

Games and the North American Indigenous Games opened up important new spaces for aboriginal sport as an apparatus for self-determination. In contrast is Linda Peavey and Ursula Smith's fascinating chronicle of how the girls from Fort Shaw Indian School in Montana became the basketball champions of the 1904 World Fair, showing the world just how nimble ten 'Aboriginal maidens' from Montana could be on the court.

Despite the excellence of this detailed scrutiny of the 1904 Anthropology Days, there is a lot of repetition across the 11 chapters of this book as each author strives to contextualize their particular take upon the events at St Louis. This can make it a bit heavy going for the reader who is constantly reintroduced to the racist brew that conjured up the Anthropology Days, and for this reason I recommend that the book be grazed intermittently rather than devoured whole. At the same time there is a wealth of fascinating material here. Taken together the contributions form a series of multi-faceted and erudite reflections upon a somewhat embarrassing episode in Olympic history that are well worth reading and that demand continuing reflection upon the divisive politics of race and human performance.

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Nicholas E. Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, the Olympic Boycott and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Pp. 356. £19.99 (pb). ISBN 978-0-5211-9477-8

A few years ago I spotted an advert for a professorship in politics. The contact person for the post was an old friend so I rang him and told him, with a mixture of pride and wholly misplaced optimism, that I had a book coming out about sport and the Cold War, which might make me a credible candidate. There was a pause and then he said: 'Well, they're certainly very into the Cold War in this department'. 'So', I ventured, 'I should apply then?' 'Forget it', he replied, 'they're not into *teaching* about it. They're still into *fighting* it.' This conversation resurfaced in my head as I read this, in many ways, very impressive book, and helped to crystallize what, for me, was the book's principal drawback – its breathless enthusiasm for the Cold War as an enterprise and, thus, for the (to my mind) many dismal stratagems discussed by White House preppies as possible ways of getting one over on 'the Soviets'. This seemed to me to

detract in several ways from an extremely readable and well-researched account of the Carter presidency's attempts to promote a boycott of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow.

Nick Sarantakes teaches policy and strategy at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. From this job description and the picture of Nick on his website – short hair, collar-and-tie, blue blazer, self-confident grin, posing in front of the Stars and Stripes – he could very easily have been one of the people he describes in his book, concocting anti-Soviet publicity wheezes and pitching strategy papers accordingly to Mr President. There's nothing, in principle, wrong with that but it is not necessary for diplomatic historians to share the beliefs and assumptions of the diplomats. There has been some excellent work on the politics of sport in recent times and its excellence has resided in its sociological grounding and its authors' ability to distinguish the wood from the trees. One thinks immediately here of John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson's skilful dissection of the machinations of FIFA, Tony Collins's histories of rugby football, Mike Marqusee's masterful biography of Muhammad Ali or Helen Lenskyj's critique of Olympic politics. All these books, touched to some degree by the flexible, Gramscian Marxism that was widely adopted in the 1980s, place social actors in some material and political landscape, balancing structure with action. One difficulty with Nick Sarantakes's approach is that is that he subscribes to the great (and not so great) men version of history so that the book is often no more than a chronicle of the doings of individuals. The reader is treated to two whole pages of biography on Lord Killanin, president of the IOC during the controversy, and fully seven pages on the life of US president Jimmy Carter. The book even closes with an epilogue that consists of information on what happened to the main protagonists after 1980. This includes much of the sort of trivia once retailed in huge quantities by the American political reporter Theodore H. White – details, for example, of whom Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security advisor, has lunch with these days (p. 270) and of Carter's post-presidential writings that included a book on fly fishing (p. 267). The problem for readers expecting a more analytical sport history is that they have to swim through an ocean of memos (with the president's scribbled responses), speeches, conversations, meetings and political impression management and to discern for themselves any important themes or issues. Material and structural factors make only a fleeting appearance – the threat to the Iranian oil fields posed by the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, for example, is mentioned in passing on page 114, but we're soon on to the next briefing paper.

