

Written by John Crumlish
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In an era when Eastern-bloc gymnasts ruled the rankings, Switzerland's **Romi Kessler** made remarkable and still-memorable strides as one of Western Europe's top gymnasts of the late 1970s and early '80s.

She credits her uniqueness and efficiency to her coaches, **Urs Straumann** and **Gabi Schneider**, who were public high-school teachers.

"They also gave me other knowledge and values such as art and culture," says Kessler, who placed ninth all-around and made three event finals at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. "They were very respectful, intelligent, creative and strict. We also had courses in jazz dance, modern dance and pantomime."

Kessler's novel beam routine and superbly interpreted "West Side Story" floor performance from 1984 perhaps best manifested her clever, dynamic style.

"We didn't let others influence us much," she says. "We did our thing. Maybe my disposition and versatility was a reason. And also my naturalness, authenticity, joy and passion for this sport."

She's encouraged by the current progress of the Swiss program.

"It's nice to see that more attention is paid to the team again," says Kessler of Switzerland's recent rise. "This results in a win-win situation."

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Kessler and her ex-husband, fellow 1984 Swiss Olympian **Marco Piatti**, have three adult children and one grandson. She works in human resources for Jaagou Ltd. in Zurich, where, as during her gymnastics career, her sense of wonder and purpose thrive.

“I have a lot of freedom here,” she says. “I can bring in my creativity, knowledge, service orientation, common sense, joy and happiness.”

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