“If you’re not good, do something else, don’t cheat someone who worked hard,” stated Shirley Babashoff after the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, Canada concluded (Armour). Shirley would never forget the loss she felt while participating in those Olympics. At nineteen, she felt confident in her hopes of coming away with gold, but cheaters got in her way. The East German swim team demoralized Shirley until she put aside her devastation and triumphed over the enemies. This event will forever be known as the “best female race of all time” (Brown). Shirley Babashoff, a U.S. Olympian swimmer, was tragically cheated out of Olympic glory, but in the end, she triumphed over this difficulty with pure talent that changed the view of doping in sports.

On January 31, 1957, a star to remember was born (“Shirley Babashoff”). Shirley Frances Babashoff was the child of Russian parents, Vera and Jack Babashoff, and joined two brothers and one sister. The Babashoff family lived in a modest house in the Los Angeles suburb of Norwalk. Shirley had a normal childhood, but normal is quite an understatement when it comes to the Babashoff’s family nature. She attended school, played outside, and had friends like every child should; however, things at home for her were far from comfortable. Jack Babashoff, Shirley’s father, molested Shirley when she was as young as five years old, and it continued for several years. Despite being so young, she still understood what he was doing and asked him to stop. To make matters even worse, her mother was addicted to drugs (Babashoff).

While all of these challenges were going on, Shirley attended her first swim class. It was love at first swim. To distract her from her rough family environment, she just kept swimming. She and her family transferred teams a couple of times and went through
several coaches because she was too good for anyone. The team that helped her grow as a professional swimmer was the Mission Viejos Nadadores. Mark Schubert was Shirley’s head coach. He was young and intelligent, and in one interview, Shirley stated that he trained her by swimming twenty miles per day. Once she reached high school, Shirley became more recognized as a professional swimmer as she broke American records and won every race. She attended some of the highest ranked swim meets in the country and even added the 1972 Olympics in Munich to her resume. Traveling globally and winning most of her races was not what she was remembered for. Some of Shirley’s greatest tragedies and triumphs were yet to come (Babashoff).

The 1976 Olympics were coming up in Montreal, Canada. Shirley Babashoff would represent the United States as a nineteen year old swimmer and hoped to come out of these Olympics as a winner, but cheaters got in her way. Prior to 1976, East Germany had become a communist region while West Germany was democratic. Citizens of East Germany felt controlled due to the fact that they were surrounded by communism; consequently, many fled to West Germany. As a result of these actions, the Berlin Wall was built to keep East German citizens from fleeing to the west (“Doping for Gold-The State-Sponsored Doping Program”).

East Germany secretly sought out ways to demonstrate communist superiority to the entire world, all while controlling its citizens. One way to show superiority was in sports. Having power in sports made a country look strong, so it was the perfect option. East Germany had to figure out how to produce the best athletes. Scientists and doctors had a solution: anabolic steroids. The East German government secretly created the State Plan
14.25. This plan started to unknowingly give mostly elite women athletes little, blue pills that made them look robust, and it also made them some of the best athletes ever. The 1976 Olympics would be the first time that East Germany would test out this secret method even though it was illegal and considered cheating. At around the same time that this was happening in East Germany, an American athlete, Shirley Babashoff, was a flourishing athlete and considered the best swimmer of that time. Breaking records and winning every race, she was clueless as she headed into the 1976 Olympics of what was to come: deception and devastation ("Doping for Gold-The State-Sponsored Doping Program").

Over the course of the 1976 Olympics, the East Germans tested their doping secret and found amazing results. Shirley Babashoff fell victim to this test because even though she was considered the best, she was losing every race to an East German woman. The results looked like this for Shirley Babashoff’s races: 4x100 medley relay: second place; 100 free: fifth place; 400 free: second place; 200 free: second place; and 800 free: second place. The gold medal went to the East German women ten times during these games. Shirley was absolutely frustrated, for she had trained hard only to lose gold to cheaters ("Shirley Babashoff").

