

Hubert Aleksander Jerzy Wagner



Inducted as a Coach

Player, coach and administrator, Hubert Wagner found success on all levels of the game. But his greatest achievements came on the sidelines as coach of the Polish National Team, his crowning achievement the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games Gold Medal.

In preparing for a career in coaching, Wagner learned his trade on the courts with 194 matches played. A member of the Polish National team from 1963 to 1971, team captain Wagner helped lead his team to a fifth-place finish at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics Games. Three years after retiring as a player, he accepted the head coach position for Poland's Men's National Team and immediately guided his country to the top with its first-ever Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) World Championship title in 1974.

Wagner was noted for his intense workouts and his philosophy that that any other place beyond first is irrelevant. That drive led to the Silver Medal at the 1975 European Championship, the Poles losing to the five-time defending Soviet team in the finals. Wagner's squad more than avenged that 3-0 loss in the European Gold-Medal Match the following year at the 1976 Montreal Olympics Games as the Polish team won the Olympic Gold Medal and ended the Soviet's Olympic reign.

After success with the Polish Men's Team, Wagner took over as head coach of Poland's Women's National Team from 1978-79, leading the team to an 11th-place finish at the 1978 FIVB World Championship and an eighth-place finish at the 1979 European Championship before taking on his second stint with the Men's National Team from 1983-85. During his second tenure coaching Poland's Men's Team, Wagner led his team to a Silver Medal at the 1983 European Championship and a fourth-place finish in 1985 European Championship.

Not one to stay too far from the sideline, Wagner became the Polish Men's coach for a third time, from 1996 to 1998. In addition to this third term, Wagner became more involved in the Polish Volleyball Association, and was elected Secretary General in January 2002.

In 2000, the FIVB nominated Wagner as a "Coach of the Century" and his Polish National Team of 1974-1979 as a "Team of the Century." He was also highlighted in a comic book in Poland as part of the Famous Polish Olympians series.

Wagner died on March 13, 2002, in an automobile accident after suffering a heart attack while driving at the age of 62. An international volleyball tournament is held annually in Poland in celebration of his life.