

THE SPORTS MEDICINE INSTITUTE IN ESSEN

by Pr: HARTMUT KRAHL *

Sports medicine is a relatively young discipline. Its initial rise to significance was dependent on the social value attributed to sport, but it has meanwhile gained independence within the range of disciplines of medicine as such. One needs only to think of the sports therapy administered to heart attack patients, diabetics or patients with posture or motor disorders.

In high-level sport, training theory and measures taken in conjunction with training in relation to organic performance have been optimised. The motor system, however, in particular its passive structures such as sinews, cartilage, intervertebral disks etc. were long neglected. Modern training methods combined with intensive competition schedules without adequate regeneration periods inevitably lead to strain and failure in these structures - experiences which have not been restricted to our Olympic team.

Our work in the sports medicine institute in Essen will therefore concentrate on three focal points :

1. *The fitness of athletes in relation to specific sports*

The purpose here is to define and develop reproducible aptitude criteria in order to be able to detect weak points which will show up under stress and either proceed with therapeutic measures or even suggest that the athlete take up another form of sport. In our opinion, we can avoid in this way a large proportion of stress damage due to sport.

2. *Dangerous and damaging stress situations in sport*

Here, we are trying to improve the capacity of modern biomechanical measures to give evidence concerning dangerous movement patterns, so as to optimise with their help the quality and intensity of stress in sport.

3. *Supervision of the athlete's state of health*

Close contact with athletes and trainers is required in order to diagnose and treat injuries and strains at an early stage. Modern operative and functional treatment methods, e.g. the early use of strength and co-ordination training by

experienced doctors and physiotherapists, should make possible optimal healing and rapid recovery.

The aims we have set ourselves can only be achieved by the co-operation of experienced doctors, physiotherapists and specialists in biomechanics with athletes and trainers. Sport without risk is impossible, but to keep this risk to the minimum is our aim. Our work will initially be aimed at high-level athletes, but our experience so far has shown that the practitioners of mass and school sport will also benefit, as will even our patients in the surgery and the clinic, who have already been treated many times with methods developed in the course of work with high-level athletes.

H. K.



Prof. Harmut Krahl is the Director of the Institute in Essen. He headed the medical team for the German athletes at Los Angeles.

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The world's first beggar was the first grandson of Eve, who aroused pity with his flat thighs and protruding shoulder blades. Sport elevates man from this condition of mendacity. It restores to him the inconvenience, that is the richness, of his own body, which means ease and liberty.

Jean Giraudoux (Sam Pouvoir)

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