

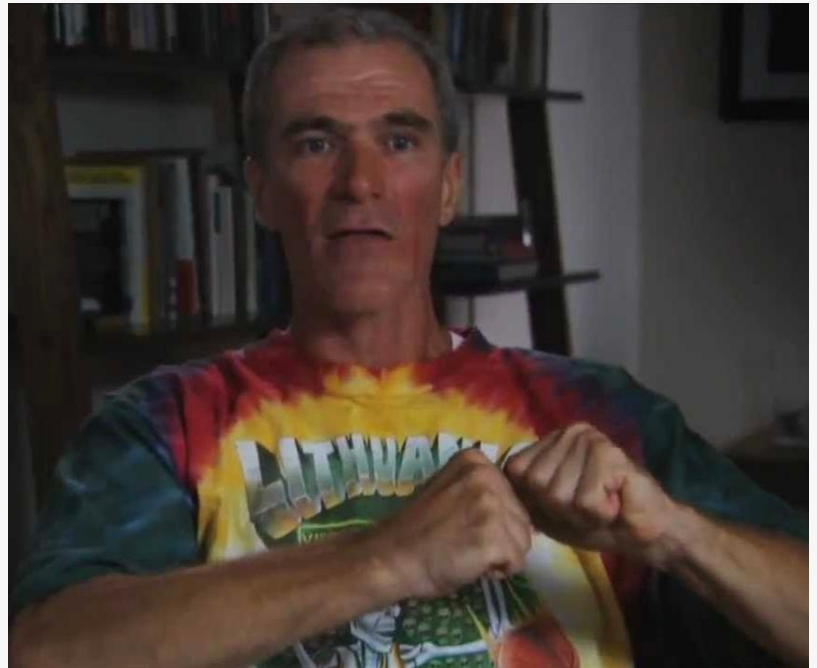
The True Story Of How The Grateful Dead and the New York Designer Funded Lithuania's 1992 Olympic Basketball Team

How the Grateful Dead and New York City Designer Greg Speirs Sponsored the 1992 Lithuanian Olympic Basketball Team

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, March 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After the former Soviet Satellite country of Lithuania broke away from the Soviet Union in 1990 they found themselves free and independent. Former Soviet Basketball players now wanted to compete in the upcoming 1992 Summer Olympics as a free and independent country of Lithuania but were lacking of funds to do so.

"That whole country of Lithuania can have a spirit of national identity, and these people can go to the Olympics." said Grateful Dead guitarist and singer Bob Weir. - from USA Today.

The story began when Lithuania, one of the Baltic States' former Soviet Satellite countries, during the time of the Reagan administration, broke from the Soviet Union and gained its newly found independence and freedom. Former Soviet player and then NBA star Sarunas Marciulionis, who was discovered by a coach at the Golden State Warriors, started rallying for donations and support for the new but financially strapped 1992 Lithuanian Olympic Men's Basketball team, with hopes of competing for the first time as a free nation apart from the Soviet Union in the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain. Marciulionis received various monetary donations, including one from the Grateful Dead musical group. According to news reports, among the various donations the team received the Grateful Dead came into the story with a separate \$5,000. donation of their own to Marciulionis, which was the part they played in this story.



Greg Speirs, creator of the Legendary Lithuanian Basketball Tie Dye Skullman Olympic Uniforms. The brand was unveiled to the world at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain and was not created as an actual team uniform nor was it ever part of the Grateful Dead.

“The Lithuanian basketball team, these aren’t homeless people. This isn’t a soup kitchen,” said Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir. “But at the same time, here’s something that can do a lotta good for a lotta people. “That whole country of Lithuania can have a spirit of national identity, and these people can go to the Olympics.” - from Substack - Curious Minds.

The Origin of the Shirts: The shirts came from New York City artist and designer Greg Speirs. The apparel brand designer also heard about the team's plight and came into this story by independently creating the Skullman® Lithuania Tie Dye® brand basketball t-shirts just so the team could have something fun to wear during the practice time before the actual Olympic competitions. They were never created as an actual team jersey, nor were they ever part of the Grateful Dead. Wearing the "Skullman Tie Dyes" energized and inspired the team.

Then the Lithuanian Olympic Men’s Basketball Team showed up on the Olympic medal platform, wearing the way-out Skullman® tie-dyed basketball uniforms after clinching the bronze medal in the men's basketball competition at the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympic Games. They wowed the world, and it turned out to be something that was never before seen in the world of Olympic sports uniforms fashion. The

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Bob Weir - guitarist and singer for the Grateful Dead

reaction from the international Olympics audience was overwhelming. The players wore the shirts wherever they went after that. The public wanted to know [where they could buy one](#). “The story became a major news event impacting popular culture, taking its place in Olympics history, had a major influence on the future of sports fashion and changed it forever. The Tie Dyed Slammin® Skullman® became a legendary household icon.” said Mike Thompson of Slammin Sports®.

