. After obtaining his architecture degree (1899) he worked in the architects' offices of Ignác Alpár and Ödön Lechner. Beside many other landmarks, he designed the famous Aranybika Hotel (1910) in Debrecen and the



Tamás Darnyi, 1988

National Swimming Stadium on Margaret-island (1930). His stadium plans co-designed with Dezső Lauber earned a second place at the art contests of the 1924 Summer Olympics in Paris.

In the last decades, athletes of two trainers have achieved world-class results: Tamás Széchy and László Kiss. Krisztina Egerszegi (1974), an athlete of László Kiss is one of the most outstanding Hungarian athletes in the history of modern Olympics. She had a fantastic gift for swimming, her perfect buoyancy was explained by the fact that her specific weight of 0.92 made her lighter than water. Her five individual Olympic victories made her the most successful

Hungarian athlete in this field, while also being the youngest player to win them. She won a gold in Seoul (1988) in 200 meter backstroke, three in Barcelona (1992) in 100 and 200 meters backstroke and a 400-meter medley, while in Atlanta (1996) she won a gold on 200-meter backstroke. The 200 m European and world backstroke record (2: 06,62) she swam in 1991 in Athens remained unbeaten until 2008. Between 1988 and 1996 she was voted the athlete of the year seven times and was chosen the best female swimmer in the world three times between 1987 and 1992.



Krisztina Egerszegi, 1988

Tamás Darnyi (1967) was the biggest medley swimmer of his era, the most successful athlete of coach Tamás Széchy. The first swimmer in the world to swim the 200 m medley within two minutes (1:59.36 – Perth, 1991). Between 1986 and 1991, he improved the world and European records of the two medley distances several times. He was chosen the Hungarian Swimmer of the Year eight times between 1985 and 1992, also winning the Athlete of the Year title five times. He is a fifty-eight-time Hungarian champion and has held the “Champion for Life” title since 1985. In 1991 he became the Swimmer of the Year. His most prestigious achievements are the four



Krisztina Egerszegi, Atlanta, 1996

Olympic victories: 200 m and 400 m medley gold medals in Seoul (1988) and Barcelona (1992).

The most successful swimmer of recent years is three times Olympic, seven-time world champion and thirteen-time European champion Hungarian swimmer Katinka Hosszú (1989). She is the first competitor of all times to hold the world record concurrently in all five medley distances (200 m, 400 m, short track: 100 m, 200 m, 400 m). She achieved the greatest success in her life at the 2016 Rio Olympics. She won her first Olympic championship title with a new world record in the 400 m medley (4:26,36). Her second gold medal



Katinka Hosszú, Rio de Janeiro, 2016

was on 100m backstroke. The third gold medal came with an Olympic record (2:06,58) in the 200 m medley. In addition, she also won a silver medal on 200 meter backstroke.

She won seven gold and two silver medals at the 2016 World Short Track Championships in Windsor, Canada, and became the most successful female swimmer at the short track world championships. At the 2017 World Championships in Budapest, she came first in the 200-medley distance and won the 400-medley with a new world record. In addition, she won a silver medal in 200 m backstroke and a bronze medal in 200 m butterfly.

The best World Championships of all times

The **Duna Arena**, the exclusive, full service sports facility of the city of Budapest was completed by 2017 to serve as the central venue of the FINA World Championships. It took less than two years to build, which in sportive terms can be said to be a record time.



The world-class sports complex was able to accommodate 15,000 spectators during the tournament, later parts of the tribunes were dismantled to reduce capacity to six thousand.

A basic requirement in terms of design was that the building itself should be able to cater for the needs of the Hungarian swimming, water polo, synchronised swimming and diving federations. In addition to these, it also had to provide an opportunity for leisure sport of the public. Beside these expectations, it had to continue to provide the services the Dagály-bath had been providing since 1948. This made it possible for those looking for a spa or a professional pool to use both facilities together. The arena houses two fifty-meter pools, where the depth of the training pool can be adjusted or the pool can even be divided by a mobile wall. There is also a diving pool, a children's pool and a bubble bath decorated with colourful mosaics.

