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BOOK REVIEW

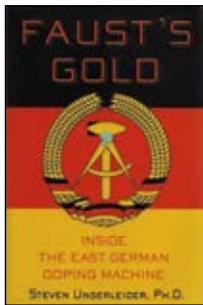
Faust's Gold

Inside the East German Doping Machine

Ungerleider, Steven. *Faust's Gold. Inside the East German Doping Machine*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2001. 249 pages. ISBN 0-312-26977-3.

Review by COL (Ret) Warner "Rocky" D. Farr, MD, MPH

See, the more things change, the more they remain the same! The network news recently was announcing a suspension of Russian athletes because of doping allegations.¹ I wonder where they learned how to do that!? Easy, just review what the East Germans, officially the German Democratic Republic (GDR), did to their athletes in the 1970s and 1980s. More than 10,000 unsuspecting young athletes were given huge doses of performance-enhancing anabolic steroids and went on to previously unheard heights of award-winning success in international competitions, including multiple Summer and Winter Olympic Games.



Since I spent much of the Cold War in West Berlin in our Special Forces unit and could travel to East Germany, I saw the East German sports machine up close and personal. Shortages might exist in most categories of items in East Berlin retail shops, but there was always sports equipment and superb training facilities. There was also tremendous Olympic success. In the 1956, 1960, 1964, and 1968 Winter Olympic Games, the East Germany versus West Germany medal count was consistently 1:1. But by the 1984 Winter Olympics, it was 24:4 in East Germany's favor. The summer games were similar, with the medal count going from 7 (East) to 20 (West) in 1956 to 102 (East) to 40 (West) in Seoul, South Korea, in 1988. All totaled, between 1956 and 1988, East Germany, with a population much smaller than that of West Germany, achieved 572 Summer and Winter Olympic Games medals while West Germany gained 334 medals. Clearly, East Germany had "help."

Basing his reports on interviews with former athletes and officials, author Steven Ungerleider details the extensive health problems that the female athletes suffered as a result of the "vitamins" they took. These ranged from short-term concerns, including raging libidos and unnatural hair growth, to serious, long-term problems, including depression, subsequent birth defects, heart failure, and tumors.

After the German reunification, the story started to emerge. Much was in the then-declassified East German secret police (the "Stasi") files, and more came out when former GDR coaches and team physicians either confessed or went to very public trial in Germany for their actions as participators in the GDR's secret "State Planning Theme 14.25." Their drug of choice, developed in 1965, was Oral Turinabol, a testosterone derivative made in East Germany. They then used "bridge therapy" to get the competitors through the event dope-testing period. That consisted of testosterone esters undetectable by the standard testing protocols.

This new revised edition of *Faust's Gold* (2013) draws on the revelations of the criminal trials of East German coaches, doctors, and officials who have now confessed to these ruthless medical experiments. This new edition highlights recent cases of performance-enhancing drugs used in baseball, the Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative scandal,² and the troubles in international cycling.

So what is to be learned from all this? Well, what comes around goes around and it's here again. Just ask the Germans and the Russians. Much interest continues. I am not making any finger-pointing associations, but even articles have the use of testosterone has appeared in the *Journal of Special Operations Medicine*. It discussed testosterone in its proper therapeutic doses, however.³

One could view this book as a precautionary tale to learn from.

References

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2. **Wikipedia.** BALCO scandal. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BALCO_scandal. Accessed 20 November 2015.
3. **Grumbo R, Haight D.** Evaluation for testosterone deficiency. *J Spec Oper Med.* 2015;15:4-9.