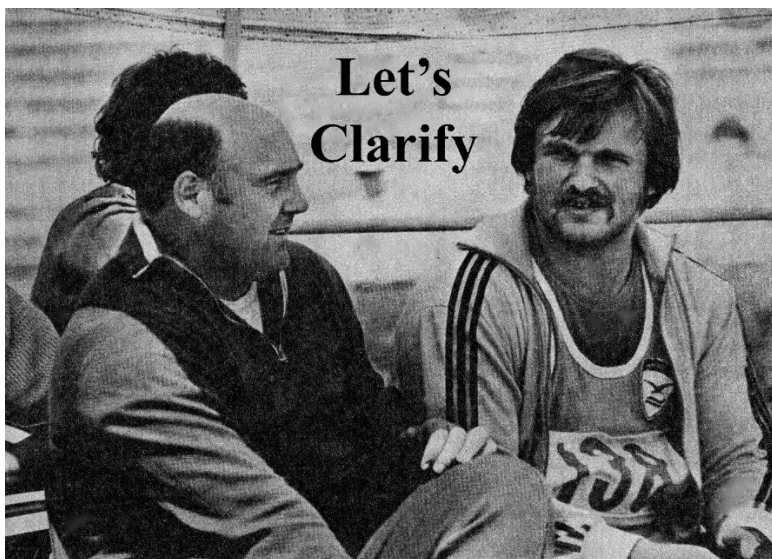


We and the Hammer



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Anatoliy Bondarchuk and Yuri Sedykh sat down together to talk about their first meeting and their common path to the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

Legkaya Atletika Introduction

We've never had this before. It's not just us. This is something that no one can recall in the history of world athletics. A time when a teacher and student, who competed against each other at an Olympic Games, stood side by side on the podium. This is what happened at the XXI Olympic Games. After the end of the hammer throw competition, Anatoliy Pavlovich climbed to the third step and to the first, his student Yuri Sedykh. Today, speaking in our column, they'll share what they remember about their first meeting and the difficult path on which they went hand in hand to win Olympic medals.

Bondarchuk: And it was exactly four years ago, in October 1972, when the head of the Athletics Department of the Kiev Institute of Physical Education, Viktor Sirenko, and the director of the Athletics Department of the Kiev Institute of Physical Education, Mykola Oleksiyovych Belykh, who was responsible for sports activities and training, came to me with an unusual request: take guardianship and mentorship of Yuri Sedykh. I had just returned from the Munich Olympics, where I became a champion, and although I was 32 years old, I was not going to switch to coaching.

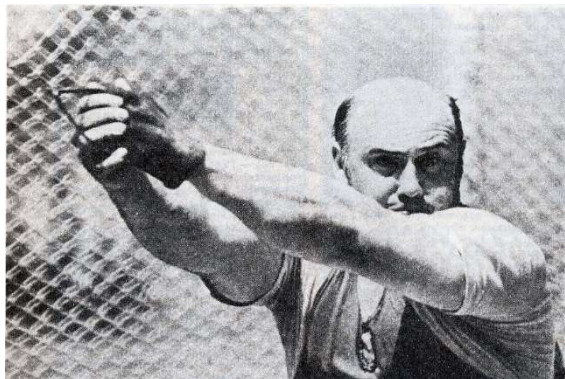
Yes, and Yuri, at first glance, was not so impressive that my eyes lit up. As I remember it, among the plusses, which I can acknowledge a bit, were narrow shoulders and rosy cheeks. When you add to these that I didn't particularly believe in junior champions, who rarely performed beyond their age, there was nothing that persuaded me to respond positively.

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Sedykh: And in the stadium was the first time I had seen you. You sat on a bench stripped to the waist. I was like, "How huge and bald. He looks like my uncle!" And the guys said to me: "So it's Bondarchuk!" My first coach Vladimir Ivanovich Volovik told me about you. When the situation came about in Kiev that I didn't have a coach, I was going to leave. But then I was brought to you.

Bondarchuk: Yes, I am in training, I have my own thoughts, my own plans, after all, I fulfilled my Olympic dream. And, most importantly, I still feel strong! If you remember, I didn't get too excited, and I didn't pat you on the shoulder with joy. It seems that I said, "Come." That's where our introduction ended.

Sedykh: No, you said more, "Come in November." But that was enough for me because I wanted to train. As it is now, I remember on that November day it was pouring, raining heavily. Not planning on training, I showed up at the stadium in my raincoat. I looked around and you and Chumak had already prepared and were waiting for me. You asked, "What are you made of? Let's warm up," I was horrified: "How? It's pouring rain." And you gave me a look like that again so, I picked up the tails of my coat, stuffed them in my pants and ran around in a circle.



Bondarchuk: Yes, I think it was that way. And I thought, "Well, I took on a lazy guy to train! Don't I have enough worries? Now I must teach him every time." And there's nowhere to retreat. I promised, and now it's awkward in front of my colleagues. In general, you keep coming to training, and I don't experience joy. A week passes, then the second and gradually the tasks loom. First, we need to revise the fundamentals of throwing. The second is to change the rhythm of movement. Third, throw the hammer like a hammer, and you threw it like a discus.