The swimming arena, which served as the main event venue for the Aquatics World Championship between 14-30th July 2017, is of an immense value for Budapest and Hungary. Success is



Duna Arena under construction



Duna Arena (Zoltán Balogh/ MTI, kormány.hu)



The Duna Arena is fully accessible for those living with disabilities (Gergely Botár / kormány.hu)



Julio Maglione hands over the award to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Zoltán Máthé / MTI, kormány.hu)

clear in comparison with the statistics of the previous venues, the Barcelona and Kazan World Championships: almost three thousand athletes per event, over a hundred thousand spectators, and almost four billion viewers who watched the events. On 24th July 2017, Julio Maglione, the President of the International Swimming Federation, handed over the most prestigious award of the world water sports federation to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of

Hungary. The award is donated by the organization to people who promote the goals and ideals of the Federation in the spirit of sport and morals. Prior to the end of the World Championships the FINA President called "the event in Budapest and Balatonfüred the best World Championships of all time". According to the organization's representatives, "Hungary has raised the FINA World Championship organization standards to a new level."



This is what boxing is about

„Guys, believe it or not, boxing is the most elegant sport, because it is fought in gloves...”

*We could quote many funny quips from the three-time Olympic champion **László Papp** (1926-2003), for which he was just as much known as his precise and mighty punches.*



The Kossuth-prize winner poet Tibor Gyurkovics was not exaggerating at all when he said that Laci Papp – as the whole country called him – “had the strength that creates legends”. He was not only a role model for athletes. The French actor, Jean-Paul Belmondo, who saw several of his professional matches, said about him “He was an exceptional boxer, who heralded a whole era of boxing. I am very sorry that he could never become world champion. László Papp reminds me of my youth, this is why he



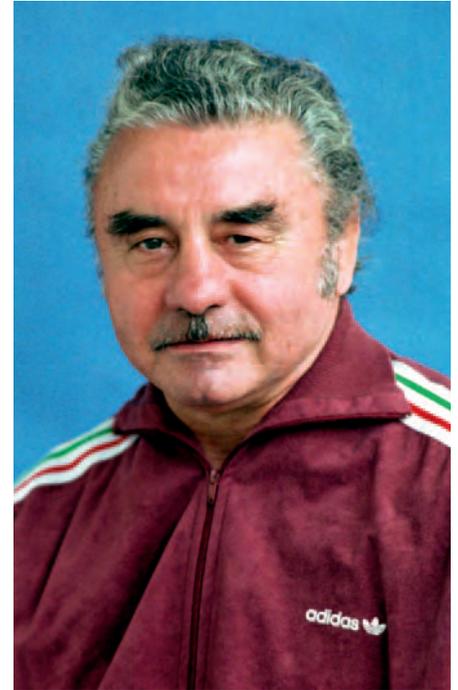
László Papp in a sports school, 1958

is especially dear to my heart. I have a photo of him appearing in my film *Fear over the city*, in an effort to pay my respect to this outstanding athlete."

László Papp was the first in the history of the Modern Olympics to win three consecutive gold medals (1948, London, middleweight; 1952, Helsinki, light middleweight; 1956, Melbourne, light middleweight). (There were two Cuban boxers, Teófilo Stevenson and Félix Savón, who repeated this feat.) He was allowed to turn professional from 1957, of his 29 matches he won 11 with KO, 12 on points, 4 with a TKO and two

of his matches were a draw. He defended his European-title six times. At the end of 1964, state officials did not allow him to continue his career: practically they stripped him of the possibility to fight for the World Middleweight Champion title.

Zsigmond Adler, another legendary figure of the boxing sport played a great part in the successes of László Papp, the most renowned and most successful master trainer of the time trained him from 1953. Their relationship was an exceptional and inseparable bond between master and disciple, which continued later on, during László



László Papp head coach, Olympic Games in Seoul, 1988

Papp's years as the coach of the national team. The International Olympic Committee decided to award him the Olympic Order in 1982, the World Boxing Council surprised him with a World Champion's belt and— on the occasion of his birthday — inducted him into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2001.