Nobody seemed to notice that the East Germans were doping, so Shirley Babashoff took action. Shirley criticized their low voices, excessive amount of hair, and how similar their body structure was to a man. However, the media and spectators thought she was crying sour grapes at the East German swimmers. She received the name “Surly Shirley” (Varona). Everyone thought that she was being selfish because she was losing, but she was speaking the truth, people were just not willing to believe it. Although Shirley Babashoff
had lost every race so far at the 1976 Olympics due to doping and her attempts to speak out against this deception fell on deaf ears, there was still one race to swim (Babashoff).

Revenge consumed Shirley as she did not want to leave the 1976 Olympics as a loser. The reasoning behind the revenge was from the anger and frustration that built up inside of her. Shirley had a strong reputation going into the Olympics, yet no one saw that it was being stripped away from her by a fraudulent team. Plus, the media did not make matters any better. In fact, it monopolized her. For Shirley, seeing the masculinized, East German swimmers repeatedly on top of the Olympic podium as though nothing was wrong, was unbearable. The anger inside Shirley was relentless, so she embraced that agonizing feeling and swam the best relay anchor of all time (Rutemiller).

The night prior to the 4x100 freestyle relay, which was the final showdown between East Germany and the United States, Shirley and her relay teammates decided they needed a plan. Together, they each visualized their leg of the race, bought matching suspenders to feel like a team, and went into the final day feeling assured. It was time to swim the swim of their lives. Beep! The buzzer went off for the relay and the face-off began. Kim Peyton, Wendy Boglioli, and Jill Sterkel held the lead for their legs, then Shirley Babashoff brought it home for the gold (Brown).

After the relay, the gratification within those four girls endured for many years after. They were all smiles as they strolled around the pool for their victory lap. Shirley Babashoff and her teammates will never forget the feeling of having that deserved gold medal hung around their necks. That gold medal may be the only physical proof of their achievement, but mentally, those girls had plenty of memories to remember that race. It was not on the
agenda of Shirley Babashoff, or her teammates, to leave the 1976 Olympics as losers, so they came together as a team and dominated the East Germans in their final race (Brown).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991, the New York Times Newspaper published the first article opening up about how the East Germans were doping during the Olympics. “We confirm that anabolic steroids were used in former East German swimming,” stated the East German coaches (Janofsky). The day Shirley had been waiting for finally came. During those past fifteen years a lot happened for Shirley. She retired from being a professional athlete, started coaching swimming, and had a son named Alex (“Shirley Babashoff Ends Swim Career”). Always in the back of her mind she was thinking of how East Germany still had not admitted to doping at the Olympics. Shirley desperately wanted the East Germans to own up to their mistakes and she be awarded the medals and records she deserved by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Once the admission of the East Germany doping came out, Shirley waited another fifteen years to receive any compensation from the IOC. In 2006, she was presented with the Olympic Order. It honored individuals who have rightfully represented the Olympics and have achieved great success in their sport (Kandil). However, in Shirley’s mind the IOC never made it right. Continually, Shirley would ask the IOC to replace East Germany records with her name and times, or at least give her the gold medals that were robbed from her. Unfortunately, the IOC refused to budge as they could not break the eight year rule. The eight year rule states that medals or records cannot be taken away from athletes once eight years had passed after the Olympics; it had been thirty years for Shirley (Kandil). Shirley understood that it was too late to take their medals away, but the record board could easily
be updated. Nowadays, Shirley is still frustrated that the IOC cannot correct the one thing she wants: to be remembered in history through the record boards.

As Shirley Babashoff was a victim to doping athletes, the East German athletes were victims as well. Over the course of two decades, 10,000 East German athletes, women and men, were victims to State Plan 14.25 (Grix and Dennis). Their trusted coaches lied to them telling them they were being given vitamins, not steroids. The East German athletes were performing outstandingly in their sport, but they did not even know why. Although the steroids accelerated an athlete’s ability, Olympic gold did come at a price. Some of the women given steroids suffered from depression, infertility, miscarriage, and even death ("Doping for Gold-The State-Sponsored Doping Program").

After the 1976 Olympics concluded, Shirley Babashoff and other swimmers still felt disdain toward the East German female swimmers. The cheating that took place at this huge sporting event, and the voice that Shirley used to speak up against the East Germany team forever revolutionized doping in sports. This triumph and tragedy cannot be forgotten in history, for the importance of it is crucial for flourishing athletes in this generation (Rutemiller and Babashoff).

