

May 16, 2023

Obituary – Leen Pfrommer (NED)

It is with great sadness that the International Skating Union (ISU) learned of the passing of the famous Dutch Speed Skating coach Leen Pfrommer, who died at the age of 87 in Utrecht in the Netherlands. Pfrommer was passionate about Speed Skating and coached several generations of top Dutch skaters, including [Ard Schenk](#) (NED), the prolific athlete who won three gold medals at the 1972 Olympic Winter Games in Sapporo (JPN).

Discipline and commitment

Raised as a military sports instructor, Pfrommer was known for his strict and disciplined approach. He started as the Coach of the Dutch national team in the 1960s, collecting multiple World and European Allround titles with [Kees Verkerk](#) and Ard Schenk.

Lieutenant colonel Pfrommer demanded discipline from the athletes he worked with, but he also gave back full commitment himself. This commitment often reached far beyond the realm of Speed Skating. When [Piet Kleine](#) (NED) didn't have a job after winning Olympic silver and gold in 1976, Pfrommer told the Dutch minister of internal affairs that Kleine would like to become a mailman. The Speed Skater got his desired job two weeks later.

Raising talents

Born on August 31, 1935 in Harderwijk (NED), Pfrommer played football and skated at his local club. He enlisted in the army and became a professional soldier. His career as a skater did not take off, but he became a Speed Skating Coach in 1965. In 1977, Pfrommer decided to quit his role as national team manager to become one of the first well-known Speed Skating commentators on Dutch television, but his passion to work with young talent got the best of him and he returned to coaching on the ice in 1985. As Coach of the Dutch national youth team, he trained among others [Leo Visser](#), [Ids Postma](#), [Rintje Ritsma](#) and [Falko Zandstra](#), who all went on to win world titles and Olympic medals, and also some of the most merited Speed Skating Coaches of the last decades, [Gerard Kemkers](#) and [Jac Orie](#).

In the 90s, Pfrommer laid the foundations for the first Dutch Sprint Speed Skating success, when he trained the national sprint team, that included World Champions [Erben Wennemars](#) and [Jan Bos](#) and triple Olympic Champion [Marianne Timmer](#).

Pfrommer stopped his professional career at the age of 66, but he stayed involved as a Coach and mentor, also outside the Netherlands. He often showed up at Speed Skating events, and two weeks before he passed away, he attended a grand gathering of more than hundred Dutch top Speed Skaters and Coaches in Leusden (NED).

The ISU pays tribute to Mr. Leen Pfrommer and will remember him with affection.

Jae Youl Kim
President

Fredi Schmid
Director General