He appeared less and less in public because of his serious disease but always responded to questions with hope and modesty: "Write about my wife — he would ask journalists — if she wasn't by me, I would not have won a single Olympics."

Olympic gold at fifty



Aladár Gerevich, 1952

*The fencing school of Italo Santelli functioned in Budapest from 1896, where the Italian master taught fencing for three decades. One of his students, **Aladár Gerevich** (1910–1991) is the 18th most successful Olympic athlete of all times.*



The winner sabre team (Rajcsányi, Kovács, Rajczy, Kornél Kelemen, István Lichtenekert, Kabos, Gerevich, Berczelly), 1936



Aladár Gerevich in assault against Italy's Dare, 1948

Aladár Gerevich with his sons



Gerevich participated at six Olympics and returned with a gold from all of them. He won a gold medal as a member of the Hungarian sabre team at six Olympics (1932, 1936, 1948, 1952, 1956, 1960). He also won an individual gold at the London games (1948). He was bronze medallist in 1936 and got a silver medal at the 1952 games. He was fifty years old by the 1960 Olympics in Rome. When many questioned his ability to compete, he challenged the younger fencers and defeated each of them. Apart from his Olympic medals, Gerevich also won nineteen World- and European gold, silver and bronze medals, he was a thirty-four-time Hungarian champion.

His brilliant technique, extraordinary physique and elegance made him stand out from even the other great Hungarian fencers. Two sabre fencers follow him on the list of the most successful Hungarian athletes: Pál Kovács (1912–1995) and Rudolf Kárpáti (1920–1999), both of whom are six-time Olympic champions. The sabre team composed of Gerevich-Kovács-Kárpáti, proved to be unbeatable at several Olympics. Their hardest and most memorable battles on the piste were against the Italian sword team at the Olympics.

“I can safely say: it was all worth it,” – said Gerevich looking back on his career. – “It was worth it, because sports, the joy of fencing and victories have compensated for many things. Without

sports, I would not have seen the world, I would not have learned so much. We sabre fencers always entered tournaments with a heavy burden: here at home, everybody expected us to win. Nobody imagined we could ever lose. We worked and won for many years. It's hard to tell how much sweat, work, sacrifice was required for each victory.”

After his retirement, Gerevich tried to pass on all of his skills to youngsters, he would appear almost every day until the end of his life in the fencing hall of Vasas Sports Club in Pasarét. In 1988 he was awarded the Olympic Order of the International Olympic Committee, and in 1990 he received an International Fair Play Award for his life achievements. In 1991, he was inducted into the Hungarian Sports Hall of Fame, and was selected by the International Federation into the Fencing Hall of Fame in 2013.



Zoltán Horváth, Rudolf Kárpáti and Wladimiro Calarese, Rome, 1960

“I have run my distance and have held onto my faith”

„I believe that swimming, running, fencing, shooting and riding only served as a tool for me to realize and to attain a human objective of a greater dimension. If breathing, without which life is impossible could be called an objective at all. I actually believe that the essence of the soul in every person nudges them in a direction, where a life more fitting of a human can be lived.”





András Balczó, 1972

András Balczó, Imre Nagy
and Ferenc Németh, winners
of shooting of the National
Pentathlon Championship,
1961

The credo and beliefs of three-time Olympic champion **András Balczó** (1938), one of the greatest personalities of the modern pentathlon sport have become just as widely known publicly as his successes from "Mission", the film of Kossuth-prize winner, film director Ferenc Kósa.

He was twenty, when he first appeared at the World Championships in Aldershot, then competed two years later at his first Olympics in Rome. His fantastic talent coupled with exceptional faith and perseverance took him higher and higher. He won the Olympics twice in team in Rome (1960) and Mexico (1968), also winning an individual silver medal at the latter. The pinnacle of his career was Munich (1972), where he won an individual gold and a silver medal with the team. He won a total of nineteen medals in World Championships, ten of which were gold medals.

