

THOMAS KELLER MEDAL

2024 Media Guide





Thomas Keller and his son, Dominik Keller

About the Thomas Keller Medal

The Thomas Keller Medal is the highest distinction in the sport of rowing. It recognises an exceptional international rowing career as well as exemplary sportsmanship and a legendary aspect. The award was named after the late President of World Rowing (at the time FISA), Thomas Keller (Thomi). Born in 1924, Keller was elected President of World Rowing in 1958, at the age of 34 and was then the youngest-ever president of an international sports federation.

Following the 1988 Olympics, Thomi Keller spontaneously awarded the FISA Medal of Honour to Peter-Michael Kolbe and Pertti Karppinen to commemorate one of the greatest rivalries in the history of the sport and recognising their exceptional talent and sportsmanship. This shaped the idea of the Thomas Keller Medal which was initiated by the Keller family following Thomi's passing in 1989. It was first awarded to the great Norwegian oarsman Alf Hansen in 1990.

Selection Criteria:

The following five factors are taken into consideration when selecting the successful recipient:

1. Success at the international level, e.g. medal count taking level of competition into account;
2. "Type" of career e.g. overcoming obstacles, shortcomings;
3. Technical mastery of the sport e.g. success in different boat types as well as sculling and sweep rowing;
4. Sportsmanship e.g. respect for others, attitude, character, "smiling win or lose";
5. "Legendary" aspect e.g. how the rower is perceived by the rowing world and the world outside rowing

In principle, the medal may only be awarded to someone within five years of their official retirement.

Privileges of the Keller Medal Winners:

A winner of the Keller Medal receives, in effect, a lifetime accreditation to all World Rowing Championships. Each year the winners will receive an invitation to complete the appropriate accreditation request form from World Rowing and are entitled to an accreditation for access to the boat area and a ticket in the President's Grandstand.

Thomas Keller Medal Panel members

Chair:

Dominik Keller

Members:

Jean-Christophe Rolland

Tricia Smith

Matt Smith

Martin Cross

John Boulton

Lenka Dienstbach-Wech

Frida Svensson

Sarah Cook

About Thomas Keller

Adapted from a piece by Christopher Dodd, journalist and historian at the River & Rowing Museum, Henley-on-Thames, Great Britain

Thomas Keller was born in 1924. He was elected President of FISA in 1958, and at the age of 34 was then the youngest president of an international sports federation ever. At that time he was still an active athlete himself, and he made it his principle always to give priority to the competitors' interests, an axiom which has been a guiding principle for his beloved sport ever since.

A chemical engineer, industrialist and company director, he presided over the Swiss conglomerate for sport timing, "Swiss Timing" for more than a quarter of a century (from 1972 to 1989). He was also President of GAISF, the General Association of International Sports Federations from 1969 to 1986.

In his youth, Thomi was a gifted skier and was a member of the Swiss university team for combined Nordic skiing and ski-jumping. It was in rowing, however, that he truly excelled. He was Swiss champion five times in the single and double scull, and a bronze medallist in the single at the 1950 European Championships.

Many of the changes made during Thomi's term as President still live on until today. The first thing he did was improve the standard of umpiring. Lane marking was introduced at the Olympic regatta on Lake Albano, Italy, in 1960. The rules of racing underwent a major overhaul in 1961. Early in the 1960s, FISA created a flag of its own of five oars in the five Olympic ring colours. The flag can still be seen floating over the victory ceremony pontoon during World Rowing events.

Through these times, the men's and women's European Championships were brought together, and the World Championships were introduced.

Championships for lightweights and regattas for Under 23s were also introduced. The FISA development programme began with support from Olympic Solidarity in the 1970s. In 1976, women entered the Olympic rowing arena.

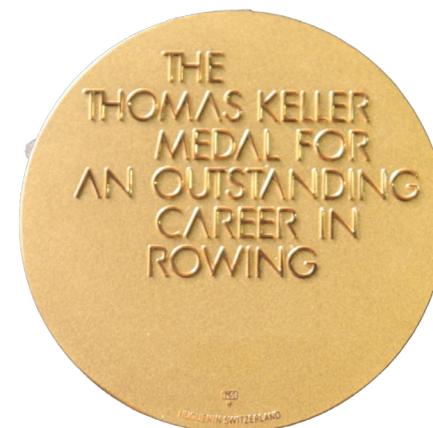
Athletes were Thomi's pride and joy. He followed every championship and Olympic race, kept a close eye on officials, knew every detail of procedure and equipment, and greeted every established international by his or her first name.



Thomas Keller Medal Winners

- 2023** Caryn Davies (USA)
- 2022** Mahe Drysdale (NZL)
- 2021** Olaf Tufte (NOR)
- 2020** *There was no award in 2020*
- 2019** Kim Brennan (AUS)
- 2018** Eric Murray & Hamish Bond (NZL)
- 2017** Katherine Grainger (GBR)
- 2016** Caroline & Georgina Evers-Swindell (NZL)
- 2015** Iztok Cop (SLO)
- 2014** Drew Ginn (AUS)
- 2013** Eskild Ebbesen (DEN)
- 2012** Vaclav Chalupa (CZE)
- 2011** Jueri Jaanson (EST)
- 2010** James Tomkins (AUS)
- 2009** Kathrin Boron (GER)
- 2008** Elisabeta Lipa (ROU)
- 2007** Mike McKay (AUS)
- 2006** Agostino Abbagnale (ITA)
- 2005** Matthew Pinsent (GBR)
- 2004** Nico Rienks (NED)
- 2003** Peter Antonie (AUS)
- 2002** Marnie McBean (CAN)

