

## Nine for IX Film Discussion Guide: *The Diplomat*

### Key Concepts:

- Role Model
- Sport Diplomacy
- Sport And Politics
- Socialism
- Communism
- Nationalism
- Democracy
- Cold War

### Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss ways in which Witt was a pioneer, role model and an agent of social change?
2. Online at [espnW.com](http://espnW.com) in the directors' statement it says "Witt may have been perceived as a functionary of a 'political machine,' but in reality, she was an athlete chasing personal dreams.... Politics may divide us, but up close, each of us shares common ground." Do you agree or disagree that sport unites citizens? Give examples from *The Diplomat* to back up your contention.
3. Many scholars argue sport and politics are inextricably intertwined. Outside of Katerina Witt's story told in *The Diplomat*, can you think of other instances where athletes have been or currently are political?
4. In the US, scholars point out a majority of athletes are apolitical and rarely are courageous enough to stand up for social injustices. What factors do you think influence athlete resistance or reluctance to be outspoken about political issues?
5. Why do you think politicians and those in power in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR)/East Germany didn't want their athletes to pursue professional sport career opportunities? Why do you think the GDR politicians considered and eventually allowed Witt to turn professional?
6. Known as "the most beautiful face of socialism," Witt's success gave her a unique status in East Germany. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in October of 1990 how did Witt end up both a beneficiary and victim of the East German regime?

7. How is sport related to a country's political development, and its sense of nationhood?
8. Can you think of examples in other sports where the Key Concepts listed at the beginning of this guide are present?

**Additional Readings:**

Adams, M. (2010). From Mixed-Sex Sport to Sport for Girls: The Feminization of Figure Skating. *Sport In History*, 30(2), 218-241.

Cha, V. D. (2009). A Theory of Sport and Politics. *International Journal Of The History Of Sport*, 26(11), 1581-1610.

Hunt, T. M., Dimeo, P., Bowers, M. T., & Jedlicka, S. R. (2012). The Diplomatic Context of Doping in the Former German Democratic Republic: A Revisionist Examination. *International Journal Of The History Of Sport*, 29(18), 2486-2499.

Jarvie, G. (1984). Scientific socialism through sport. *Canadian Journal Of History Of Sport*, 15(2), 5-18.

Krüger, M. (2014). The German Workers' Sport Movement between Socialism, Workers' Culture, Middle-Class Gymnastics and Sport for All. *International Journal Of The History Of Sport*, 31(9), 1098-1117.

Merkel, U. (2009). Sport, Politics and Reunification: A Comparative Analysis of Korea and Germany. *International Journal Of The History Of Sport*, 26(3), 406-428.

Redeker, R. (2008). Sport as an opiate of international relations: The myth and illusion of sport as a tool of foreign diplomacy. *Sport In Society*, 11(4), 494-500.

**Additional Activities:**

1. Watch Dave Zirin's documentary *Not Just a Game*, a film about politics and sport in the US. Zirin first traces how American sports have glamorized militarism, racism, sexism, and homophobia, and also highlights the forgotten history of rebel athletes who stood up to power and fought for social justice beyond the field of play. Compare and contrast the themes in *The Diplomat* and *Not Just a Game*.

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