His victory at the 1969 World Championships is particularly memorable, when on the closing day on the Hármashatárhegy-hill above Budapest,



thousands of people ran with him by the track to celebrate. In a portrait film about him, he said about this event: "Nearing the finish line, I noticed that many people were running with me on both sides of the track. Men, women, old and young people, and that was very important to me. Something became very clear to me. I understood there and then, that I was not running for myself, nor for the prize. I saw for myself how many people I make happy



András Balczó Olympic gold medallist, Munich, 1972

with my victory and evidently bitter, if I lose and this circumstance lent a very special character to the way I competed. It was this realization that I soaked up as the blotter paper does with ink and by the end it completely overwhelmed me. This thought, that I was running for others simply carved itself into me."

He was elected Athlete of the Year in Hungary in 1966, 1969 and 1970 and Athlete of the Nation in 2004. His honesty, openness, his dedication to

telling the truth made him a role model for many. People like and adore him. They pay attention to him, because they see a hero in him, who "has run his distance" and "held onto his faith" for them and in their place. He often gives speeches, which are the same kind of testimonials of the essence of life's trials and tribulations as was the film "Mission" about him.

He lives happily in a house he built himself in Budakeszi with his wife,



András Balczó receiving the award of the Hungarian Olympic Committee, 2001

Mónika Császár, an Olympic team bronze medallist gymnast at the 1972 games and their twelve children. "Effort is what people need. They should fulfil the goals they feel must be achieved, lest they remain unsatisfied. The knowledge, that I have done all that was required of me is sufficient for my inner peace," – as András Balczó summarized the essence of his mission.

***Whoever came,
they were
still better***

*Table tennis found its way to Hungary
with English mediation in 1902.
It soon became popular, so three
years later – as the first in the world
– a national championship
was organized.*





World champion Viktor Barna

The World Federation was constituted in the 1920s and Hungarians dominated the World Championships, which were organized from 1926. The best ones of the era were: Viktor Barna with twenty-two, Miklós Szabados with fifteen world championship titles, which still makes them the most successful ones in the sport. World War II caused enormous losses to the sport. A new gold team was brought up by the fifties, later on the Far-Eastern style and the appearance of the soft racket surface managed to secure Hungarian successes again.

One of the best table tennis coaches in the world was Zoltán Berczik (1937-2011). He trained the Jónyer-Klampár-Gergely trio, a ping-pong gold team,

which was the first in the seventies to defeat the Chinese team, that many considered to be undefeatable. His most renowned athlete was István Jónyer, a four-time world champion. In addition to the triumph against the Chinese in Pyongyang, István Jónyer was also an individual world champion (1975, Kolkata), while also winning doubles with Klampár (1971, Nagoya) and Gergely (1975, Kolkata). Interestingly, Gábor Gergely and István Jónyer initially both wanted a football career. Tibor Klampár was dismissed as a small child from one of the clubs because he was



István Jónyer és Tibor Klampár in action, 1979



Budapest table tennis champion duo Gábor Gergely and István Jónyer, 1975

deemed to be too clumsy. Their career reached the top under the guidance of Zoltán Berczik in Pyongyang.

“He had a very good eye, and I was shocked to see how he could predict play.” – recalled István Jónyer about his master, Zoltán Berczik. – “He prepared us so well, that we could have played for a week against the Chinese at those



World champion team: Gergely, Klampár, Jónyér, Takács, Kreisz on the top of the podium, Pyongyang, 1979

ominous 1979 World Championships in North Korea, and they would still not have won against us.”

“We were already doubles world champions with István, when he became our coach, but he taught us new things.” – added Tibor Klampár. “We were rejuvenated and under his guidance we were able to defeat the Chinese again and again, and that was a big thing because they had so many people to choose from that after each of their defeats, they would come back at us with a new team. But whoever came, we were still better.”

