

Detlev Grabs

Detlev Grabs is a 60-year-old who swims with the Mégophias Trois-Rivières. Detlev is a professor of anatomy at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR), the appointment which brought him to Canada 13 years ago. Always more interested in science and sport, he will refrain from playing the flute or singing for us.

Detlev was born in East-Berlin and grew up in the German Democratic Republic where sport had an extraordinary value. He felt he fit right in. Detlev learned to swim at age five and started competing 2 years later. Through the GDR'S excellent recruitment program, he was chosen to attend a special sports school in Berlin at age 11. From there on he was destined to train hard and accomplish his school duties at the same time.

As a junior, he competed on the national and international level and in 1976 joined the senior National Team for the European Cup in Italy. He remained on the National Team until his retirement from competitive swimming in 1981 at age 21, at the European Championships. The highlight of his swimming career was the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow.

23.07.1980 – 23.07.2020

It's been 40 years that my teammates Jörg Woithe, Frank Pfütze, Rainer Strohbach and myself won the Olympic silver medal in Moscow in the 4x200 free relay in 7:28.60 for the GDR. Some facts:

- we lowered our national record by 8.34 seconds*
 - we beat Brazil by 0.7 sec and if we would have been 2.23 seconds slower we would have finished 7th*
 - behind us were Sweden, Italy, Great Britain, Australia and France*
- Still a proud but distant memory.*



Translation: Two pictures that tell a lot: Detlev Grabs of the GDR and Australian Mark Terry follow the battle of the final swimmers (left picture) in the 4X200m freestyle relay and their consecutive reactions after the final touch (right picture).

Since 1981 Detlev finished school, attended university and became a medical doctor. He worked at universities in Germany (Charité/Berlin), the USA (Yale/New Haven) and Switzerland (University of Fribourg) before becoming a full-time professor in Quebec. During these years he continued to swim occasionally as time and opportunity were limited.

Since 2008 the pool has been just 3 minutes from his UQTR laboratory there was no way to bypass this opportunity to return to swimming. And while already being in the water multiple times a week, why not re-enter the competition scene as well. Detlev trains three times week between 2 and 3 km each session. Since the UQTR pool is in reconstruction workouts are between 7 and 9 pm, his wife accepts this crazy schedule that keeps him in shape.

Detlev had many swimming goals for 2020, his first year in the 60-64 age group. He did break 5 provincial records (QC) in the winter of 2020 and 2 Canadian long course records, in the 200 free and 200 back, in February 2020.

"Certainly, in this particular year everything was cut short. We stopped swimming in March as all of you and beside some dry land training and some lake sessions it took until September 8th to be back in the 25m pool. We will see what that means in the future. But we are back in the water, everything else will also fall in place. Until then, keep swimming and enjoying the challenges and the camaraderie around the pool. We will see each other in one of the next competitions to come." – Detlev Grabs