The book's central concerns are with endless White House wrangling over how to contrive 'PR victories' over 'the Soviets' and the related matter of Carter's re-election campaign. For Sarantakes, the American attempts to browbeat foreign governments into a boycott were not wrong, but 'ineffective' (p. 36). From this flows a string of predictable judgements: Carter was a bungler simply on tactical grounds – for example for setting a date for Soviet withdrawal and thus losing face when they did not withdraw; his absent-minded successor Ronald Reagan, whose administration, not content with 'PR victories', illegally bypassed its own Congress to fund the savage Contras of Nicaragua, somehow nevertheless supplied 'visionary leadership' (p. 13); Carter aide Lloyd Cutler is said to have committed a 'blunder' when he let slip that the administration didn't actually expect the Soviet Union to leave Afghanistan shortly before the White House was to demand they do so within a month (p. 96); and Brzezinski was 'vindicated [in] his many hard line positions toward the Soviet Union' simply by the ending of the Cold War (presumably in The United States' favour).

To his credit Sarantakes brings out a good deal of the ignorance which American politicians brought to their dealings with the Olympic movement: their belief in the old myth of the Olympic truce, for instance, or their surprise at finding that national Olympic committees were often not the creatures of their own governments, which entailed their tripping over their own doctrine that politics should be kept out of sport. And there is much fascinating detail – the Shah of Iran, for example, once discussed the possibility of his country's staging the Olympics, but with the proviso that there could be no marathon, since the marathon was the symbol of a Persian defeat (p. 45). There is a good chapter on the consequence of a boycott for American corporations: NBC withdrew their cameras but Coca Cola were contractually committed to providing the official Olympic soft drink. And the author recognizes the boorishness and jingoism of American crowds at the following Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984.

But, for all that (and the writer's jaunty, Washington insider style) there is at times a po-faced quality to this book. Muhammad Ali, for example, is described on page 115 as 'a professional boxer and former Olympic gold medallist', which is broadly equivalent to characterising Elvis Presley as 'a popular vocalist who once appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show'. There are leap-off-the-page platitudes – as when Nick remarks that 'being inquisitive is a good professional trait for reporters' (p. 96) and that 'history is a never ending story. As such it can never really have any conclusion.' This read like a tautology to me, but at least it was a nice, implied rebuke to fellow Cold Warrior Francis Fukuyama, who proclaimed 'the end of history' in 1992.

There are also footnotes that could easily have been inserted by the Monty Python team: on page 202, for instance, there is a reference to a body called '*Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano*'. There is then a star and next to a corresponding star at the foot of the page readers are helpfully informed that this means 'Italian National Olympic Committee'. Similar assistance is available for those not confident of translating *Comite Olimpico de Chile* (p. 125) or *Association des Comites Nationaux Olympiques* (p. 127).

Do read this book, but read it in the spirit adopted by the athletes and national Olympic committees who went to Moscow in 1980 – refuse to be talked down to by the White House or its apologists.

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Steve Bailey, *Athlete First: a History of the Paralympic Movement* (Chichester: Wiley, 2008). Pp. 281. £50.00 (hb). ISBN 978-0-470-05824-4

In September 2011 the London Olympic Games organizers for 2012 reported 'unprecedented' ticket sales for the Paralympics events, as demand exceeded supply for some sports for the first time in the games' history. Low ticket prices and a desire to be part of the wider Olympic experience were cited in some quarters as the key reasons why the Paralympic sales had been so brisk. After all, Britain had been waiting some 64 years for another bite of the 'greatest sports show on earth'. Presumably, for many people any kind of Olympics contact in 2012 would do?

But it is also true that, after its global breakthrough at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992, the Paralympics are now much more widely recognized today for the high level of skill and sporting competition they invariably produce. They also make darn good global television, as media executives have begun to recognize. Disability sport is no longer about emotional exploitation and a crass celebration of the 'bravery' of these athletes for even making it onto the court, track or into the pool (though television is never shy of mining such stories). The current text occasionally strays into adjacent territory, where a 'wonderful celebration of competitive physical activity fuels dreams' (p. 2) or where sport is, inevitably, 'even more meaningful to persons with a disability' (p. 4). But mostly we are spared this sort of rhetoric in favour of 'the facts'. And they are that many of these folk want to win as ruthlessly as any elite professional athlete.