“It is very difficult for me to speak because I owe everything to Zoltán Ber-

czik” – said Gábor Gergely, who was a few years younger than the others. – “I was seventeen, when he unexpectedly invited me to the national team. I was somewhere lower in the Hungarian ranking, but he saw something that he had been looking for a long time. He became my second dad, as a coach he took me all the way to the top, even if I was not nearly as talented as my teammates.”

According to national coach Zoltán Berczik, all three players were world-class: “Jónyér was the greatest, he stood out both in terms of his qualities and diligence. Klampár still had at least one world- and one European championship title in him, while I was the one who dis-

covered Gergely. Time proved me right, but his mentality was also required for his successes, he was an extremely good competitor.”



European and world champion István Jónyér awarded the Pro Urbe prize, Budapest, 2015

Interesting stories



Ágnes Keleti on the uneven bars, 1956

Ágnes Keleti five-time Olympic champion: she won gold medals in Helsinki, 1952 – Floor exercise; Melbourne, 1956 – Uneven bars, Balance beam, Floor exercise and as a member of the Team, Portable (Andrea Bodó, Margit Korondi, Alice Kertész, Erzsébet Köteles and Olga Tass). At the 1954 Rome World Championships, she came first on the uneven bars. Her successes have made her the most successful Hungarian female gymnast of all times. She was already there at the Olympics in 1948 but suffered a serious injury during training before the tournament and could not compete. Nobody in Hungary has ever won more gymnastics championships

than her. After the Melbourne Olympics, she stayed in Australia and later settled in Israel. She played a major role in creating the Israeli gymnastics sport.



Károly Takács, 1952

Károly Takács already liked to shoot when he was a child. He was fourteen years old when he was enrolled in NCO training school. He was such an excellent marksman that they changed the rules that banned NCOs from competing in competitions for the officer ranks. He was already a successful shooter, when he lost his right hand because of a grenade explosion in a military exercise in 1938. With incredible

willpower he learned to shoot with his other hand. He accomplished his biggest victories holding the pistol in his left hand. He was a two-time Olympic champion (London, 1948 – with a world record, Helsinki, 1952 rapid fire pistol, 2x30 shot competition, 25m) and World Champion (Luzern, 1939 – rapid fire pistol, team). Defeat was not an option for him at the Olympics, he wrote his victory speeches before the tournaments. Between 1938 and 1960 he became Hungarian champion thirty-five times (individual: 13; team: 22) and was a member of the national team on a total of twenty-six occasions.



Éva Székely, 1952

Éva Székely was the first in Hungary to introduce the butterfly discipline and to win the first championship (1949) on 100 m and 200 m, this is why she was named “Madame Butterfly”. Her great-

est achievement was the gold medal at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics in 200m breaststroke. The rules at the time permitted swimmers to switch from the breaststroke to butterfly, but not back again. After Éva Székely's victory, which she won swimming butterfly the rules were changed and butterfly was recognized as a separate discipline. After her sports career, she worked as a pharmacist and later became a fellow at the Scientific Research Institute of the College of Physical Education.

Zsuzsa, Zsófia and Judit Polgár were subjects of a pedagogical experiment. Their teacher parents, László Polgár and Klára Altberger proved that children are able to achieve peak performances if their (age specific) formation in a special field begins at an early age. Their parents homeschooled them, but chess was not taught to the detriment of anything else: all three of them hold multiple degrees and speak four-eight foreign languages. They are considered to be the best chess players. The girls'

achievements have been a brilliant testament to the success of the experiment questioned by so many people. They broke many existing records, became the youngest grandmasters, they achieved the biggest ratings, won the women's world championship title and Judit, who is the most successful among them, became the best female player in chess history. In November 2016, she became an ambassador of a United Nations program promoting equal rights until 2030.