Lithuanians decided to dress up in the colorful Skeleton Jerseys in order to show their newly reborn country national colors and to show their gratitude to Greg Speirs and the Grateful Dead for their financial support. Rimas Kurtinaitis characterized the emotional awarding ceremony by



The 2022 Commemorative Editions Lithuania Tie Dye® Slam Dunking Skeleton Iconic Apparel Brand were showcased in the "Center of the World" in Times Square, N.Y.C. when the brand celebrated its milestone 30th Anniversary in 2022.

saying: "Well, we cried. It was really from joy. Words cannot even express feelings like that. You need to be there". Valdemaras Chomičius: "It was such an emotion that it's hard to explain. You have to experience it". Arvydas Sabonis by comparing his 1988's Olympic gold medal and the 1992's Olympic bronze medal said: "The medal in Seoul was gold, but this bronze is our soul". In all, Lithuanians averaged 94 points per game in the tournament, being outclassed only by the USA (117 points per game). This is from Wikipedia (Lithuania men's national basketball team: History).

"With those t-shirts, we were like the new kids on the block," explained Rimas Kurtinaitis, a starting wing for the team who is now head coach of Lithuania's BC Wolves.

"It's really difficult to understand the magnitude and the significance and the impact and the power of what went down with those shirts." said NBA Hall of Famer Bill Walton. - Gannett News

Listen to the podcast that uncovered the complete, true facts about the t-shirts:

<https://wonderly.com/shows/sports-explains-the-world/episode/13843-the-skullman-cometh/>

Watch the YouTube Documentary: <https://youtu.be/MsbJg8ijNYE?feature=shared>

"We were very proud to wear those shirts," Sarunas Marciulionis said. "Life used to be pale, no colors, no excitement. It was like a black and white movie where we lived ... Now this was something fresh, something different."

"We showed up for that medal ceremony all in tie-dye, all smiling, all happy and laughing and free," player Arturos Karnisovas told the Houston Chronicle. "We had our president in the locker room, taking his shirt off, putting the tie-dye shirt on, and showering with champagne."

"If one fashion item could encapsulate this moment in time, it was those shirts," said Jon Weinbach, who co-wrote and co-produced the 2012 documentary, *The Other Dream Team*, about the 1992 Lithuanian men's basketball team.

"You had the blending of worlds of politics and pop culture and basketball in this really fun,



The brand was unveiled to the world at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain. The iconic apparel and the legendary Slam-dunking Skullman were enshrined in the Basketball Hall of Fame on December 07, 1993, "a day that will live in infamy."

great-spirited way.”

“They’re free-minded people. We had just become a free country. There was a freedom connection,” Marciulionis said. - from Substack - Curious Minds

The legendary apparel was highlighted in the 2012 sports and political documentary film "The Other Dream Team", Directed and produced by Marius Markevicius and Jon Weinbach, which celebrates Greg Speirs' iconic tie-dyed uniforms worn by the Lithuanian Basketball Team, now an historic piece of Summer Olympics' basketball history.

See IMDB bio:

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3998173/>

Listen to "The Other Dream Team" interview:

<http://www.gregspeirs.com/greg-speirs-audio-interview-by-the-other-dream-team-documentary-film/>

Read the news doc. facts.:

<https://www.amworldgroup.com/blog/lithuanian-slam-dunking-skeleton-back-for-the-other-dream-team-documentary>

Where the uniforms came from:

"The Skullman® Lithuania tie dye® basketball shirts are actually a separate, independent, bona fide, licensed apparel line brought into this story, created and solely owned exclusively by the designer. It was never created as an actual team jersey by the creator, nor was it ever part of the Grateful Dead. After three decades of marketing and sales Greg's efforts of keeping the brand in the public's mind, has turned his apparel property into a bona fide, solid brand with an amazing, continuous 33 year longevity. All licensing rights for the property and brand always originated exclusively from the designer right from the beginning when he created them in 1992." said Mike Thompson of Slammin' Sports. "The designer played a much more significant role in the story of the Lithuanian Olympic Basketball Team than was first reported in 1992, including with respect to the funding of the Lithuanian team. But the true facts about the accurate source of the famous jerseys and the major sponsorship have finally been brought to light." added Mike.

“It is a much less romantic version of the story,” McNally admitted. “That’s the story that everybody constantly ignores. It was just Grateful Dead serendipity ... We got a lot of credit that



Greg Speirs' original 1992 Barcelona Lithuania Tie Dye® Skullman Jerseys, gained international exposure at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Spain. 1992 Iconic Slam-Dunking Skullman®. Copyright 1992 & Trademark property of Greg Speirs. All rights reserved.

we didn't deserve." said Grateful Dead spokesman Dennis McNally. Speirs feels similarly when he reflects on how previous versions were told. "It's such a great story that maybe those reporting wanted the story to be the way they wished it would have been or the way they really wanted the story to be," Speirs said. "Like a feel good fantasy but not in reality or with correct facts." McNally admits that the narrative these days is too often personalized to credit Grateful Dead frontman Jerry Garcia, who he said didn't even pay much attention to basketball. McNally said the band is credited with "genius marketing" on this project even though the first round of memorabilia contained no band logos, nor was it directly funded by the Grateful Dead. - USA Today

"But the real story with the real facts is still a great story nonetheless, because the public deserves accuracy and truth in reporting." added the artist.

