



Weaponized sport

How the media misuse sport as a propaganda weapon in the information warfare.

Felix Abt

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Short introduction by Peter Hanseler

Our author Felix Abt has already published several articles with us. He is one of the very best insiders regarding North Korea and China since he actually worked and lived in North Korea for a number of years. Mr. Abt is running his own blog - easternangle.com, where this article has been published first. We are happy to be able to see his angle once in a while and to be allowed to publish his work. Here is his latest article about lies by the Western press; prove of lies not by allegations but by facts - the way we like it.

Introduction

Actually, Western journalists should care more about North Korea than about China; because then they are allowed to report anything they want – including fabrications – because it is unverifiable anyway and they do not have to expect any refutation. Moreover, it is precisely *the CIA-sponsored horror stories* about the country isolated by the West with an almost complete economic embargo – the most comprehensive sanctions regime in the world – that best fit the expectations of media consumers who have been conditioned accordingly for decades.

However, it is much more difficult to spread horror stories about China. This is because China is far more transparent, and if someone wants to verify, for example, the claim perpetuated by the US that Uyghurs are forced to harvest cotton under inhumane conditions (which is why Chinese cotton products had to be banned), they can travel to Xinjiang themselves.

Absurd allegations

He might then find out there, for example, that state-of-the-art American *John Deere* machines on automated farms, most of which, by the way, belong to Uyghurs, are performing the allegedly human rights-abusing "*forced labor*" 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – and unpaid at that.

Amy Hawkins is the senior China correspondent for the British "Guardian." Instead of taking a closer look at the just ended [Asian Games](#) in China, she brashly spread the claim that the picture of two Chinese female athletes with the number plates 6 and 4 hugging each other tightly reminds of the date of the "*Tiananmen massacres*" and was therefore immediately "*blocked*" by the Chinese state.



Amy Hawkins @amyhawk_ · 21h

Chinese censors block image of athletes hugging - seemingly because of the "64" race numbers



theguardian.com

Chinese censors block 'Tiananmen' image of athletes hugging

Readers added context they thought people might want to know

This image was not "censored" on Chinese internet and can easily be found on platforms such as Douyin, Weibo, Baidu, and Sohu

baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=177864901...

[twitter.com/MotulX22/statu...](https://twitter.com/MotulX22/status...)

sohu.com/a/725168748_11...

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Screenshot: Twitter

Her colleague John Simpson, BBC star journalist with 226,000 followers on Twitter/"X," spread the same claim in his message below:



Screenshot: Twitter

Many other media, including the leading German magazine "Spiegel," which has its own correspondents in the country, rewrote the story.

In an unbiased search, the first result appears to be, of all things, the report from "Xinhua News," the news agency of the official Chinese state media. I also noticed that many other Chinese media published (and at the time of writing still show) the same picture. Did "Xinhua" perhaps enjoy disseminating the image, even though the owner of "Xinhua", the Chinese state, is said to have banned it, according to Western media?

山口大抗议，此地裁判在综合考量已有数据后认为运动员抗议可能有效的情况下，应该允许提出抗议的运动员完成比赛，并在赛事结束后再做最终的决定。赛后研究如果仍然认为提出抗议的运动员抢跑犯规，则应取消运动员的成绩。



Screenshot: Xinhua

By all accounts, no one in China batted an eye when the picture with the supposedly infamous figures appeared. The Western media already thought they had seized another good opportunity to pillory oh-so-dictatorial China once again. The German "Spiegel," notorious for spreading outrageous lies by journalist Relotius and other cheaters, for example, fantasized that a "*photo was shared a lot on the net – until China's censors intervened for political reasons*":

Asian Games in Hangzhou

China zensiert offenbar Foto von zwei sich umarmenden Sportlerinnen

Die Sprinterinnen Lin Yuwei und Wu Yanni lagen sich bei den Asian Games nach ihrem Finallauf in den Armen. Ein Foto von dem Moment wurde im Netz viel geteilt – bis Chinas Zensoren aus politischen Gründen zugriffen.

2 Min



Screenshot: German Spiegel spreading disinformation

But what is it about the alleged Tiananmen massacre that the Western media actually allude to when they point to the female athletes hugging each other? Former Washington Post Beijing bureau chief Jay Mathews acknowledged in 1998 that *"all verified eyewitness accounts say that the students who remained in the square when troops arrived were allowed to leave peacefully."* Mathews called the Tiananmen Square massacre a *"myth"* and emphasized that it would be *"hard to find a journalist who has not contributed to the misimpression."* As far as can be determined from the available evidence, no one apparently died in Tiananmen Square that night.

Tiananmen Protests – Massacre or Disinformation?

This view was also confirmed by "Reuters" correspondent Graham Earnshaw, who spent the night of June 3 to 4, 1989, in the center of Tiananmen Square and interviewed many students. He said that most of the students had already left the square peacefully by that time and that the remaining few hundred were persuaded to do likewise. *"There was no violence, let alone a massacre,"* [Earnshaw said](#).

