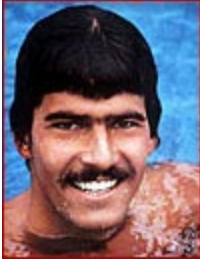


## MARK SPITZ



### Profile:

American swimmer Mark Spitz achieved an Olympic record in 1972 that may never be equalled: seven gold medals. Perhaps no one athlete put more pressure on himself than American swimmer Mark Spitz. The athlete's bold predictions and cocky disposition made it almost impossible for him to live up to the standards he was setting for himself.

Spitz began swimming at the age of two and as far back as he could remember, he ruled the pool. He held 17 national records (for his age group) at the age of ten and was named "the world's best 10-and-under swimmer." At age 16, he won his first AAU National Championship. And the following year he won five gold medals at the 1967 Pan American Games and laid claim to ten world records. He couldn't help but think he was the best.

So before the 1968 games in Mexico City, Spitz predicted he would accomplish what no one else had— to win six gold medals. He ended up with two team golds, plus an individual silver and bronze. It's tough for someone to be disappointed with four Olympic medals, but Spitz was.

He spent the next four years at Indiana University, winning almost every conceivable award, setting almost every world record in existence, and preparing himself for the 1972 Olympics in Munich.

At Munich, not only did Spitz win the six golds he predicted four years before—he won seven! And not only did he win all seven, but world records were set in each event. He won four individual golds in the 200m butterfly, the 200m freestyle, the 100m butterfly and the 100m freestyle. He also added three team golds as the United States won the 4x100m freestyle relay, the 4x200m relay, and the 4x100 medley relay. It was the greatest performance by an Olympic athlete in history.

Tragedy then struck the 1972 games as Palestinian terrorists killed two Israelis and taking nine others hostage. Spitz, who is Jewish, left Germany for London before the closing ceremonies. The nine hostages were later killed.

His performance coupled with his good looks made Spitz an instant celebrity back in the states. A host of endorsements and a short-lived television career followed but he eventually settled in to a profitable real estate career. Seventeen years later, at the age of 39, he began training again with the hopes of earning a spot on the 1992 Olympic team. The familiar mustache was gone but the fire remained. Alas he fell short in qualifying and had to settle for a whopping career total of 11 Olympic medals.