About Greg Speirs:

He is the former art director who designed the rock n' roll music magazine "Grooves" back in the 1970's including several highly collectible issues about the rock group Kiss from the early days. He also designed the legendary "Monaco Monk" icicle sleds for Prince Albert of Monaco and his Olympic Monaco Bobsled Team used in the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics & 1995 World Cup. See:

<http://www.skullman.com/bobsleigh.htm> He collaborated in the 1970's with famed Woodstock Music Festival founder and music producer Artie Kornfeld, in particular with RCA Records. Awards: Named to Society Of Illustrator's top 500 Illustrators in America Annuals 1975 and 1976. Named to Who's Who in America and Who's Who in the World.

The continued funding and the charity:

"When the Olympics ended and demand for the shirts continued, Greg saw it as a great opportunity to help the team and chose to donate all of what would have been his profits to continue to fund the team. He licensed to the team use of his property (the shirts) to sell t-shirts for a limited time to raise money to sponsor the team and for Marciulionis' additional charities. That's why Greg is called the major sponsor of the 1992 Men's Lithuanian Olympic Basketball Team after the Olympics. He donated 100% of his profits to sponsor the team, which was the original [\\$450,000 in the first wave of charity](#) donated to the team ([reported by Forbes Magazine](#))



Official Brand - Original Tie Dyed Slam Dunking Skullman® is a bona fide licensed property created & owned by the designer. All licensing inquiries should be directed to Skullman.com. ©1992 & TM® property of Greg Speirs. All related indicia & marks are Official Brands.

which continued sponsoring the team after the Olympics with more continuing profits going to Marciulionis and his charities which may have skyrocketed to millions of dollars according to news reports. That's why Greg is considered the major sponsor of the 1992 Lithuanian Olympic Basketball Team. All of the rest of Greg's profits were given to Lithuanian player Sarunas Marciulionis and the "Sarunas Lithuanian Children's Fund" to help sick children in need, which was set up and controlled by the former Lithuania team player and NBA star who received 100% of all remaining funds with a portion used to fund Marciulionis' basketball school in Lithuania according to news reports." recalled Mike. "Any donation of funds given from the sale of a shirt ultimately came from the artist. The documented fact is that after the Olympics ended, as Licensor, it was his money that became the biggest donation to the team, to Marciulionis, to his charity and to build Sarunas' basketball school in Lithuania, because those funds came from the sales of his shirts. Only Greg had the right to release profits to charity or to anyone. 100% of his licensing profits were released to fund the team, Marciulionis and his charities. The only thing that Greg would want is to one day meet all of the many children in need who were helped by his huge donation that was given to Marciulionis." added Mike.

"The 1992 Lithuanian Basketball Team represents what happens in freedom...people excel. The Lithuanian Slam-Dunking Skullman® represents rising from nothing. Like a Phoenix from the ashes to slam-dunking a flaming basketball. It's not a dead skeleton, but the Skullman is alive and represents rebirth and a new life. When you are free you have the opportunity to succeed as an individual while still being part of a team. It was not only a victory in Olympic sports, but it was as if it were an overall triumph over communism itself. It's about freedom and free enterprise." recalled Speirs.

The artist's uniforms were listed as one of the Ten Olympics Games' most memorable team uniforms in modern history in The National News' "Lifestyle/Luxury" article, by Sarah Maisey July 26, 2024.

The uniforms were "enshrined" in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass. on Dec.7th 1993, below a giant 12ft. x 8ft. 3-D incarnation of the legendary Slam Dunking Skeleton. Marciulionis' jersey was also added to the collection by the Basketball Hall of Fame's curator Mike Brooslin at the time.

See link: <http://www.lithuaniatshirt.com/basketball%20hall%20of%20fame.htm>

An Icon of pop culture and a symbol of freedom:

The Iconic Apparel is a solid brand with an amazing over 30 year longevity. Still a most sought after brand by collectors after three decades of marketing and sales. A big part of the brand's three decade plus popularity and longevity is it's collectibility aspect. Demand and popularity increases today. People want to own part of the story and own a piece of history and a symbol of freedom." — Mike Thompson - Slammin Sports. Vintage editions of the T-shirts sell for hundreds of dollars online on sites like Ebay and Etsy. The brand's 30 Year milestone was celebrated in 2022 in Times Square, New York City.

About the Property:

The brand is an independent, bona fide, licensed property created by the designer Greg Speirs and is not part of any other entity. The brand stands alone as a separate independent property owned by the designer. All licensing rights originate from and belong to the Licensor and the creator, Greg Speirs. The brand has been marketed and sold consistently for over 30 years through Skullman.com.

Vintage editions of the shirts sell for hundreds of dollars online at sites like EBay and Etsy. The Original 1992 Skullman Lithuania Tie Dye® T-Shirts and the 2024 Edition Tees, Hats, Caps, Hoodies and more are available on the www.Skullman.com website. Some of the 2024 Collector's Editions even have Special Commemorative Patches and Embroideries.

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