



The LifeWave energy patch uses organic materials, its maker says.

Energy patch creator insists it's a sporting buzz

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It's been two years since a company in Suwanee began selling a body patch that supposedly provides an energy jolt without sending substances through the skin.

Now David Schmidt faces his most significant sales challenge yet: convincing the drug-testing lords for Olympic sports that the product meets its rules — and the medical profession that it is effective.

Schmidt welcomes being dragged into the white-hot debate over performance boosters employed by Olympic athletes. In fact, he is eager to prove the legality and the legitimacy of his creation, LifeWave Energy Enhancer.

"We are going to be fully cooperative," he said Monday. Scrutiny "will be a good thing."

The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, which oversees drug testing and educational programs for American athletes in

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Olympic sports, refrains from commenting on ongoing studies.

Schmidt claims the patches contain a blend of amino acids, water, oxygen and unspecified "organics," all of which are FDA-approved. Instead of transmitting the materials into the system, he said, they "communicate with" a body's electromagnetic field, instructing it to convert fats to energy.

"It's like having a cellphone to the body," said Schmidt, who operates the business out of his Suwanee home. The patches are manufactured in New Jersey.

A report in the San Francisco Chronicle about several Stanford University swimmers' use of the patch during Olympic trials included skeptical comments from the medical community about the patches' ingredients and whether they work as advertised.

"When you say amino acids, that could be anything under the sun," Dr. Bryan Frank, past president of the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, told the newspaper. "It sounds to me like a real vague description because they don't want to say what it is."

Dr. Joseph Acquah, a licensed acupuncturist in San



VASNA WILSON / Staff

David Schmidt, president of LifeWave Products, poses with LifeWave Energy Enhancer patches on his wrists. He says it sends signals but doesn't put chemicals into the body.

Francisco, was quoted as saying: "The question is whether or not it's stimulating the electrical field of the body. . . . I've never seen a scientific study that shows you can use amino acids to change electrical currents."

In Suwanee, Schmidt acknowledged, "I've had my share of skepticism from the profession. I've also had my share of acceptance."

The Stanford swimmers caused a small stir at the trials, prompting their coach, Richard Quick, to limit use of the patches to warmups. Quick, a former U.S. Olympic women's head coach and current assistant, did permit their use through the NCAA meet.

Two of the six swimmers who tried the patch, sisters Dana and Tara Kirk, made the Olympic team. Both passed drug tests at the trials, as did all other qualifiers.

"Given the climate in sports today, especially with [the BALCO investigation in]

track and field, I suppose I'm not surprised it has received this kind of attention," Schmidt said.

He could not confirm whether any other U.S. Olympians are applying the patches.

Because the patches are worn outwardly — on the shoulders, wrists, ankles or knees — they have raised as much curiosity as suspicion in the swim world. Use of banned or unethical performance enhancers tends to be discreet.

"It's probably the feeling of most coaches around that the two swimmers in question would have made the team, no matter," said Jack Bauerle, coach of the powerhouse University of Georgia swim team. "The patches do need to be tested for everyone's peace of mind."

The patches' impact is felt within minutes and is effective for about 12 hours, Schmidt said. They are recommended for use an average of about once every two days. A

month's supply retails for \$80.

The firm's Web site lists three other products for sale, along with testimonials from a few athletes and non-athletes. Other clients include NFL alumni such as Herschel Walker, a few current players and bodybuilders, according to Schmidt.

Schmidt said he has made inroads mainly with the LPGA Tour, having persuaded about 80 women golfers to try the patches. The estimate was confirmed by an LPGA spokeswoman.

"I use the patches every time I play and it makes a huge difference in my energy levels and my breathing," Hall of Famer JoAnne Carner is quoted as saying on the Web site.

Schmidt said the benefits were substantiated through clinical tests at selected colleges, including Morehouse in Atlanta.

A patent is pending on the formula.