

Vern Barberis - Australia

The Oceania Weightlifting Federation is saddened to learn of the passing of our dear friend from Australia Vern Barberis.

Vern passed away on the 6th of January 2005 at the age of 76.

He was the first Australian and the first weightlifter from this region to win an Olympic medal. He won a Bronze medal at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics in the lightweight division (67.5Kg) Vern was also the first Australian weightlifter to win a gold medal at a Commonwealth Games. He won gold at the 1954 Empire (Commonwealth) Games.



He was not only a champion weightlifter but he was also a true gentleman.

He competed in many world events against one of the greatest weightlifters of the 20th century in Tommy Kono from the USA.

During the 1993 World Weightlifting Championships held in Melbourne I was very happy to see once again Tommy Kono and Vern Barberis together in the same venue where they competed against each other at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

The Oceania region had the pleasure in 2002 to have Vern and his dear wife Betty with us in Fiji attending the Oceania Championships in Suva and they both attended the opening of the Oceania Weightlifting Institute which coincided with their 50th wedding anniversary.

Again Vern traveled back to the Pacific in June 2003 and attended the South Pacific Games held in Suva. He had a true lifetime commitment to the sport of weightlifting.

The Australian Weightlifting Federation and also the Oceania Weightlifting Federation certainly has lost one of its greatest champions and one of the greatest supporters of our sport.

A great athlete, a great person. Vern will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Paul Coffa
GENERAL SECRETARY
OCEANIA WEIGHTLIFTING FEDERATION