
*Overview:* The Caraccioli brothers state that politics and the Olympics were nothing new—Jimmy Carter was not the first person to use the Olympic Games as political leverage.\(^1\) 1980 was, however, the first and only time the United States has gone to such an extreme as to disallow United States Olympians from pursuing their dreams and competing in the Olympic Games. Although the main focus of this book is on the U.S. boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics, it also touches upon the relationship between politics and the Olympics in general. The Olympics is a global phenomenon. One could argue, however, (for the sake of American Studies) that the United States is the most important country partaking in the Olympic Games. The absence of the United States was certainly noticed by all the other countries competing in Moscow, because many of the best athletes in the world—the American athletes—were not present. At Connecticut College, in American Studies 465: The Globalization of American Culture Since 1945, we have learned about the spread of American ideology, especially during the Cold War. Although I feel deeply sorry for the athletes who were not allowed to compete, the absence of the United States at the 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow sent the world a message. The perennial political and athletic powerhouse—the United States of America—would not stand for Communism—especially the unwarranted invasion of non-communist nations by Communist countries.

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One cannot truly understand what it must have felt like to have the Olympic dream stripped because of a political feud. This book, however, offers great insight into what those athletes were feeling before and after the boycott was announced. Sandwiched between each chapter, the Caraccioli brothers documented interviews they conducted with the often forgotten Olympians. The short bios concern 18 different athletes, and are all shrouded with disappointment. Many of these athletes still—30 years later—dream about the Olympic glory which could have been theirs. While reading this book, your heart truly goes out to these athletes, because many athletic historical records do not regard them as Olympians because they did not actually compete at the Olympic Games. The athletes of the 1980 U.S. Summer Olympic team are remembered as Olympians*. The asterisk marks the fact that these athletes—even though many were the best in the world—did not compete in Moscow.

The stories of the different athletes make this book a great read and a compelling page turner. I had not heard of many of these athletes because I was not yet alive in 1980. After reading short stories about how hard they trained in preparation for the 1980 Games, one can only fathom how difficult it must have been to hear the President’s decision to forego the Olympics.

The chapters of this book—the information regarding the background of the boycott: Afghanistan, the Soviet Union, the Carter Doctrine, the lawsuit by many Olympians toward the USOC—while very important, were not very fluid and somewhat boring. The player bios at the end of each chapter were the main impetuses to continue reading.
How this work can be applied to American Studies: This work is pertinent to any study of athletics and the United States, as well as to discussions about Cold War policies in America and abroad.