The Polgár sisters (Judit, László, Zsófia and Zsuzsa) with their father



The Polgár sisters playing chess, 1992



Judit Polgár in the office of the foundation, 2015

Always going windward

*He sailed around Cape Horn
dreaded by seamen five times.
He crossed the Equator ten times.
He crossed the Atlantic-ocean seven times:
Nándor Fa (1953) is the native
of a landlocked country, yet nowadays
he is considered to be among the best
seamen of the world.*





A huge crowd of Hungarian and French fans welcomed Nándor Fa on 8th February 2017 at the finish line of the Vendée Globe round the world yacht race at the French port of Les Sables D’Olonne. The Hungarian ship designer and builder, solo ocean sailor circumnavigated the planet in a time of 93 days 22 hours and 52 minutes aboard his ship *Spirit of Hungary*, coming 8th in this race around the world.

As it was reported by the website *Spirit of Hungary*, the race began in favourable conditions for the competitors after the start on 6th November. “They passed through the Bay of Biscay in good breeze, and then proceeded with slight manoeuvres and at good speed towards the zone north of the Equator. The *Spirit of Hungary* crossed the Doldrums, the calm zone around the Equator without any delays, only to struggle with a smaller fleet later on in the Southern Atlantic to cross a huge low-pressure area. While the fleet of faster ships just managed to pass in



Nándor Fa coming 5th in the race around the world, Vendée Globe 92–93

Left: Nándor Fa ship designer, solo ocean sailor awarded the Fair Play prize of the Hungarian Olympic Committee

front of it, Nándor and the others were left with no other option but to work their way through the zone with arduous effort. In the Pacific-ocean he was slowed by bad weather for days, while he kept looking anxiously behind him, whether Conrad Coleman, who was in hot pursuit had been hit by a storm and needed assistance or not? One of the exciting episodes of the Pacific-ocean section was when Nándi fell asleep at the helm and only woke, when he had already crossed a few hundred meters into the no-go ice zone for competitors, an error that he had to correct with a detour of several hours.”

The *Spirit of Hungary* went around Cape Horn on 9th January, this was the

fifth time during the sailing career of Nándor Fa (Szent Jupát 1987 – with József Gál; BOC Challenge 1991; Vendée Globe 1993; Barcelona World Race 2015; Vendée Globe 2017). After this he managed good average speeds towards the Equator, where he again had to endure difficulties all the way till the finish. Nándor Fa was probably compensated for his superhuman perseverance during all the ocean storms by the cheers, the trumpets of thousands and thousands of fans, who welcomed him as he sailed down the port channel. “As he said, a sailor feels such liberating joy upon arrival at the finish line, that some of it would best be stored for the next coming months and years.”

A photograph of a Formula 1 race car, likely a Ferrari, on a track. The car is in the lower foreground, moving towards the right. In the background, a large, dense crowd of spectators is visible, filling the stands. The scene is viewed through a safety fence, which is out of focus in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.

Formula-1 Hungarian Grand Prix in Mogyoród

Bernie Ecclestone, the British businessman and former executive of the group of companies running the Formula One racing series, decided in the 1980s to organize a Grand Prix in a socialist country.

He travelled to many countries and it was after visiting several sites and having lengthy discussions, that he arrived in Budapest in 1983. He chose the site on the outskirts of the village of Mogyoród near the capital. The Hungarian Formula 1 Grand Prix has been organized at the Hungaroring every year since 10th August 1986. Over the decades it has become a true classic, traditional race; the Hungaroring is ranked third after Monte Carlo and Monza, in the list of courses, which have been included in the tournament schedule continuously.

Race drivers have said that, with its technically demanding course, the many bends and few straight segments, it is always a challenge to win at the Hungarian Grand Prix. One of the best drivers nowadays, Sebastian Vettel from Germany needed nine years, before he could first win at the Hungaroring in 2015 and to repeat his victory again in 2017.



Csaba Kesjár race driver, 1987

The first Hungarian to drive a Formula-1 car at the Hungaroring was Csaba Kesjár (1962–1988). He was allowed to

test one of the cars of the Zakspeed team on the Hungarian Grand Prix weekend in 1987. He could have been the first Hungarian to race in the Formula-1, but he was barely 26, when he unfortunately passed away in a car crash during a Formula-3 training in Germany.

