

Former Olympic Gold Medalist Takes Doping Plea

Former Olympic race walking gold medalist Alex Schwazer has received an eight-month suspended prison sentence under a plea bargain deal with prosecutors who were investigating him for doping.

The race walker will also pay a 6,000-euro (\$7,350) fine as part of the deal. Schwazer failed an out-of-competition test before arriving at the 2012 London Olympics. The race walker, who won the 50-kilometer walk at the 2008 Beijing Games, was removed from Italy's team before competing. He later admitted to using the blood-boosting hormone [Erythropoietin](#) (EPO). The Italian race walker who retired during the 2012 Olympics now wants to compete at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. The 3 1/2-year ban imposed on Schwazer from the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) expires in January, 2016. His ban may be extended by CONI, which is still investigating him.

Doping is a criminal offense in Italy and Bolzano prosecutor Guido Rispoli is leading an inquiry to show that doctors and coaches were aware that the race walker was doping long before he tested positive, possibly dating to Beijing. The athlete's lawyer, Gerhard Brandstatter, said Schwazer wants to become an anti-doping spokesman to prevent other kids from making his mistake and added with the plea bargain Alex has already turned the page so to speak and now we're waiting to close the case with the sports authorities.

CONI's anti-doping court is also expected to judge Schwazer's ex-girlfriend and former figure skating world champion [Carolina Kostner](#) on whether or not she assisted in covering up Schwazer's use of banned drugs by helping him avoid a test. A ban of four years and three months has been requested for Kostner by Schwazer's use of banned drugs by CONI's anti-doping prosecutor.

In June this year, Kostner, the reigning Olympic and World bronze medalist, said she would sit out the 2014-15 season. In the past, Kostner has remarked if she had known Alex was doping she would have convinced him to confess, for his own health and added being accused of aiding him is intolerable for her. She went on to remark that it is strange to find out how anti-doping authorities could seek a heavier ban for her compared to so many athletes banned for doping. A long ban on the 27-year-old Kostner could rule her out of the 2018 Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, and may end her career.

[Carolina Kostner](#) has also won two silvers and three bronzes at the worlds, and is a five-time European champion. It is not clear as of now whether she could be banned retroactively and stripped of medals. CONI president Giovanni Malago expressed sympathy for Kostner. A CONI ban would likely prevent Kostner from performing in shows supported by national or international sports federations.

The skating champion has acknowledged accompanying Schwazer on a visit to Lance Armstrong's banned sports doctor, Michele Ferrari, in 2010. According to published reports of

Kostner's testimony to prosecutors in Bolzano, Kostner admitted to lying to inspectors from the World Anti-Doping Agency who visited her home in Germany looking for Schwazer on July 30, 2012.