

2009 Volleyball Hall of Fame

SIEGFRIED SCHNEIDER

Inducted as a Player



A two-time Olympian, Siegfried Schneider led the German Democratic Republic men's volleyball team to its only Olympic volleyball medal. The East Germans won the 1972 Olympic Games silver medal before a large partisan crowd in Munich. It would be the last major volleyball event for Schneider as a player, but for the years the big hitter from Forst prowled the courts, East Germany rightfully belonged among the world's volleyball elite.

Schneider first fell in love with the game at 13, and pushed aside all other sports and began to train and to play volleyball exclusively. In 1956, after an apprenticeship as a carpenter, the 17-year-old Schneider moved from Forst to Leipzig and joined the Leipzig Sports Club in order to practice and play volleyball at a much higher level. While in Leipzig, he attended night school and completed a correspondence course in civil engineering. But volleyball still called, and he went on to complete another correspondence course at the GDR Sports University in Leipzig, and graduated with a degree as a sport teacher and volleyball coach.

By the mid-1960s, Schneider began serving notice that the East German team was a force to be reckoned with. After leading East Germany to a fourth-place finish in the 1966 FIVB World Championship and the 1967 European Championship, there were high expectations for the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. Schneider was outstanding at the competition and played in all nine matches, but East Germany's quest for a medal came up short as it lost to Czechoslovakia in the bronze medal match to come home with another fourth-place finish.

All that would change the following year as Schneider played a key role in East Germany winning its first-ever Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) World Cup in 1969 and its first-ever FIVB World Championship in 1970 with a dramatic five-set win over host Bulgaria.

The East German team stumbled a bit in the 1971 European Championship, again narrowly missing the medal stand by finishing fourth. However, Schneider sparked the German Democratic Republic team to the silver medal at the 1972 Olympic Games. En route to the medal stand, East Germany defeated the two-time Olympic champion Soviet Union during the semifinals and it looked like the home team would take its place atop the medal podium, but they lost the chance for the gold medal with a four-set loss to Japan.

After the 1972 Olympic Games, Schneider finished his active sport's career, but from 1973 to 1982, he coached men's volleyball teams in Germany's highest leagues, and from 1983 to 1990, he served as the manager of a sports club of about 700 members.