Shirley Babashoff was one of the few athletes who had the courage to speak out because she experienced the East German team’s doping during every race in the pool. The media can be a powerful source, and “Surly Shirley” was the name given to her by the media as she was trying to voice the truth. Although Shirley was harshly ridiculed by the media, she did influence future generations to speak out. Lily King, an Olympic breaststroker representing the United States, was a great example of this because she
spoke out against the Russian’s use of performance enhancing drugs during the 2016 Rio Olympic Games (Rutemiller and Babashoff). People have stated that Shirley Babashoff was a reminder of why it is important to voice your opinion, for she was an advocate for those affected by cheaters.

The huge triumph in this story is the 4x100 free relay that dominated East Germany's performance enhancing drug relay and changed the view on doping in sports. Once the four women worked together and took gold, the crowd went wild with pure shock. Shirley, her teammates, and her coaches proved that pure talent can overcome anything (Brown).

The 1976 Olympics forever influenced the doping world. Once the message got out that the East Germans did actually use performance enhancing drugs at those Olympics, the IOC made drug testing more secure. However, analyses show that the amount of athletes doping increased drastically after 1976 (Janofsky). After all of these events went down, Shirley wanted people to realize the effects that cheaters have on non-cheaters and how it monopolizes them forever. Never take the easy way out of things. The East German doping scandal may have significantly opened the door for more athletic dopers, but Shirley Babashoff’s actions influenced people to speak out and impacted the views on doping.

The doping East Germans dominated over Shirley Babashoff at the Olympics until she took action and out swam the competition in their final race. Shirley was trounced upon by the East Germans as she was losing every race to them. The East German women were cheating to win. Nobody seemed to realize the cheating that was going on even when Shirley Babashoff spoke out, but it was a tragedy never forgotten. However, even after the
tragedy, Shirley and some of her teammates put aside their disappointment and came
together to leave the Olympics as gold medalists. The 4x100 free relay was the final
showdown between the United States and East Germany, and the United States women
earned their spot on the top of the podium. That race will go down as the “best female race
of all time”. Shirley Babashoff’s life will be remembered by the 1976 Olympic games.
Through her persistence of what she felt she deserved after being robbed of her glory
during those games, views changed on doping, drug tests got stricter, other athletes started
to speak out against doping, while other athletes even used doping as a solution to win, but
hopefully the biggest impact that this story should have on readers is to not cheat.
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Amedio, Steve. “Getting Wet Is Still Shirley Babashoff’s Pleasure.” The Times

The Times Herald Record article by Steve Amedio was a primary source. I know this
because it was published in 1976, which was the same year of the Montreal, Canada
Olympics where Shirley Babashoff’s triumph and tragedy took place. The main thing
I took away from this article was how Shirley Babashoff was the main hope for gold
at the Olympics, however, she had a sour taste of defeat by the East Germany team.

“Babashoff Only U.S. Swim Hope.” The Morning Herald, 15 July 1976,
newscomwc.newspapers.com.

Another similar article to the one above is The Morning Herald newspaper article,
which is also primary because it was published in 1976 at around the same time the
Olympics were happening. After taking notes on this article, I have learned that the
East German women have almost every record for the 1976 Olympics. The list goes
on and on until it hits Shirley Babashoff’s name at the bottom. Shirley still has not
gained those records back.

Shirley Babashoff’s Making Waves book was a very big factor in writing this paper. It is an autobiography on Shirley’s life. Shirley herself wrote the book for readers to get an even deeper look into this triumph and tragedy. After reading this book, the information that I used the most was Shirley’s childhood. I took everything from her rough family environment to her first swim class and up to becoming a professional swimmer. I also used this as a source for Shirley’s feelings after the East German doping scandal was revealed.


Brent Rutemiller interviewed Shirley Babashoff in this source I used, and it was very helpful. Shirley Babashoff herself was being interviewed, so we got her opinion firsthand. I learned all of the significances that this event had on the world, which consisted of athletes being influenced to speak out, including Lily King, and how Shirley will represent drug issues in sports forever.


