



Fashion director known for her unusual locations
Lucy Ewing
 Page 58



Register

Obituaries

Roger Self

Authoritarian manager and inspiration behind the revival of British hockey and the success of men's and women's teams at the Olympics

The training sessions taken by Roger Self, the Great Britain hockey manager, were legendary. Sometimes those involved were pushed so hard they vomited. Self did not care; he never tried to be friends with the players. He was interested only in Olympic glory.

When he succeeded, securing Great Britain's first gold medal in 68 years after a memorable victory over West Germany in the 1988 final in Seoul, the players forgave him for the pain he had inflicted. The training regime overseen by a man rarely inhibited by sensitivity had been both unorthodox and unyielding — but it worked.

His appointment as manager in 1980 had brought a new sense of purpose after he had almost single-handedly saved GB hockey. He championed involvement in the Olympics throughout the Seventies when the home nations — as with their counterparts in international football — fiercely resisted threats to their independence. Some would even have welcomed the end of a unified hockey team playing under the banner of Great Britain.

Self, on the other hand, believed that representing the GB team in the Olympics should be the pinnacle of every player's career.

His greatest legacy was the Framework Agreement signed by England, Scotland and Wales in 2006 when he was president of GB Hockey. The agreement gave precedence to Great Britain on the field, clarity to business matters off the field, as well as transparency in selection. It paved the way for the success of the women's team, which won bronze in London in 2012 and gold in Rio last year.

More than 30 years earlier, it had been a partnership between Self and his head coach, David Whitaker, that had led to the success of the men's team. They secured the bronze medal at the

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Los Angeles Games in 1984, took silver at the 1986 World Cup and then gold in Seoul.

Richard Leman, a member of those three squads, described Self as "an enigmatic leader, often provoking us, but always finding the right way to make us think hard and perform".

On the final selection weekend before the Los Angeles Olympics, the names of 14 members of the squad were announced on the Saturday evening. Two more players would be named after a selection match on the Sunday.

With the players completely shattered, Self stunned the group by singling out three players — Kulbir Bhaura, Robert Clift and Mark Precious — to be put through an exacting series of shuttle runs. The rest of the squad stopped training and watched. Bhaura was the first to face the "humiliation". He recalled: "I was absolutely furious and as soon as it was over I hurled my stick into the stand. I remember after a long selection debate, Roger came over to tell Mark and I our tickets on the plane were reserved."

Self's ruthless edge ensured that



Roger Self during training in 1979 and, below, the Great Britain team after winning the gold medal at the Seoul Olympics in 1988

none of the players ever took fitness for granted again.

Four years later, the campaign in Seoul started badly with a 2-2 draw against the hosts, South Korea. Incensed at how the game was slipping away, Sean Kerly — the star of the Great Britain team — approached the bench and became involved in a furious finger-wagging exchange with Self. Grilled at the post-match press conference, Self remained deadpan. "We were simply discussing tactics," he said.

Often prickly, he maintained a grip on dealing with the media, but never sought the limelight. When he learnt on the morning of the Olympic final that Whitaker had acceded to a request from BBC Television to travel on the team coach to the stadium and film in the dressing room, he vetoed it instantly. The team, he said, was the priority, not publicity. Hard as the BBC tried to persuade him, he wouldn't budge. "They'll get more than enough attention if they win," he said.

According to Leman: "He made us realise we had to work bloody hard for success and thank God he did. We hated it."

The manager was always confident in his methods, having imposed high standards of discipline and physical fitness during seven years as manager of Wales. In 1970 Wales beat England for the first time, going on to win the triple crown and making their debut in the European championships.

He also managed the north London club Southgate when they dominated European hockey, picking up the bronze medal at the European club championships in 1975 before claiming three successive titles from 1976 to 1978.

According to Whitaker, Self "could be daunting, but he always summed people up well and if you were found wanting you knew it. We had vigorous



debates about everything behind closed doors, but it was that robust dialogue which helped give us the edge."

Roger Douglas Self was born in Guernsey in 1939, the youngest of three sons of Roy Self and his wife, Elsie (nee Cross), who ran a furniture business on the island.

His father sent Roger's mother and their three sons to live with relatives in Derby before the Germans invaded the island in 1940, while he was deported to

France, then Germany, for the duration of the war. They were reunited in 1945.

All three boys won scholarships to Elizabeth College, Guernsey, where Self excelled at hockey, cricket and football. An attacking opening batsman, he was later selected for the island's cricket team. After school he trained at St Luke's College in Exeter for a three-year physical education course and qualified as a Football Association coach. He was captain of Redditch for several years and played Birmingham League cricket for Moseley. He met his wife, Hilary, at her hockey club social in Hampton-in-Arden in 1967 and, after a whirlwind romance, they were married.

He later established his own financial services company, Roger Self Ltd, in Stratford-upon-Avon, where clients often remarked on his sense of humour. He enjoyed going for a pint with friends and, with Hilary, hosting dinner parties — as long as it did not interfere with hockey.

Always insistent that there was a job to do, he rarely relaxed. The couple gardened together in all weathers and he loved playing sport with his children and 11 grandchildren. He would often mow the lawn and then set up a tennis court with an old Wimbledon net and

He mellowed after stepping down as manager of Great Britain

play with a friend. The dogs acted as ball boys while the children would sit on a ladder and score. He mastered skiing — there was, according to his wife, "always time for one more run" — and spent many idyllic hours with her fishing for mackerel off Guernsey and salmon in Cumbria and Scotland.

Self is survived by his wife and their five children: William, who has taken on his father's financial services business; Joanna, who works part-time for a law firm; and Leonie, Harriet and Natalie, who are all housewives.

Self mellowed considerably after stepping down from his managerial role with Great Britain in 1988, but continued to take an active role in the sport. He became a respected tournament director, officiating at key events, and was president of the Great Britain Olympic hockey board between 2004 and 2007 before resigning due to ill health.

Awarded an OBE in 1984, he was appalled that only three of the 16-strong 1988 squad were recognised in the Queen's honours and campaigned tirelessly, but so far unsuccessfully, with Richard Dodds, the 1988 captain, to gain recognition for the others.

One of the players, the defender Jon Potter, nicknamed "Ice Man", said: "He changed all of our lives for the better. He was, and still is, my inspiration."

Roger Self, OBE, hockey manager and businessman, was born on June 10, 1939. He died from the muscle disease inclusion body myositis on June 5, 2017, aged 77