The first Hungarian competitor and point winner in the history of the Formula-1 World Championships was Zsolt Baumgartner, who became a test pilot for the Jordan team in 2003. When



the driver of the team Ralph Firman was injured during training at the Hungarian Grand Prix, Baumgartner substituted for him during the race. He did not manage to finish the race, after his car stalled because of an engine fault in lap 34. He also drove instead of Firman at the Italian Grand Prix in Monza. He was given two chances to drive during the next year at Minardi: he came ninth during the first and eighth during the second race because many drivers were forced to retire early from the race.

Currently there isn't any Hungarian driver in the Formula-1, but the Hungarian Grand Prix has been in the competition schedule for decades and has a valid contract until 2026.

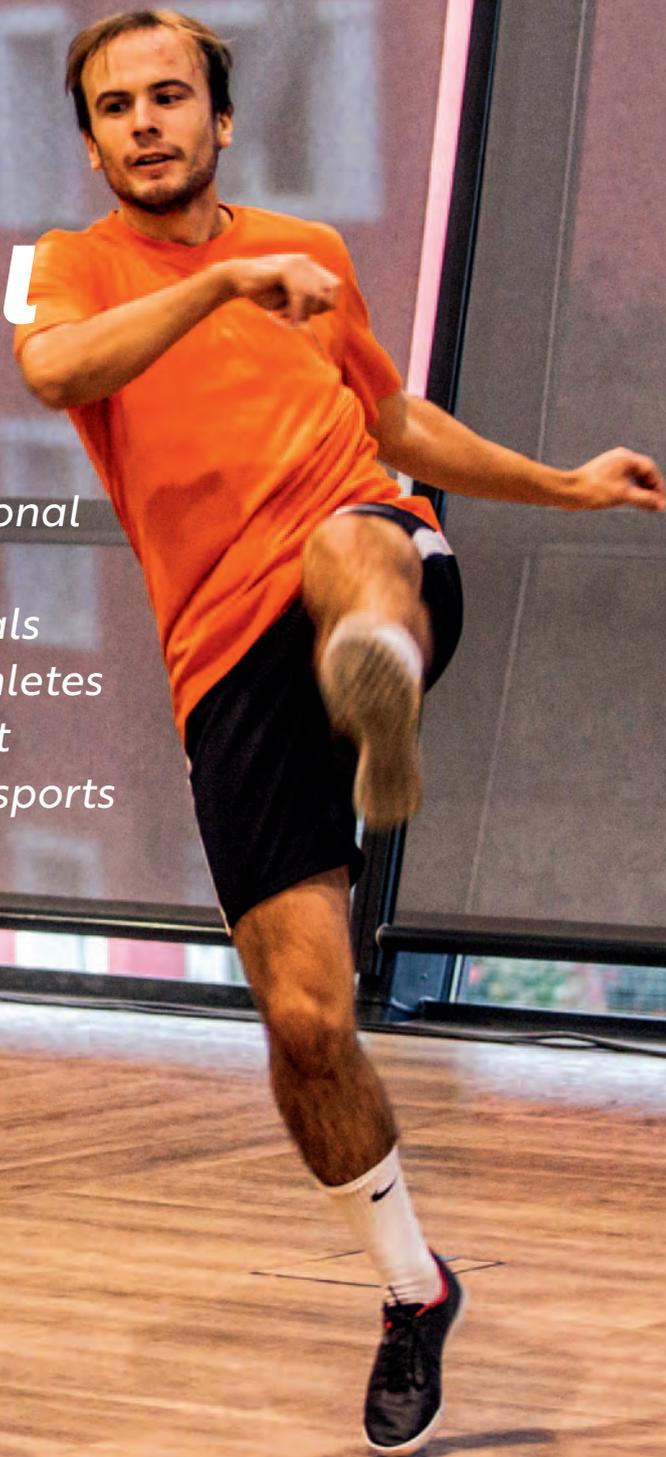
Zsolt Baumgartner

Qualification training, Hungarian Formula 1 Grand Prix, Mogyoród, 2017



Hungarian innovation in international sports

The fact that that Hungary is a traditional sports nation, is not only manifested by the 176 gold medals, 151 silver medals and 174 bronze medals won by our athletes at Olympic games, but also by the fact that Hungarians are successful in the sports economy and innovation.





