

The 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games: Assessing the 30-year legacy, by Matthew P. Llewellyn, John Gleaves & Wayne Wilson (eds), Oxon, Routledge, 2017, vii +190 pp., £31.99 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-138-08537-4

Olympic legacy historians will have much to chew on with this book. This book, edited by Matthew P. Llewellyn, John Gleaves and Wayne Wilson, assesses the 30-year legacy of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. This book is a collection of papers originally included in a special issue of *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. The range of topics featured in this book reflect the importance of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games to the Olympic Movement.

The first original contribution is from Robert Edelman, who argues persuasively the primary reason for the Soviet Union's boycott of the 1984 Olympics stemmed not from a desire to enact revenge, but from a fear for the safety of their Olympic delegation from supposed terrorist groups in America. The influence of Cold War politics is further discussed in Toby Rider's chapter, which discusses the battle to achieve media accreditation for the American government funded broadcasters, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, in the face of opposition from the Soviet Union. The political theme is continued in Matthew Llewellyn's chapter, which recounts the 4-year bureaucratic struggle by the Apartheid South African government to gain readmission for South Africa into the Olympic fold. Faced with the prospect of a mass African boycott if South Africa were allowed to compete at the Games, coupled with the Soviet and Eastern Bloc boycott, the potential economic and political consequences of readmitting South Africa ultimately led the IOC to refuse South Africa's Olympic aspirations. The 1984 Olympics marked the first time women were allowed to compete in the marathon event at the Olympics. This chapter, written by Jaime Schultz,

offers a reminder of the challenges faced in enabling women to compete in the marathon at the 1984 Olympics, and the continued struggle for equitable representation for women at the Olympic Games. The 1988 Olympics in Seoul may be synonymous with Ben Johnson's famous doping scandal, but John Gleaves argues the 1984 Olympics can be viewed as the foundation for sport's modern-day approach to doping. Gleaves explains how the blood transfusion practices of the United States men's cycling team at the 1984 LA Olympics, not considered illegal at this stage, led the IOC to change its definition for doping and prompted a new 'ban first, test later' approach to doping substances. Cesar Torres's chapter provides a non-American view of the 1984 Games, explaining the limited role of the Games in Argentina's nascent democracy following the devastating aftermath of the military junta that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. Susan Brownell utilizes an anthropological approach to explain why China's most successful athlete at the 1984 Olympics, gymnast Li Ning, lit the flame at the Beijing 2008 Olympics. Brownell argues the 1984 Games, the first time China competed at the Summer Olympic Games since 1952, was important in the market reforms contributing to China's rise as an economic superpower over the last thirty years. Wayne Wilson's chapter makes the case for a sports infrastructure legacy from the 1984 Olympics. Wilson argues the creation of a foundation supporting youth sport was possible because of the surplus generated by the Games, and this foundation has supported the development or creation of 100 sports facilities in the South California region. The importance of the Los Angeles Games to the future trajectory of the Olympic Movement is the focus of the final original chapter and epilogue. Stephen Wenn suggests the successful management of the Games by Peter Ueberroth, President of the Los Angeles Olympic Organising Committee, demonstrated the economic potential of the Olympics for host cities, helping to spur an increased enthusiasm from cities interested in hosting the Olympics. Finally, Mark Dyreson

reflects on how global television coverage of the Los Angeles Games helped to transform the economic, cultural, and political progress of the Olympic Movement.

Offering criticisms of this book seems unfair considering its breadth and engaging manner, but there are two main areas of criticism for the reader to reflect on. First, the book features a primarily, though understandable, American perspective of the legacies. It would have been interesting to have read more diverse geographical perspectives of the legacy, such as an Africa nation or Russian view. Second, the legacies reported are exclusively positive, with little consideration of some of the negative or unrealized legacies from the Games. More consideration of the less positive legacies would have enabled a more balanced perspective of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic legacy. Notwithstanding these slight criticisms, this book enables readers of varying ages and interests to appreciate the significance of the 1984 Olympics. For individuals unable to remember or experience the Games, the author contributions enable the Games and their impacts to be brought to life. For individuals who experienced the Games at the time, this collection should provide otherwise underappreciated or unknown insights to emerge.

The contribution of this book may not only be in its account of the range of legacies from the 1984 Olympics, but as a potential learning opportunity for future hosts and the Olympic Movement. The 1984 Olympics acted as a watershed moment for an Olympic Movement in crisis. Like in 1984, there is currently a dwindling appetite from cities to host the Olympics. Popular opposition to hosting the Olympics has increased as costs grow and doubts surface as to the net benefit for the local population from the Games. There may be no Cold War, but the world is facing a global challenge in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. We do not yet know the full impact COVID-19 will have on the future of the Olympic Games. With the economic challenges faced by governments around the world as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Paris 2024 may represent the first Games of a new era in the

Olympic Movement, as cities look to run a more austere Games and reduce costs.

Understanding how the 1984 Olympics were able to shift the Olympics in a positive direction may offer lessons to help meet the challenges facing the Olympics today.

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