

## Maria Valentina Vezzali [en]

**Place of birth:** Jesi (Ancona) **Date of birth:** 12 February 1974 **Height:** 164 cm **Weight:** 53 kg **Sport**: Fencing **Discipline/Event:** Foil **Occupation:** Police Officer (rank: Sovrintendente) **Original club:** Club Scherma Jesi **Present club:** Fiamme Oro **Coach:** Giulio Tomassini

Valentina is the most successful Italian athlete in history having ranked as World number one for twelve years. She was born on February 14, 1974 in Jesi/Italy, and started playing fencing in 1980 with coach Ezio Ticcoli achieving her early successes. Her first victory came in 1983, when she won the "Fumi" trophy in the youth category "Prime Lame". Since then she went on to win, putting together a string of impressive results.

Beijing 2008 was her fourth Olympics. As the reigning champion, she lived up to everyone's expectations winning the individual foil gold plus a bronze medal in the foil team event. With these victories she has won a total of 7 Olympic titles: 5 gold medals, 1 silver, and 1 bronze.

She got through difficult stages in her career as only a blue ribbon athlete can do. Just four months after giving birth to her son Pietro, Valentina was able to win her fourth individual foil world title in Leipzig. In 2006 she underwent left knee surgery to repair her cruciate ligament. Through persistent application and sacrifice she could recover and get back in shape.

Master Giulio Tomassini's technical and psychological support has always been fundamental to important for her. He has been coaching her since 1990 and knows the secret of our champion: she is able to reset and start from scratch. Her greatest talent on the strip? Dexterity and reactivity: she can foresee her opponent's intentions and prepare her counter offensive action to parry or be the first to touch. She does the right thing at the right time. She resumed foiling in February 2007 after the operation and in October she won her fifth world title in St. Petersburg, defeating her teammate and opponent Margherita Granbassi, who had beaten her at the 2006 World Championships final in Turin.

After the Olympics, the undisputed queen of women's foil did not content herself and went on to win.

Valentina is an example of strength and will, and longs to continue winning.

At the 2012 London Olympics she had the honour of being the flag bearer for the Italian team, carrying the Italian flag at the opening ceremony and won two medals: bronze in the individual event and gold in the team foil event.

She joined the police sports group "Fiamme Oro" in 1999 and since then has become "the policewoman with a foil", with the rank of "Sovrintendente".

### Results

#### Olympic Games

**London 2012: Individual Foil Bronze; Team Foil Gold** Beijing 2008: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil

Bronze Athens 2004: Individual Foil Gold Sidney 2000: Individual Foil Gold, Team Foil Gold Atlanta 1996: Individual Foil Silver, Team Foil Gold

**World Championships** 2011 - Catania (Italy) - Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Silver 2010 - Paris (France) - Individual Foil Bronze; Team Foil Gold 2009 - Antalya (Turkey) - Individual Foil - 5th place, Team Foil Gold 2007 - Saint Petersburg (Russia) - Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil 5th place 2006 - Turin (Italy) - Individual Foil Silver; Team Foil Silver 2005 - Leipzig (Germany) - Individual Foil Gold, Team Foil 7th place 2004 - New York (U.S.A.) - Team Foil Gold 2003 - Havana (Cuba) - Individual Foil Gold, Team Foil 4th place 2002 - Lisbon (Portugal) - Individual Foil 5th place, Team Foil 7th place 2001 - Nîmes (France) 2001- Individual Foil Gold, Team Foil Gold 1999 - Seoul (Korea) - Individual Foil Gold 1998 - La Chaux de Fonds (France)- Individual Foil Bronze, Team Foil Gold 1997 - Cape Town (South Africa) - Team Foil Gold 1995 - The Hague (The Netherlands) - Individual Foil Bronze, Team Foil Gold 1994 - Athens (Greece) - Individual Foil Silver, Team Foil Silver

**European Championships** 2012 - Legnano (Italy) 2012 - Individual Foil Gold 2011 - Sheffield (United Kingdom) - Individual Foil Silver, Team Foil Gold 2010 - Leipzig (Germany) - Individual Foil Gold 2009 - Plovdiv (Bulgaria) - Individual Foil Gold, Team Foil Gold 2007 - Gand (Belgium) - Individual Foil Silver; Team Foil Bronze 2003 - Bourges (France) - Individual Foil Silver, Team Foil Silver 2001 - Koblenz (Germany) - Individual Foil Gold, Team Foil Gold 1999 - Bolzano (Italy) - Individual Foil Gold, Team Foil Gold 1989 Plovdiv (Bulgaria) - Individual Foil Gold

**Mediterranean Games** Pescara (Italy) 2009: Individual Foil Gold Tunis (Tunisia) 2001: Individual Foil Gold at the World University Games Beijing (China) 2001: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Silver Palma de Mallorca (Spain) 1999: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Gold Sicily (Italy) 1997: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Silver Fukuoka (Japan) 1995: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Silver

**World Cup** She holds the record of 78 victories in the World Cup 2010 - 2011: 2nd place in the overall ranking 2009 - 2010: 1st place in the overall ranking 2008 - 2009: 2nd place in the overall ranking 2007 - 2008: 1st place in the overall ranking 2006 - 2007: 1st overall in the ranking 2005 - 2006: 4th place in the overall ranking 1998-1999; 1999-2000; 2000-2001; 2001-2002; 2002-2003; 2003-2004: 1st place in the overall ranking 1997 - 1998: 2nd place in the overall ranking 1995 - 1996: 1996 - 1997: 1st place in the overall ranking

**Italian National Championships** 2012: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Gold 2011: Individual Foil Silver; Team Foil Bronze 2010: Individual Foil Silver; Team Foil Gold 2009: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Gold 2008: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Gold 2007: Team Foil Gold 2006: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Silver 2005: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Silver 2004: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Silver 2003: Individual Foil Gold; 2002: Individual Foil Bronze; Team Foil Gold 2001: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Bronze 1994 - 1995 - 1996 - 1997 - 1998 - 1999: Individual Foil Gold; Team Foil Gold 1992: Individual Foil Gold

**World Junior Fencing Championships** Mexico City (Mexico) 1994: Individual Foil Gold Denver (USA) 1993: Individual Foil Gold Genoa (Italy) 1992: Individual Foil Silver Mödling (Austria) 1990: Individual Foil Bronze

**World Cadet Fencing Championships** Foggia (Italy) 1991: Individual Foil Gold Göteborg (Sweden) 1990: Individual Foil Gold Lisbon (Portugal) 1989: Individual Foil Gold

**European Junior Fencing Championships** Estoril (Portugal) 1993: Individual Foil Gold Innsbruck (Austria) 1992: Individual Foil Gold

**World Junior Cup** 1992 - 1993 - 1994: Individual Foil Gold

**Italian Junior Championships** 1992: Individual Foil Gold

**CISM Military World Games** Catania(Italy) 2003: Individual Foil Gold, Team Foil Gold Viterbo (Italy) 2000: Individual Foil Bronze; Team Foil Gold

**International Tournaments** Grenoble (France) 2002: Individual Foil Gold "Seven Nations Cup" - Tauber (Germany) 2001: Individual Foil Gold

**National Tournaments** "Open di Ravenna" - Ravenna (Italy) 2003: Individual Foil Gold "Marta Russo" - Rome (Italy) 2001: Individual Foil Gold

**Honours** 2008 - Grand Officer (*Grande Ufficiale*) of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic 2000 - Commander (*Commendatore*) of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic

On May 28, 2009, she entered the Guinness World Records book as the athlete with the most number of gold medals won in consecutive Olympic Games.

Italian version

25/07/2012