Sedykh: And I keep coming to practice, still being afraid of you. Everything was unusual and strange for me. We trained a lot, and few words were spoken. But now, remembering those days, I understand I was told the fundamentals, the essentials. To the point. Therefore, I was not confused about the theory, but was aware of everything that was necessary at that moment.

Bondarchuk: What was I thinking? That you're going to be a champion? No. About making me famous? No. I was asked to take care of you, and I tried to do it. And now that four years have passed, I can praise you: you tried harder. Two months had passed since your first training session, and in the dead of winter you threw beyond your record - 63 meters. But that wasn't the point. I clearly saw that you "felt" the movement, grasped the rhythm, and most importantly - I saw the beginnings of an independent person in you. I gave you an assignment and I saw you trying to master it. That's what I liked the most.

Sedykh: And I wasn't used to this. I felt a lot of attention, but at the same time I constantly caught myself thinking that I must think a lot of things myself. You must weigh and determine your own condition all the time. And at the same time, I felt, I am doing much less than I did before. I was unaware at the time: I did less physically, but a lot mentally: I kind of mentally grew into a movement.

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Bondarchuk: You were good. You were "growing up-" and I was "overgrown." And what would I think of? Responsibility. It's not easy to answer in front of you, in front of myself, in front of my bosses who trusted me. My worries in training were enough, and then I...

Sedykh: Anatoliy Pavlovich, I didn't get you upset, did I?!

Bondarchuk: I don't think so. In May 1973, at seventeen years old, you already threw a six-kilogram hammer 75.88. I think it was a worldwide achievement for your age.

Sedykh: And on my birthday I gave you a gift: I threw a new record - 67.28 with a standard hammer.

Bondarchuk: What was is what was, less bragging. Better remember how, while waiting for the European Junior Championships in Duisburg, we were both afraid that you would burn out too soon.

Sedykh: And why burn out?! What did you teach me? The main thing is not which place, but the result. And I walked to the hammer sector ready to throw 67 meters. And threw it. And became a champion. Honest...

Bondarchuk: Do you mean when, having won first place, you almost went home without a gold medal?

Sedykh: Anatoliy Pavlovich, maybe it's not worth telling, otherwise people will laugh....

Bondarchuk: Let them laugh. Maybe someone will find it useful in the future.

Sedykh: What was is what was. At the championship, I didn't know where to put my hammer, and took it to the sector. Somehow, I explained myself to the senior official and put the hammer in a prominent place. And then, when the competition began, he took the hammer and, went into the treatment room and gave it to Gena Tishchenko. We came out of there, and passions were boiling over. There was no translator. The top official spoke French, he was translated into German, then into Bulgarian, and from Bulgarian to me. And I almost cried. And claiming to be ignorant of the rules as the European Champion was embarrassing. Anyway, I left them to sort things out, and I rushed to look for the oldest hammer official who was supposed to save me. I found him just in time. He confirmed everything, and they didn't have time to "separate" me from my first medal.

Bondarchuk: And did you remember it?

Sedykh: For a lifetime!

Bondarchuk: Perhaps others will remember it, too. But these are all fairytales. Everything was going well for you. There was a new junior world record of 69.04. We had to move on. Both for you (if you haven't forgotten that I trained nearby), and for me! You were the first to bathe in glory, and it seemed that they began to forget about me, the athlete, Bondarchuk. We had to think about the future. Some things to work out, and there was no denying it. If you remember, the task that faced both of us was expressed simply: the optimal ratio of intensity in all of what we did.

Sedykh: How could I forget? You've got me upset? It's nice to be a champion, but I wanted to... stay. Isn't it true I worked harder than necessary? Had I ever been late for training?



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Bondarchuk: Stop, Yuri! Come on. Not so many twists and turns! There were no complaints against you about this part, but I had some other complaints, but we'll keep quiet about this, we'll keep it a family secret... As for our tasks, we won't stay silent about this. Everything was thought through, everything was discussed. Both of us knew we were experimenting, which meant that we were taking a risk. And soon, in April 1974, both of us had sore backs. We trained way too much! This was an opportunity to think... We exceeded the limits of intensive training too much. In the spring I threw 73.10, and at the national championships, I'm ashamed to admit, only 65. 50..

Sedykh: For me, it wasn't that noticeable - I even added two meters that season.

Bondarchuk: What do they say in such circumstances, where is my eighteen years? You were 19 that year and I was 34. When you live to see my age, you won't brag recklessly about your young years. An obstacle is an obstacle. No matter what we say now, we both had injuries. Barely got out. That's right - this was a mistake along the way. Be calmer. The main thing now is not to "chop firewood." *[I think he's saying not to say things that will cause an argument.]*

Sedykh: Anatoliy Pavlovich, why so harsh? Let's remember how things were. You told me everything. When I grasped it you asked me, "What do you think?" What could I think? If you, my teacher, were taking a risk every minute next to me? Yes, I had to run ahead of you so that you could learn from me. But you didn't even think that way. You thought I didn't see or feel. In general, everything was the same. And the fact that I'm younger, as you said yourself, this shortcoming was easily corrected.