The Kingston Daily Freeman was an interesting article. It was published at around the same time of the event in history. I found from this article that after the
Montreal, Canada Olympics, Shirley was too monopolized to continue swimming, so she retired forever and got on with her life. She ended up having a son and finding a job to suit her.


Donna de Varona’s article taught me new information. Since Donna de Varona was actually an announcer at the 1976 Olympics who saw everything right in front of her, and this article was published in 1976, it is primary. I learned that most spectators at the event, including Donna, just assumed that the reason the East German team was going fast was because of their nice suits, hard training, and dedication, but they were all wrong.

SECONDARY SOURCES


Nancy Armour’s USA Today article was not written or published at the time of the event, nor was it written by someone who was at the event or experienced it firsthand. This article gave me my introduction quote to hook readers and taught me that Shirley Babashoff is a reminder of why it matters to speak out.

Brian Brown’s documentary, The Last Gold, is all about Shirley Babashoff and what she went through. Mr. Brown did not experience the event first hand or have any first hand accounts in the documentary, and it was not filmed at the same time period of the event in history. After taking these notes, I have found out what Shirley and her relay mates did to feel confident for their relay to beat the competition, and I used that in my paper. This source also had the original footage of the 4x100 Free Relay. Finally, used this source for my summarized introduction paragraph, and the aftermath of those four girls who finally won gold.


PBS’s Doping for Gold article was a huge factor in writing this historical paper. It was not written at the time of the event, nor was it written by someone who was at the event and experienced it firsthand. The information I took from this article was how East Germany sought out ways to demonstrate communist superiority to the world, built the Berlin Wall, and used steroids to have power in sports. I also found the health effects that doping had on the East German athletes.

This source is a secondary source because it was not published at the time of the event, and it was not written by someone who experienced the event first-hand. I took away from this source information on the number of East German athletes who were victims to the “test”.


The New York Times article really taught me about the aftermath of Shirley Babashoff’s tragedy. The author did not experience the event firsthand, and it was not published in 1976. The aftermath consisted of how the doping scandal came out thirty years later than the Olympics, and how Shirley never got her medals or records back that she deserved, even after it was proven true that they were doping. Not only that, but also how the number of athletic dopers increased from 1976 and on.


Caitlin Yoshiko, a writer for LA Times, had an excellent article to use information from. Because it was not written at the time of the event, and the author did not experience the event firsthand, it is a secondary source. The information I took from
this source was how the International Olympic Committee (IOC) never gave Shirley Babashoff the records or medals that she deserved. I also learned about the eight year rule and the Olympic Order with this source.


Santa Monica’s Making Waves book overview was a great source. It was not published at the time of the event or written by a person who experienced the event firsthand. After reading and taking notes on this source, I learned how the East Germans looked after taking steroids, and how the book, Making Waves, broke the silence to expose the doping East Germans.


Brent Rutemiller’s Swimming World article was a solid source. Due to the fact that it was not published at the time period of the event, and the author did not experience it firsthand, it is a secondary source. The information taken from this source was how the 4x100 freestyle relay was the final showdown between the U.S and East Germany.

This encyclopedia/reference source gave me great statistics. It listed all of Shirley Babashoff’s events that she swam in Montreal, Canada and what place she got for each one. Also, it stated when she was born, which is important. This online encyclopedia was not published in 1976, the year of the Olympics, and the person who wrote it was not a spectator, coach, or athlete at the 1976 Olympics.


*Steroids*, by Jon Sterngass, was an informative source. It was published in 2011, not 1976, which was the time of the Olympics, and Mr. Sterngass did not attend the Olympics to see it firsthand or use firsthand accounts in the book. This source taught me all about steroids and what effects it has on users, so I could have some background information to understand doping better.


*Faust’s Gold* was an interesting book. This book was not an autobiography, it was not written or published anywhere near 1976, and the author did not use firsthand accounts or experience the event firsthand. The biggest thing I took away from this source was that the East German women athletes never knew they were being given steroids. Instead, they thought that these secret, little, blue pills were vitamins.