

# KATHRIN BORON (GER): 2009 Thomas Keller Medallist

By Martin Cross

**It is particularly fitting that Kathrin Boron, this year's winner of the Thomas Keller medal, won her first world title at Bled in 1989, the last championship that Thomi attended. He would have seen the 19-year-old win the first of her eight world titles in the double sculls there, with her partner, Beate Schramm. But for an ankle injury, Thomi might have also seen Boron win her first Olympic Gold in Seoul. But not even he could have guessed the impact this remarkable woman would have on the sport.**

When Boron first walked through the doors of the Dynamo Potsdam's rowing academy in the autumn of 1983, even the world's top women's coaches in East Germany could not have foreseen the impact that this tough 13-year-old athlete would have amongst her teammates and competitors. Her achievements alone between 1989 and 2008, including four consecutive Olympic titles, command the utmost respect. But Boron's impact went far beyond this. As one of Boron's competitors for her final race in Beijing said: "It's not just the medals that make the role-model, it's the whole package."

That 'package' meant Boron could not only perform consistently at a world-beating level in different boat classes but manage to do all this while keeping her job in Potsdam and becoming a mother in 2002. Her daughter, Cora, was no stranger to regattas or training camps. British female athlete Katherine Grainger admitted that seeing how Boron coped sent out a powerful message: "She's amazing and has shown other women who compete in the sport just what it's possible to achieve."

Boron is also seen as someone who always had time for her fellow competitors, with a smile, or encouraging comment, a woman with remarkable consideration. After an epic race at the Beijing Olympics, the German quad was beaten by China and Britain. Frances Houghton, then one of the closely beaten British crew members, explained "Even though Kathrin was gutted that her quad could only take the bronze she managed to find the time to look across at us, with a look that said I feel for you too. To do that then, was just amazing and shows what kind of woman she is."

The 2004 Olympic single's champion, Katrin Rutschow-Stomporowski, rates that victory as one of Boron's greatest, particularly as it came after the birth of Cora. "I think Kathrin had to be really strong that year to come back after she had taken a year out of the sport."

Rutschow-Stomporowski first partnered Boron in the German quad for the Atlanta Olympics, which saw Boron take her second Olympic

title. And Rutschow-Stomporowski recalled the incredible standards Boron set for each and every training session: "She didn't conserve power for the next session. And from the moment that I had the first training session with her, I knew she was one of the strongest rowers of all. It was such a motivation to row with her and when you could beat her, you knew that was something special."

Though Boron never quite managed to win a world title in the singles – just missing out to Denmark's Trine Hansen in 1994 – she recorded a memorable double three years later at the World Rowing Championships in Aiguebelette, when she came out of the double scull to win a second gold in the quad.

That sense of self-belief readily translated itself to others around her. She was not someone who said much in races. Her input was made during training and the pre-race chats. But you could feel her presence in the boat. And if you were in the same crew as her, you knew you had really earned your place. The young German Olympian, Lenka Wech, who trained with Boron in Potsdam explained: "She asks a lot of herself and the others around her. She was a real inspiration for any young rower who trained with her."

Unsurprisingly, Boron's experience was also put to use as an athlete representative for the German sculling squad. Though Boron has now hung up her blades, she will always be close to the sport and remain an immense figure in the history of rowing.

*Kathrin Boron is currently ranked at the top of the World Rowing Top ten athletes list.*



## Medal count:

	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Olympic	4	0	1
WChamps	8	5	0