Bondarchuk: So, we tried, we made mistakes, we took our time to go back to find the only path that we had missed being in a hurry. I am trying to speak figuratively, without getting into the "weeds" of the specifics of hammer throwing, but I am sure that every athlete and coach who once came to a dead-end will understand us perfectly. There is only one way out - back. So, you and I were going back, even in what we had done, we found a grain of truth and climbed up another step in understanding the main task: the optimal ratio.....

Sedykh: Don't you think that even with our mistakes you were right? It may be worse today, but tomorrow...

Bondarchuk: Yes. In several attempts to find the truth, I deliberately pushed us to the limit, because we were right in our planning, and we had to prepare for tomorrow.....

Sedykh: And I felt the sense during the 1975 season, [that followed the experimental one]: I would throw and feel a new level all the time. And I couldn't manage my own eagerness and the opportunity to implement it. However, something was breaking down in me, especially in the way of preparing me for competition. There were several breakdowns. I was sad. But you didn't lose heart, all the time offering new options. If I'm not mistaken, there were five. And when you implemented them, you found both positive and negative things in each one.

Bondarchuk: Well, done! That's right. You saw everything but didn't feel how carefully and discreetly I planted the idea in you of the real possibility of going to the Olympics - '76. I figured it out myself when you threw 74.30. But I wasn't in a hurry to speak candidly about it. I was giving you the opportunity to mature. I must teach, and you...

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Sedykh: And me? If you hadn't done it yourself, who would have done it for me? I trained conscientiously and, in the fall of 1975, I believed it myself. How important it is to believe it yourself! And retune in a new way. Even more purposefully, more efficiently. When I got sick for four days, it seemed that I wouldn't have time to catch up with the others. I had just gotten better - and went back to bed for four days. You have no idea how scary it was. I knew that I could, I believed that I could, and I felt like it was leaving me! Escaping!

Bondarchuk: Why wouldn't I know? Even during your illness, an opportunity presented itself for you and my leaders at a high-level meeting I said: "In 1976, the No. 1 opponent for all throwers, including for me, will be Yuri Sedykh." And the leaders frowned: who is this Sedykh? That's how it turned out - it was in my head. I prepared you. And I, an old man, also wanted to perform at the Olympics. I had to think about my own preparation and not just about your illness. Who knows how hard it was for me to keep up with you! When you were not around, I didn't feel my age, and when we were together training and there was only comrade Hammer between us, and 15 years difference in age...

Sedykh: I got it. But, believe me, I couldn't have been happier then when, in March 1976, you threw 73.13, unexpectedly. And although I had an advantage of one and a half meters - 74.86 over you, I saw how you got excited and, probably, thought: I can still do it. Am I right?

Bondarchuk: Yes. But how hard it was for me in that pre-Olympic winter! As I hurried after you, I didn't take my age into account. But fortunately, I was able to improve and move on by the summer.

Sedykh: And the season had already begun! That's where passions really heated up! I threw 77 meters. And for the first time, I felt the feeling of flying far away. And then I was overcome with doubts: how can all this be repeated? But you, Anatoliy Pavlovich, fought like a lion - 75.66. Second place. I was proud of you.

Bondarchuk: And then, if you remember, we sat down together...

Sedykh: Don't I remember? And all opponents were given the maximum, and we took the bare minimum. And then I was worried about you. How we worked together, lived as one chain, one dream, and now - apart. I couldn't even imagine that fate could divide us before the Olympics.

Bondarchuk: Thank you. I saw and felt it. From the outside, you and I must have looked like two communicating ships with one another, and everything we had was for the two of us. And it bounced from one to another.

Sedykh: At the national championship, I was first.

Bondarchuk: I was a strong second.

Sedykh: So, all is good, let's go together?!

Bondarchuk: Everything was so easy for you! But you were my student, after all! And... competitor. What was I supposed to do with you?

Sedykh: Beat me up, overburdening me with training, push me to the point where I didn't throw far!

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Bondarchuk: Well, done! How well I coped with the assignment!

Sedykh: O Master! After the national championship, you destroyed your competitor, Yuri Sedykh. Although, to be honest, I deliberately went for it more than once, trusting your merciless hand.

Bondarchuk: You're joking around, but what will people think?

Sedykh: But the two of us did the same thing. Perhaps, we didn't look quite convincing in the eyes of our leaders?

Bondarchuk: I think so. Looking from the outside at you and myself, I can also say without a doubt that we both looked terrible in the qualifying competitions for the Olympics.

Sedykh: But we had nothing to lose, although the chain reactions in qualifying were bad, it wasn't bad in the main competitions. We worked things out...

Bondarchuk: Only in the 1976 season: April, May, June, July... Yes, six times.

Sedykh: Aren't you angry at me that I won?

Bondarchuk: Eh, Yuri, if I were younger!