Miklós Németh, 1976



Mihály Gyarmati and Károly Ferencz built a hit-scoring apparatus and continuously developed the technical equipment

Sports history has recorded many Hungarian innovations. For example, in fencing, sport-diplomacy efforts of Hungarian fencers played a major role in the automation of the sword fencing discipline. Prior to that, Mihály Gyarmati and his engineer partner, Károly Ferencz built a hit-scoring apparatus and continuously developed the technical equipment of our fencers. The scoring machine provided an objective signal on a valid touch, but the final ruling, on who made the valid touch was still up to the

Referee. The innovation had already existed in principle but was not used at the main competitions (European and World Championships, Olympics). It was first used in épée fencing and it was only later introduced in the foil and sword disciplines. The rehearsal was at 1955 at the World Championships in Rome, where our fencers won five gold medals.

The javelin called Flying History was a similarly successful innovation developed by Olympic champion Miklós Németh (1976, Montreal). The Olympic

champion Jan Železný (89,66 m) and later on Steve Backley (90,98 m) both achieved results better than the world record in force, using the special javelin with the roughened area patented by Miklós Németh.

Two-time Olympic champion Zoltán Magyar (1976, Montreal and 1980, Moscow) worked with his gymnastics trainer László Vigh to develop a new element on the pommel horse. This was accepted and approved by the International Gymnastics Federation. He won



Zoltán Magyar, Moscow, 1980



Ronaldinho, the world champion Brazilian football player presents the teqball, Budapest, 2016

a total of three European Championships (1973, 1975, 1977), three world championships (1974, 1978, 1979) and two Olympic championship titles with his special move called the "Magyar Travel".

Gábor Borsányi and Viktor Huszár invented a new sport, teqball, which became world famous within months. Simply put: it is foot tennis played on the table tennis table. It's a football-based new sports tool, one that is great for professional footballers and amateur sports lovers alike to develop their tech-

nical skills, concentration abilities and endurance. Two or four players can play. The sport was officially introduced on 18th October 2016 in Budapest by Ronaldinho, the world champion Brazilian football player. The International Teqball Federation (FITEQ) was formed in March 2017, which aims to promote the interests of the Hungarian invention.

Andor Iván, with the help of Iulia Ionescu, a friend from Bucharest University, invented and developed the SPINE, a spinal stabilization system that can be

essential for protecting the health of those pursuing the most dangerous winter and extreme sports or motorcyclists and cyclists. SPINE is a special back support that becomes rigid along the back of the spine upon a certain level of impact, thus stabilising the body until medical assistance arrives. In addition, SPINE has the advantage of being X-ray safe, so EMTs and doctors do not need to remove it during examination, so the spine is safe until an accurate diagnosis is established and treatment begins.

Countries and medals

*all-time medal table for Summer
and Winter Olympic Games
from 1896 to 2018*

COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
United States of America	1022	794	705	2521
Soviet Union	395	319	296	1010
Great Britain	263	295	289	847
France	212	241	262	715
Germany	191	192	232	615
Italy	206	178	193	577
China	224	164	153	541
Australia	147	163	187	497
Sweden	145	170	179	494
Hungary.....	177	151	174	502
Japan	142	135	162	439
Russia	150	129	159	438
East Germany	153	129	127	409
Romania	89	95	122	306
Finland	101	85	117	303

First ever
Hungarian
Winter Olympic
Gold Medal
at Winter Olympic
Games 2018 –
PyeongChang
(South Korea)
Hungarian
Gold Medal
winner Short
Track Speed
Skating Team
(left to right):
Csaba Burján,
Viktor Knoch,
Shaoang Liu,
Shaolin Sándor Liu





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