



“ *It was a great experience listening to the topics discussed and meeting such lovely people which will be illuminating for the future* ”

*Mario Rodrigues, Sports Reporter, The Statesman, India*

# Doping's Former Homeland

East Germany turned out a vast number of doping experts – many of whom are now playing their trade in other countries

By Karen Balling Radmer

East Germany possessed an enormous, highly effective doping system that left a trail of dead youngsters and destroyed athletes in its wake. In spite of this, few appear concerned about the succession of doping experts from the former GDR taking their grim knowledge abroad. These experts are still in demand in nations that with enough desire for improved results and more medals.

Moreover, despite seemingly cleaning up its act, doping does not appear have significantly decreased in the former East Germany. If we cast our eye over the performances of its top sportsmen and women, they hardly seem to have diminished.

This was the unhappy message given by two German professors to the Play the Game conference. The first, Giselher Spitzer, Professor of History at Cologne University, has written a book charting East Germany's doping system. As a result, Spitzer has been taken to court on a number of occasions without losing a case – which testifies to the accuracy of his work. However, despite its meticulous research, the book has not received the political attention it deserves, or provided grounds to dismiss sports experts with a questionable past. One example Spitzer cites is Gudrun Fröhner, formerly responsible for doping female gymnasts in East Germany, and now working with female gymnasts in the German Gymnastics Federation.

Spitzer's colleague is Professor Gerhard Treutlein from the sports and physical education studies at the University of Heidelberg. Treutlein fears that few journalists or politicians are concerned about doping, and lack the interest to follow up disclosures such as those made in Spitzer's book.

He points out that each time a performance requirement is set for athletes to join a team, it creates a risk that – if they are unable obtain the required standard legally – sportsmen and women will choose to use illegal drugs. In such instances, he asks, who is more guilty – the athletes or the system?

He underlines that the hidden doping system in East Germany was enormous. All children were screened for evidence of sporting talent and, each year, 10,000 were picked out. The system employed 4,700 professional coaches and 1,000 doctors. It took 5,000 to administer the system – and 1,500 were active in doping research.

»GDR's athletes were, in fact, a type of civil soldier,« says Giselher Spitzer. »They were well paid, exposed to strict assessments and sworn to silence about the doping system.«

From the political side, it was decreed that everything possible should be done to ensure that East Germany achieved as much sporting success as possible – and this directive was carried out to the letter.

Each year, top sportsmen and women received what amounted to ten kilos of anabolic steroids – in all, two million tablets. Although around 25% of the steroids used were at the trial stage, they were still given to athletes. Moreover, blood doping was used at a time when it was still regarded as too dangerous by most other nations. Every year the GDR submitted 2,000 new athletes to the list of those using artificial performance-enhancers.

»We can estimate that today there are 10,000 athletes who have suffered physical harm because of the doping system,« continues Giselher Spitzer. »At the same time, the effects of doping are being passed down to

the next generation. There are many instances of female athletes giving birth to handicapped children.«

It was not only pressure from the politicians which led to the drawing up of the doping manual. The nation's sports organisations also played a major role in a practice that continued systematically, even though negative side effects were documented. When wrestlers refused to use illegal substances, they were barred from competition by their own sporting association before agreeing once again to tow the official line.

While most adult athletes knew what was happening and were pressed into participating, children in the GDR simply accepted the pills or injections they were given.

One example is Catherine Menschner, who, between the ages of ten and twelve, was a victim of state doping. She should have spoken of her life after doping at Play the Game, but even today the after-effects are leaving their mark. Catherine Menschner was admitted to hospital while the conference was underway.

»The system made it impossible to say no to doping,« continues Giselher Spitzer. »It was the sports organisations themselves which regulated the dosage and wrote the manuals, while politicians expected nothing less than outstanding results.«

What he sees as one of the most serious consequences of the policy is the widely accepted use of steroids in fitness centres today.

»What will happen when the consequences of this practice become apparent?« he asks. »Thousands of children will be born handicapped as a result.«



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**The German researchers Treutlein (left) and Spitzer (right) feel that their country still suffers from the GDR doping heritage**



## EXTRACT

# Which rules to follow?

**Sometimes athletes get trapped between different set of rules in national and international bodies.**

**The law Professor Richard H. McLaren from the University of Western Ontario in Canada is a member of the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS). In his lecture, he outlined the dilemma and presented a handful of examples:**

By Richard H. McLaren

**No** athlete could be said to be more trapped between conflicting rules than the United Kingdom's Alain Baxter. Not only was Baxter caught up in a purely technical violation of the rules of the OMAC but also he was duped by the domestic national drug laws of the country hosting the Olympic Games.

Baxter was the Bronze medallist in the slalom at the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. He had a long-standing medical condition of



nasal congestion and for a number of years had been using a non-prescription Vicks Inhaler to relieve his symptoms.

This inhaler is included on the list of permitted substances issued by the United Kingdom's Sports Council. The domestic drug rules in the United States differ from those of the UK. In the United States, the same Vicks product has a different formulation. The American version of the inhaler contains levmetamfetamine the levo rotation of the stimulant methamphetamine, which is included in the banned substance list of the OMAC.

During his time in Salt Lake, Baxter began to suffer from nasal congestion. When he was unhappy with the medication provided by his

team doctor he proceeded to buy and use the American version of the Vicks inhaler which appeared to be the same product he used regularly in the UK.

Following his medal winning performance he tested positive for the presence of methamphetamine. Methamphetamine is a substance with two rotations, the dextro (methamphetamine) and the levo (levmethamphetamine). Although the IOC refused to order a test to determine which form was present in Baxter's sample the CAS panel was sufficiently satisfied that the sample contained levmetamfetamine resulting from the use of the US Vicks inhaler.

Despite the fact that levmetamfetamine is a much weaker stimulant, and that it was agreed by experts on both sides that it did not have a performance enhancing effect, Baxter was found to have committed a doping offense on a strict interpretation of the OMAC.

This conclusion reveals a stark contrast between a permissive national law and the International Rules, which are broader and more comprehensive. This conflict between national domestic law and international Rules in this case destroyed the athletes attempt to participate successfully.

Had Baxter been competing in

the UK or most other countries the non-prescription Vicks inhaler bought at the time of competition would not have resulted in a doping offense.

To make matters even more sympathetic to the athlete, even if Baxter had read the label on the US Vicks Inhaler and found the term levmetamfetamine, he would not have been able to match that term with any of the prohibited substance listed on the OMAC banned list.

Thus, the OMAC did not have regard for the fact that the levo rotation, levmetamfetamine, was used in non-prescription over the counter medication in the United States. While it should be remembered that Baxter did take a substance without the permission of his team doctor he was clearly caught in a conflict of international Rules and domestic law which was inconsistent with those Rules.

Although these rules were not specifically sporting in nature their effect was to permit an over the counter cold remedy to be sold to an athlete which in a doping context stood to deprive him of his competitive result and serves to illustrate the dilemma elite competitive athletes face today.

**Read more at [www.play-the-game.org](http://www.play-the-game.org)**