

AN INTERESTING “DOPING” DISQUALIFICATION IN THE WRESTLING COMPETITION AT THE 1968 OLYMPICS

I was reading the USA Olympic Yearbook from 1968 (1) and in the wrestling section (page 173) there was a description of the 57 kg category in Greco-Roman wrestling:

“Hristo Traykov of Bulgaria was disqualified by the International Amateur Wrestling Federation Health Commission. In his match against the American David Hazewinkel, Traykov was found with ammonia in his uniform.”

I made phone contact with Dave Hazewinkel for more information, but unfortunately, he did not remember the incident. I then emailed my colleague in Bulgaria, Dr. Sylvia Bakalova, who is a wrestling history expert. She replied that the official information is missing and that Hristo Traykov died in 2014. She spoke to Ognyn Makaveev, who is one of the managers in Bulgarian wrestling. He said that in the Olympic games in 1968, during a between period wrestling break in the match between Traykov and Hazewinkel, the towel had been soaked with ammonia, and this resulted in the disqualification.



Dave and Jim Hazewinkel were members of the 1968 and 1972 United States Greco-Roman Olympic teams and were both members of six consecutive World and Olympic teams from 1967 to 1972. Dave Hazewinkel was the first American to win two World medals in Greco-Roman wrestling, earning a bronze medal in 1969 and a silver medal in 1970. Jim Hazewinkel was also a member of the 1966 World team and his highest finish at the World Championships was fourth in 1969.

Ammonia inhalants (AI) are commonly referred to as smelling salts, ammonia capsules, and historically have been used for the prevention and treatment of fainting, dizziness, and lightheadedness. AI use is widespread by athletes as a possible means of temporarily enhancing athletic performance during training or competition. AI use is common among various athletes as a means of increasing focus or “psyching up,” and it has been speculated that AIs are most commonly used for their purported benefit of increasing muscular strength for short periods of time (2).

When inhaled, it causes a rapid and extreme irritation of the lungs, nose, and mucus membranes of the nasal cavity. This causes a concomitant rapid inhalation reflex that causes involuntary inhalation. This reflex then stimulates the muscles that control breathing to work faster, accelerating respiration and stimulating a higher degree of consciousness.

Whether AI use provides athletes with any scientifically proven ergogenic benefit cannot be answered given the lack of research examining AI use during training or competition. There is no research showing any increase in strength or athletic performance after their use (3). Research examining the safety and efficacy of AIs during training is needed and would be beneficial in establishing their potential safety and/or efficacy. Anecdotally, the use of AIs does seem to provide athletes with increased focus and effort. The sportsmedicine and athletic training community strongly discourages their use, particularly because they can mask the symptoms of concussion.

References

1. United States Olympic Book 1968. Fliegner, Frederick: Ed. Published by International Olympic Editions, New York, 1969.
2. Velasquez, J. (2011). "The Use of Ammonia Inhalants Among Athletes." Strength & Conditioning Journal **33**: 33-35.
3. Herrick R and Herrick S. Allergic reaction to aromatic ammonia inhalant ampule: A case report. Am J Sports Med **11**: 28, 1983.