

HIGH LEVEL SPORT IN THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES - ORGANIZATION AND IMPACT ON MILITARY SPORT

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It is a great honour for me to give some information to this audience from the German point of view. My briefing covers two areas:

While part one explains everything around the subject "High Level Sport in the German Armed Forces" the second part will very briefly touch the given or assumed consequences on military sport and on CISM activities. I am presenting my view with the background as Chief of the German Delegation to CISM and as Division Chief for Training in the German Armed Forces Office, being also responsible for all kind of sport in the armed forces.

Although I tried to make it as short as possible the lecture might slightly extend the foreseen timeframe. Be patient.

Before I'll go into details I'd like to make some preliminary remarks which will set the frame:

1. Promotion of High Level Sports in our Armed Forces is **not a core function**. That means our Armed Forces are designed for selfdefence,, out-of-area mission etc. but not for promotion of High Level Sport. This has direct influence on the funds available.
2. Sports for all is of great importance for the military fitness of the individual soldier, high level sport is not.
3. It must be allowed to question if the input-output-relation doesn't fulfill the expectations.
4. I'd like to recall what kind of vision and goals we ourselves have set up as the guideline for all our activities.

And last but not least

5. Under the light of the summer Olympics it is once more my firm believe that we in CSIM should compete in the military

but forget about copying Olympics for the Military.

My briefing goes along the following outline

- Fundamentals
- Objectives
- Organization
- Personnel
- Career
- Infrastructure / Equipment
- Financial Involvement
- Selection Criteria / Enlistment Procedure
- Output
- Impact on military Sport
- Closing Remarks

In May 1968, a German Parliament decision formally tasked the Federal Government "with fostering elite athletes by installing Bundeswehr sports promotion sections which shall seek to establish the closest possible ties to the sports proficiency centres of the individual sports associations."

The German Armed Forces support the efforts made by the Federal Government to promote top competitive sports in Germany with a view to:

- ensuring that Germany is adequately represented in international contests (e.g. European and World Championships and Olympic Games);
- offering German athletes the same opportunities as enjoyed by the athletes of other countries; and
- to enable German athletes to keep up with the world class while serving in the armed forces.

The Bundeswehr has 25 sports promotion sections of platoon to company size which are integrated into the military agencies assigned to the territorial commands.

The sports promotion sections are located within the catchment areas of Olympic training facilities and the sports proficiency centres of the individual umbrella organisations with a view to enable soldiers to benefit from the services provided by these installations.

The sports promotion sections are under the administrative and logistic control of the Joint Support Service. Special sports-related control is performed by the section responsible for sports at the Armed Forces Office.

The Bundeswehr sports promotion sections are widely distributed all over Germany.

Upon Germany's unification, the Bundeswehr system of promoting top-level sports was applied to the new Federal States as well. Thus, the former army sports clubs in Rostock, Frankfurt/O., Potsdam and Oberhof were restructured to also become sports promotion sections.

Currently, the Bundeswehr promotes top athletes in 25 sports promotion sections, three of which are exclusively reserved for military sport events (Eckernförde: naval pentathlon, Altenstadt: parachuting, Munich: military pentathlon).

Budget restraints presently affecting the armed forces will most probably result in a moderate reduction. It is intended to close down or merge some of the promotion sections which will most probably end up at a number of 15 all together.

700 of the 740 posts assigned to top-level sportsmen and women in the Bundeswehr sports promotion sections are made available to the German Sports Federation (DSB).

The remaining 40 posts are reserved for military sports, such as military pentathlon, naval pentathlon, and parachuting.

6% of the 740 posts (45 posts) may be filled with supporting personnel (coaches, technicians, physiotherapists).

The Bundeswehr sports promotion sections are under the administrative command of control/permanent staff which account for additional 54 posts. In total this figures sum up to round about 800 posts.

An additional 2,500 (in years in which Olympic Summer Games are held 3,500) reserve duty exercise days are assigned to athletes on an annual basis to prepare for and participate in international competitions, such as Olympic Games, World and European championships.

Above and beyond that, up to 200 posts may be allocated to conscripts volunteering for additional military service (from 10 to 23 months) within the established ceiling (these posts were created when the basic military service period was reduced to 10 months, thus ensuring promotion for one sports year (12 months)).

Since 1992, women have the possibility to perform military service as elite athletes in Bundeswehr sports promotion sections, and their numbers are steadily increasing (presently 165).

You may excuse that I have picked MSgt Susi Erdmann. This is not only because she is one of the most beautiful ones we have as you can see here, she is also one of the most famous. She started her career on single sled in the former DDR as a young school-kid, was called in to service by the NVA and fostered in Oberhof, one of the former Army Sports Clubs. After the reunification Sergeant Erdmann was taken over by the German Bundeswehr, promoted to MSgt and became the first and still only professional female sports soldier in the German Armed Forces. In the meantime she changed to the two-women bobsleigh and being the 2004 World champion in this discipline she had even greater success than before.

