

Soviet Hockey Star Krutov Dies at 52

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Vladimir Krutov

Vladimir Krutov, one of the Soviet Union's all-time great ice hockey players and part of the national team's formidable KLM Line, has died. He was 52.

The Russian Hockey Federation said Krutov died Wednesday. It did not give a cause of death, but the Itar-Tass news agency said he had been taken to hospital several days earlier for stomach bleeding.

"Volodya was such a dependable and steadfast man that I would have gone anywhere with him — to war, to espionage, into peril. There are fewer and fewer guys like him in every generation of hockey players," federation president and former Soviet goaltender Vladislav Tretyak was quoted as saying by the Sport-Express newspaper.

Born in Moscow, Krutov attracted attention for playing with local factory team Meteor and was then invited to the hockey school of the CSKA Moscow club. He played with the team between 1978 and 1989.

Krutov and his CSKA teammates Igor Larionov and Sergei Makarov formed one of the most

potent scoring lines that hockey has ever seen and led the Soviet team to gold in the 1984 and 1988 Olympics. He was also part of the team that lost to the United States at the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics in the Miracle on Ice and won five world championship titles in the 1980s.

Along with their defense colleagues Vyacheslav Fetisov and Alexei Kasatonov, they became known as the Green Unit for the color of their practice jerseys.

He was one of the first Soviet players to play in the NHL, but spent only a single undistinguished season with the Vancouver Canucks, reportedly plagued by homesickness. He later played for Switzerland's Zurich and Swedish lower-league clubs Estersund and Brunflo, and coached CSKA for one season in 2001-02.

Thereafter, he was director at a state sports school. In 2010, he was inducted into the hall of fame of the International Ice Hockey Federation.

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