- 2001** Steve Redgrave (GBR)
- 1999** Silken Lauman (CAN)
- 1999** Kathleen Heddle (CAN)
- 1998** Roland Baar (GER)
- 1998** Kerstin Koeppen (GER)
- 1997** Thomas Lange (GER)
- 1997** Jana Sorgers (GER)
- 1997** Carmine Abbagnale (ITA)
- 1997** Giuseppe Abbagnale (ITA)
- 1996** Rolf Thorsen (NOR)
- 1996** Nikolai Pimenov (RUS)
- 1996** Francesco Esposito (ITA)
- 1994** Yuri Pimenov (RUS)
- 1991** Thomas Greiner (GER)
- 1990** Alf Hansen (NOR)



CARYN DAVIES

2023 Thomas Keller Medal Winner

In May of 2013 thousands of spectators were treated to the remarkable spectacle of the men's first eight from Pembroke College Oxford racing with an American woman in the key stroke seat. Extraordinarily, Caryn Davies and her crew went on to win the Summer Eights that year. Those who knew her as the most influential American oarswoman of the 21st century – both on and off the water – would of course not be surprised. By then, Davies had won medals in three Olympics – two of them gold – in 2008 and 2012. Moreover, she had already become the talisman of the Iconic US women's eight. After an international senior career that stretched from 2002 to 2019, it is fitting that Davies has been awarded the 2023 Thomas Keller medal.

For eleven years between the 2006 world championships, up to the Rio Olympics, the American women's eight, won gold every single year. And while her legal studies and work as a lawyer kept Davies out of some of those crews, Tom Tehaar, who coached the American women from 2001 to 2021, had no doubt about Davies' influence on that incredible run. 'I've learnt more about rowing from Caryn than from any other athlete I've coached.' And Tehaar went on to say that: 'It's right that Caryn's achievements have been recognised by the award of the Thomas Keller medal.'

Davies' first of four world championship gold medals came in Seville in 2002. By then it was already clear that Davies was an amazing team-player. Her teammates have unsurprisingly been fulsome in their praise for Davies'

many qualities, particularly that of taking new athletes under her wing and helping them understand how best to move a boat. Double Olympic champion Caroline Lind said: 'I learnt so much rowing in the '7' seat behind Caryn Davies. She's one of the all-time greats in the US. What I learned from Caryn was how it feels to set a great rhythm. She's like a metronome.' The young Kara Kohler explained how influential Davies was to her development in 2012.



'Not only did Caryn impart her rowing wisdom to me, but she also took me under her wing and helped me navigate my first year on the team – something for which I will always be grateful.' Kohler went on to win a bronze medal that year.

At 1m.90 Davies has a tall willowy physique, which lent itself to a fluid and graceful stroke, both in the boat and on the erg. She also became a great sculler while spending time in Tasmania, early in her rowing career. In Gifu in 2005, she raced in the final with the US women's quad. But with that poise came a fierce toughness as one of her teammates recalled: 'we were stounded at her ability to make boats faster, especially when sitting at stroke.' It was leading her crew from that seat that Davies showed a rare talent.

In a system where selection for the US women's eight was so tough, Davies consistently showed she had the resilience to stay at the top. This was despite taking a career break for the 2009 and 2010 seasons. The legendary US coach Kris Korzeniowski said: 'What I admire about Caryn is her ability to combine training and racing at the highest level with the pursuit of the highest levels of intellectual achievement. She is exceptional.'

In 2015 while studying for an MBA at Oxford, Davies stroked the Dark Blue women to victory on the first women's Boat Race, held on the famous Championship Course. Despite returning to her career as a lawyer, Davies was still determined to make a return to the team for the Tokyo Games. And the lawyer from Ithica, New York raced in the US women's four in the 2019 world championships and helped them qualify that boat for the Olympics.

Off the water Davies put her energy into representing athletes. She served as Vice President of the U.S. Olympians and Paralympians Association. In fact, it was Davies' work that got the Paralympians incorporated into the Association. The hard-working lawyer even completed the necessary

paperwork. Her determination to give back to the sport was seen when she volunteered for the role of Team USA's Athlete Service Coordinator in the Pyeongchang 2018 Olympic Winter Games.'

Davies did not have things her own way during her career. She was hopeful of making the Tokyo team. But with COVID interrupting everything and up against athletes half her age, Davies could not quite make the 2021 Tokyo team. Nevertheless, Tom Tehaar, national team head coach at the time, said: 'Despite her disappointment Caryn could not have been more supportive of the team that went to the Games.'

Davies' medal not only stands as a testament to her remarkable career but also to the achievements of those women who made the U.S. eight such an iconic boat in our sport.

worldrowing.com, 13 December 2023



Thomas Keller Media Activities

25 May, 2024 - Lucerne, Switzerland

Shuttle Bus from Finish area to Boatpark*

10:20

Thomas Keller Medal Presentation

10:35

Shuttle Bus from Boatpark to Finish area*

11:00

*Please register for the shuttle in the media centre

Enquiries:

media@worldrowing.com