The normal Basic Military Service for conscripts in the German Armed Forces has a 9 months duration.

An 8-week basic training at the beginning is mandatory for military athletes

Top-level athletes performing their basic military service may generally extend their terms of enlistment to become temporary-career volunteers and even career soldiers.

Whether or not the promotion is continued depends on the military qualification and behaviour on the one side as well as the endorsement in terms of athletic performance by the competent umbrella organisation and the German Sports Federation on the other (high standards are applied).

An extension beyond the 2-year enlistment as temporary-career volunteer requires the applicant's agreement to attend junior/senior NCO training courses which will be scheduled in accordance with the international competition calendar.

Athletic training, the preparation for and participation in competitions account for approximately 70%, military basic and advanced training for approximately 30% of total time in service.

The responsibility for the adequate training programme and competition schedule lies with the umbrella organisation and/or the cognizant national coach.

Should a top-level athlete no longer meet the requirements, he or she will be transferred to a field unit and assigned a post according to his or her training and rank until his or her end of contract respectively his or her retirement.

Athletic facilities that fulfil the requirements of top competitive sports are only provided at the Bundeswehr Sports School in Warendorf, which also supports the "Olympic Training Centre Westfalen". Spare capacities at these facilities may be co-used without charge by the umbrella organisations of the respective sports branch and/or the members of their national cadres. Bundeswehr sports promotion sections do not have a self-contained infrastructure.

To discharge their official duties, the Bundeswehr sports promotion sections are outfitted with the required material and sports equipment.

In terms of sports for which the Bundeswehr designates its own competition teams and top-level athletes (for example within the framework of its membership in the Conseil International du Sport Militaire (CISM)), the Bundeswehr sports promotion sections are furnished with special sports equipment (for example, special equipment required for shooting and parachuting competitions, etc.).

For team performances, top-level athletes are equipped with standard uniform sportswear. In addition, the Bundeswehr sports promotion sections provide the necessary scope of special sports clothing that fulfils the high performance standards demanded by the individual sporting disciplines in terms of training and competition.

Members of Bundeswehr sports promotion sections are supplied with a physiologically balanced diet that is adapted to the requirements and strain caused by each individual sports discipline.

With the express support of the German Sports Federation (DSB) and the consent of the German NOC, a directive was issued requiring that all Bundeswehr top-level athletes be furnished with sports equipment and clothing carrying the Bundeswehr logo which, taking the specific rules and regulations of each individual sport into account, must be clearly visible (e.g. during public appearances).

In addition, individual agreements have been concluded with the respective umbrella organisations specifying how the clothing to be worn in training and competitions shall be labelled, taking the national and international provisions into consideration.

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The German Armed Forces have become an integral part of the overall system of sports in Germany.

The funds allocated for the promotion of top-level sports by the Bundeswehr are not itemized in the defence budget, but included in the appropriate chapters/titles.

In 2003, the total expenditures for the promotion of top-level sports by the Bundeswehr amounted to approximately 27 million EURO. This slide specifies the break-down.

As far as the Bundeswehr promotion of top-level sports is concerned, there are currently no proposed cuts in the 2004 defence budget nor in the draft for 2005.

The budget funds estimated for the promotion of sports by the Bundeswehr in the area of military service sports and the appropriations for the promotion of top-level sports by the Bundeswehr are sufficient to ensure the funding of the entire spectrum of tasks. Nevertheless, 27 Million EURO per year for 740 military high level athletes is quite an amount and one may question if the outcome is worth it. I will come back to this a bit later. (The overall amount for high level sport promotion within the FRG even amounts to approx. 175 Million Euro per year. See Slide 22)

The FMOD, as well as the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the German Sports Federation (DSB), gives the highest priority to Olympic sports/disciplines (allocating individual contingents for each sport).

Currently, athlete-candidates are accepted only based on the following criteria:

An athlete must be a member of National Cadres A, B, C or D/C

Priority One are Olympic sports/disciplines:

Second Priority includes **Non-Olympic sports/disciplines:**

The approximately 700 posts assigned to the DSB are allocated as follows: Olympic summer sports account for approximately 445 posts (60%), Olympic winter sports for approximately 185 posts (30%), and non-Olympic sports for approximately 70 posts (10%).

In accordance with the concept of equal treatment, there is not one individual sports association affiliated with the DSB that does not benefit from the promotion of top-level sports by the Bundeswehr.

In this view we are supporting on the same bases athletes from the area "track and field" as well as athletes from the area of casting, chess or tournament dancing. The only difference is the quantity of athletes.

