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The 1996 summer Olympic Games in Atlanta

4 gold medals

The humiliation of Barcelona, where tennis player Marc Rosset won Switzerland's only medal – though a gold – is forgotten. With a total of seven medals – four golds and three silvers – the Swiss team at the 26th summer Olympic Games of the modern era was more successful than any since 1948. This is particularly impressive since six out of the seven awards were obtained in traditional Olympic sports rather than in one of the many newcomer events.

Only the silver medal for Thomas Frischknecht's victory on the mountain bike came from one of the trendy types of sport which makes the Olympic festival more lucrative but less true to its origins.

For the first time ever, a Swiss was victorious in "normal" cycling. French-speaking Pascal Richard crowned his career with victory in a competition in which the world's best pedallers were on the starting line, and not just so-called amateurs as previously.

Switzerland had to wait a long 44 years to obtain another gold medal in Artistic Gymnastics. Donghua Li is the name of the chosen one. He was born Chinese but married Swiss in 1989, and has represented our country since 1994. True he was world champion in 1995 and European champion in 1996 in his showpiece discipline, the pommel horse, but it was only with his Olympic gold that his greatest dream finally came true.

But the site of Switzerland's greatest triumphs at Atlanta was Lake Lanier. On the water Xeno Müller took gold in the single sculls, then brothers Markus and Michael Gier repeated in the lightweight double sculls, and finally Ingrid Haralamow, Daniela Baumer, Sabine Eichenberger and Gabi Müller surprised everyone by obtaining silver in the kayak fours.

Disappointment that in the most Olympic of all Olympic sports, light athletics, the best that Switzerland could do was a 13th place was finally dispelled by Willy Melliger's ride to silver on his grey, Calvaro, on the last day.

René Lenzin



Xeno Müller



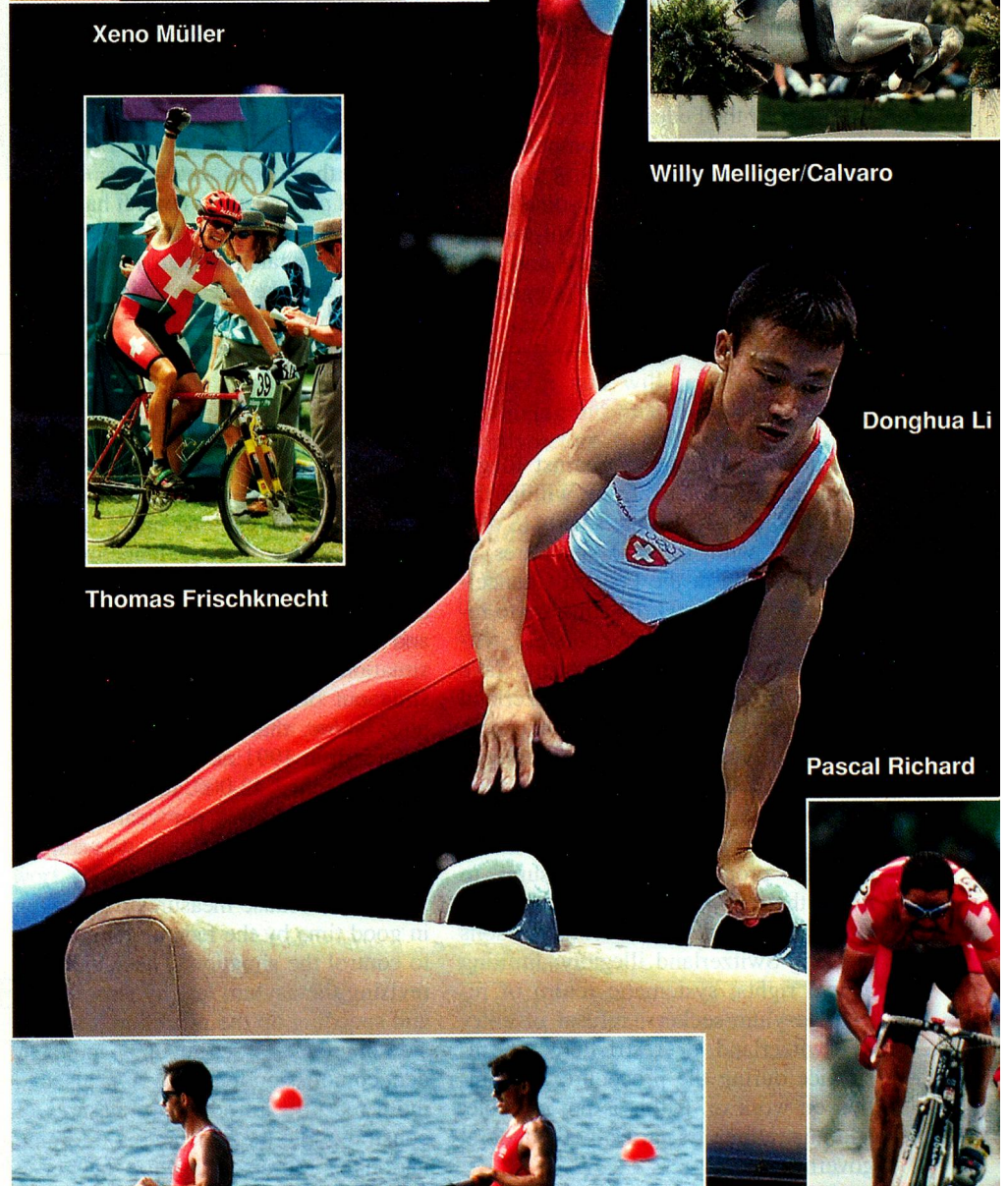
Thomas Frischknecht



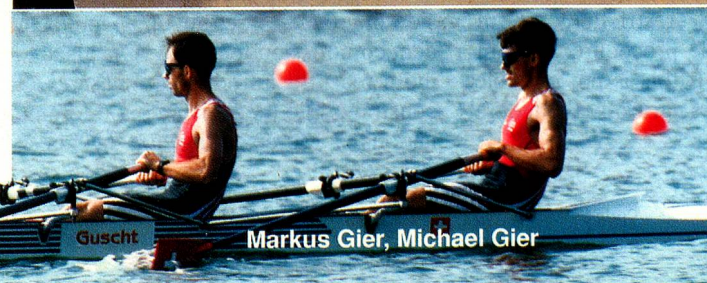
Gabi Müller, Sabine Eichenberger, Ingrid Haralamow, Daniela Baumer.
(Photos: Keystone)



Willy Melliger/Calvaro



Donghua Li



Guscht Markus Gier, Michael Gier



Pascal Richard