The unsuspected Gregory Clark, a British-Australian diplomat, journalist, author and university professor who lived for many years in Hong Kong, where he studied China extensively, and who has lived in Japan since 1976, wrote in an article in the "Japan Times" entitled: *What Really Happened in Tiananmen Square?*

"Yes, there was something close to a massacre in those streets, with some of the units originally sent to clear the square of students turning their guns wildly on the crowds that had tried to block their approach. And to find out why the soldiers did such an atrocious thing we do not have to look much beyond those widely publicized photos of military buses in rows being set on fire by those protesting crowds."

To date the world seems to have assumed that those buses were fired by the crowds after the soldiers had started shooting. In fact it was the reverse — that the crowds attacked the buses as they entered Beijing, incinerating dozens of soldiers inside, and only then did the shooting begin. Here too we do need not go far to find the evidence — in the not publicized photos of soldiers with horrible burns seeking shelter in nearby houses, and reports of charred corpses being strung from overpasses.

True, the crowds had had their reasons for protesting. I travelled extensively in China in the early 1970s, soon after Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution movement was launched.

I saw firsthand the grotesque and insane abuse to which the entire nation had been subjected. If I had been a Chinese student or citizen in those days, I would have been among the protesters, even as late as 1989.

The regime seemed to realize this, which is why it tolerated the student protest in the square for six weeks despite the enormous loss of face and inconvenience. Its party secretary general even tried to negotiate."

[Read Clark's full article](#) in which he states: "Right from the beginning we should have had our doubts about the 'massacre' stories."

As a reader of proven fake news, one wonders how journalists from the Guardian, BBC, Spiegel and many other Western media must feel when their disinformation is debunked by facts, and why they maintain their claims instead of retracting them and coming up with a correction or even an apology.

Only propagandistically usable Chinese female athletes in demand in the West

The last time the media pounced on a major sporting event in China was in the run-up to the *Beijing Winter Olympics*. *Peng Shuai*, a Chinese tennis player, became famous when, according to Western media, she accused a retired top politician of rape (she didn't use the word "rape" in her original Chinese text, though!) after the years-long secret love affair with many ups and downs between the two had fallen apart. Western politicians – including the German government coalition – and their assistant media therefore immediately called for a boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics, which they stayed away from in protest. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, for example, which is influential in German-speaking European countries, strongly condemned the Olympic Committee for the impudence of allowing the Olympics to be held in China anyway.

The athlete was subsequently often seen in public, laughing and talking to other people. Because she apparently had not ended up in a gulag, as the Western media soldiery must have secretly hoped, she soon disappeared from the Western media circus again.

Dilana Dilixiati is also a Chinese sports star, but unlike the tennis star, no one in the collective West knows her. Her team had scored an unexpected, sensational victory in the semifinals against [basketball superpower Australia](#) at the FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup. Australian media reported, "*They defeated the hosts 61-59 at the Sydney Superdome on Friday night in a thrilling encounter that was decided only in the final seconds.*" The "*dramatic thriller*" sent shock waves.

Untold but moving stories

Those who followed the game immediately recognized that Dilana Dilixiati looked different from her teammates: The journalists must have noticed her. Strangely enough, the Uyghur – who spells her name in Uyghur as دىلانا دىلشات, which doesn't look like Mandarin – didn't attract any interest, even though she would have been more suitable than any other for a sensational success story inviting clicks. The case was clear: Dilana Dilixiati, a Uyghur, and her apparent permission and ability to travel contradicted the narrative embedded in Western minds that Uyghurs are prisoners and victims of genocide and should not be allowed to leave Xinjiang. Dilixiati's story consequently had to be kept quiet by agenda journalists-because media consumers would naturally have noticed that something could be wrong with the prevailing narrative; and no one likes to be manipulated.

There are other reports that are not told because they do not want to fit into the image of anti-Chinese reporting and could possibly arouse unwanted sympathy with the demonized Middle Kingdom: For example, there is the extraordinary story of the joy and tears of two Chinese and Japanese swimmers who were friends. Although it was extremely moving, it was not picked up by the Western media – because it would probably have upset the prevailing China narrative as well: Chinese and Japanese swimming stars stood together on the medal podium at the 2023 Asian Games.



Japan's swimmer Rikako Ikee (right, red jersey) and China's swimming gold medalist Zhang Yufei (left, white jersey). Screenshot: Twitter/CGTSportscene

The Japanese Rikako Ikee had been a world-class swimmer since her youth; however, she fell ill with leukemia and was hospitalized for months. Now she has made a furious comeback. The race she had competed in, the 50-meter swim, was the last swimming event of the Hangzhou Games and Ikee's last chance to win an individual medal – which she did. The message was clear: Leukemia is history, and I'm back among the medal winners! China's Zhang Yufei knew the whole story. Although they were sporting rivals, they were also Asian neighbors and friends who had shared a journey. It was an emotional moment. *"I said to Rikako, don't cry, don't cry,"* Yufei, the Chinese swimmer, recounted. *"When they announced her name on the podium, I felt like crying. But I thought to myself, 'This is a live broadcast, I can't cry.' Then I saw her crying and hugging her coach. I couldn't hold back my tears anymore."*

ARTICLE TAGS:

Analysis China The Guardian Der Spiegel Earnshaw, Graham BBC Zedong, Mao
Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ) Reuters