Every top athlete aspiring to be promoted by the Armed Forces files an application to join a Bundeswehr sports promotion section to his or her cognizant umbrella organisation.

If the application is endorsed by the umbrella organisation and the German Sports Federation, the athlete-candidate may be drafted according to his or her needs for basic military training followed by his or her reassignment to a requested Bundeswehr sports promotion section.

Official training / competitions are scheduled to take place in Germany and abroad on the basis of the requirements by the individual umbrella organisations (generally at the Olympic training facilities and/or sports proficiency centres).

The efficiency of the Bundeswehr concept of promoting top-level sports has been demonstrated by the considerable and ever increasing number of male and female soldiers participating in and winning medals at Olympic Games and international championships.

113 of the 428 participants in the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sydney were members of the Bundeswehr.

At the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, 24 of a total of 56 medals (43%) were won by Bundeswehr athletes.

At the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, 70 of the 158 participants were members of the Bundeswehr.

In Salt Lake City, 25 of a total of 35 medals (71%) were won by Bundeswehr athletes.

At the last 7 Olympic Games since 1992 (Albertville, Barcelona, Lillehammer, Atlanta, Nagano, Sydney und Salt Lake City), Bundeswehr athletes have won 130 medals (47 Gold, 37 Silver, 46 Bronze) or about 41% of a total of 317 medals.

Above and beyond that, during the period from 1991 to 2002 alone, a total of 356 world championships, 320 European championships and 1,824 German national championships were won by Bundeswehr soldiers.

The promotion of top-level sports by the Bundeswehr guarantees for the athletes ideal conditions to build their careers as professional and elite sportsmen or women.

In addition, the promotion of top-notch sports will continue to ensure that Germany continues to be a leading nation in the global sports arena.

The promotion of top-level sports by the Bundeswehr is a highly efficient institution and a guarantee of success. This is also underlined by the fact that it was declared an indispensable factor, for example by the German Sports Federation's "concept of the national promotion of top-level sports."

The Bundeswehr, the DSB and the individual umbrella organisations are seeking to improve their cooperation by exchanging experiences on a regular basis.

So far – so good. But there are also critical voices being raised by the writing media. E.g. the slide shown here. Germany has not been as effective during the Summer Olympics as expected. Especially the output in Swimming and Track & Field were below our possibilities. And I am not counting medals only. This holds true even if you compare the outcome down to rank ten in comparison with 2000 in Sydney.

I mentioned already earlier that the overall cost for all top-level-athletes in Germany during the last four years (2000 – 2004) summed up to almost 700 Million EURO. It is more than dishonest just to divide this amount by the number of medals (84) we have won within these four years. But this is the way the so called "Boulevard press" acts. In fact, Germany fosters 4500 top-athletes in different organization and by different amounts and means. The High-Level-Sport-Promotion by the German Armed Forces is only one of them. The only question we in the military need to answer is what kind of output do we need and is the impact on the Military (Sport) acceptable.

There is an **image upgrade** for the German Armed Forces, but neither do I have real figures nor has this relation ever comprehensively been analyzed. Top Military Athletes quite often cannot be identified as member of the Forces. You may recall the small sticker I showed before. And also, when being interviewed during or after competition they simply forget who their "main sponsor" is. My guess about a possible image upgrade is: yes there may be some, not more, not less.

The same holds true regarding the **public interest** for the military just because we foster top-athletes. In fact, there is nor direct correlation between successful military top-athletes and a higher "application rate" for volunteer service.

Sports for All in the military is what really is on the mind of those who are responsible for the military fitness of our men and women we send on missions all over the world. To make them able to resist against the complex challenges in the field is what we strive for. And again I have my doubts if high-level-sport is something that influences sports for all dramatically. Some of us might recall that we had an symposium on this one before. The outcome was not very impressive and even less was the transformation into daily practise.

Last but not least, one item of reflection could be the **soldier's motivation**. Does the pure existence of high-level sport in the armed forces or top-athletes in uniform motivate young enlisted men or female volunteers to put higher efforts on training? I do have my doubts. For the German Armed Forces I can easily maintain: Sorry, no, this is not the case.

In conclusion my assessment is: The impact of military High-Level-Sport on the German Armed Forces is rather marginal.

Let me quickly read to you our CISM vision as we set it up at our symposium in Rio de Janeiro in 2002:

**"To be the International Sports Organization
of Choice that brings
Armed Forces Personnel
from all nations onto the Sport Fields,
building friendship through Sport
and
contributing to World Peace"**

The question is what can CISM achieve under the assumption of our common vision?

Develop Sport in CISM

Yes, we altogether can bring sport in the military further on. We do this by executing all possible kinds of sport meetings between member countries on all levels, from bi-lateral events between neighbour countries up to intercontinental World Championships. Military men and women who originally have a normal

