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Politics on Ice: The United States, the Soviet Union, and a Hockey Game in Lake Placid

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Abstract: This paper explores the intersection of sport and politics by examining how and to what extent the 1980 US Men's Hockey Team's gold medal victory in Lake Placid was catapulted from the hockey arena to the political arena.

Keywords: hockey, United States, Soviet Union, Cold War, 1980 Winter Olympics, Carter administration

Résumé : Le présent article jette un regard à l'intersection du sport et de la politique et examine comment la médaille d'or méritée en 1980 par l'équipe de hockey masculine américaine à Lake Placid s'est soudainement retrouvée catapultée du milieu du hockey au milieu politique.

Mots clés : hockey, États-Unis, Union Soviétique, guerre froide, Jeux olympiques d'hiver 1980, administration Carter

Introduction

It is known as the "Miracle on Ice" and is widely regarded as the greatest sports moment of the twentieth century. During a snowy afternoon in Lake Placid, New York, on 22 February 1980, the US Men's Hockey Team, coached by the legendary Herb Brooks, defeated the heavily favoured Soviet Union 4–3, setting the stage for the US gold medal victory against Finland. Considered a long shot for a medal before the XIIIth Winter Games began, the US Hockey Team captured the imagination and harnessed the spirit of an entire nation. In a country whose national pastime is played on baseball diamonds and sandlots and whose sports heroes make their living in Yankee Stadium, Lambeau Field, and above the rim,

twenty college students drawn mainly from Minnesota and Boston introduced millions of Americans to the game of hockey.¹

The story of what took place on a “sheet of ice” in a small village nestled in the Adirondack Mountains will be told and retold for generations. It is a story about a coach with a vision, a team of patriotic kids from mostly working-class families who were prepared to make sacrifices for the unknown, and a nation that was desperately searching for someone or something to restore its faith and confidence. But it is also a story of how and why sporting events can easily be transformed from athletic contests to political confrontations where athletes, like brave and courageous soldiers, are expected to wage battle with their adversaries.² More importantly, it is a story about how a group of athletes were able to remain focused on their goal at a time of considerable political upheaval and nationalistic fervour.

In light of heightened Cold War tensions leading up to the XIIIth Winter Games, it is not surprising that what took place in the hockey arena between the Americans and Soviets was catapulted into the political arena. After all, during the Cold War, any major event that involved a matchup between the Soviets and Americans—whether it was a chess tournament or, in this case, a hockey game—was bound to be viewed as not only a confrontation between the world’s two superpowers, but as a competition between two very different political systems and sets of ideological beliefs. What is interesting is not that the showdown between the US Hockey Team and the Soviets, the gold medal winner in 1964, 1968, 1972, and 1976, became politicized. Rather, it is that despite the political importance the media and policy-makers assigned to this contest, Coach Brooks and his players did not allow themselves to be swept up in what was quickly becoming a political tidal wave. This is not to suggest that Brooks and some of his players avoided playing politics after the gold medal game. Indeed, following their success in Lake Placid, Brooks and several of his players shared their views publicly on President Carter’s decision to boycott the Summer Games in Moscow. Nevertheless, what becomes clear is that in the weeks and months leading up to their historic victory, they managed to keep politics out of the locker room.

For a group of patriotic American college students raised during the height of the Cold War, it would have been tempting to treat the Soviets as their mortal enemy. After all, in the eyes of the

media, policy-makers, and the public, the twenty Soviet players proudly displaying CCCP across their chests were more than competitors—they represented a country that had invaded Afghanistan, supplied nuclear weapons to Cuba, and tried to spread communism throughout Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. As President Reagan remarked in the early days of his administration, the Soviets constituted the “Evil Empire”³ and stood for everything the United States opposed. However, despite widespread fear and animosity in the United States toward the Soviet Union, the US Hockey Team paid little attention to the political dimensions of the US-Soviet rivalry. As Dave Silk, a forward on the 1980 US Hockey Team observed, “For us it was a hockey game. To the rest of the world, it was a political statement” (qtd. by Carroll). Herb Brooks agreed. When asked by reporters “if the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the threatened U.S. boycott of the Moscow Olympics were important to his players,” in preparing for the Soviet game, Brooks stated, “It was just a hockey game for the players. . . . [E]ven though we have different ways of life and different government, [t]here was no politics on behalf of the Russians and no politics by us.” (Kindred). The unwillingness of the US hockey players to be drawn into international politics stood in stark contrast to the animosity expressed by several Team Canada players toward their Russian opponents during the historic 1972 Summit, which, in the words of Team Canada’s Phil Esposito, was nothing short of a war.⁴ Still, by the time the pairings for the medal games were announced, the US players began to realize that they were no longer preparing for just another hockey game. As hundreds of telegrams began flowing in from all over the country encouraging the US Team to crush the Soviets, the US players understood that far more was at stake than a medal. Indeed, despite Coach Brooks’s efforts to keep his players out of Cold War politics, the US Hockey Team had been propelled into the national and international spotlight. In a matter of days, Jim Craig, Mike Eruzione, Mark Johnson, and their teammates became America’s best hope for reasserting the country’s strength and prowess.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the intersection of sport and politics by examining how and to what extent the media, policy-makers, and the public drew upon the success of the 1980 US Hockey Team for political purposes. While the spectacular victory over the Soviets—a victory that was cast as nothing short of David versus Goliath—lifted the spirits of a nation at a time of considerable unrest, it also afforded politicians, journalists, and the

American public an opportunity to claim supremacy in the political arena. In short, the US Hockey Team's exceptional performance in Lake Placid did far more than entice thousands of spectators jammed into a hockey rink to chant "USA! USA!" And it certainly did more than convince Americans to proudly display the Stars and Stripes on flagpoles and in parades honouring their conquering sports heroes. After years of frustration over worsening economic conditions at home and a growing sense of powerlessness on the world stage, the American victory gave the United States, not to mention the increasingly disillusioned and despondent Carter Administration, a reason to celebrate. As Mike Eruzione, captain of the US Hockey Team proclaimed, "Winning the gold medal didn't solve the Iranian crisis, it didn't pull the Soviets out of Afghanistan. But people felt better. People were proud. People felt good about being Americans because they could relate to who we were. We were working-class, lunch-pail, hard-hat kids who represented them in an athletic event that was far greater than hockey" (qtd. in HBO Documentary).

In the first section of this paper, I turn my attention to how Herb Brooks, the visionary and winning coach of the University of Minnesota Gophers, was able to take twenty college kids and transform them into a hockey team that could combine tremendous speed and agility, stick-handling finesse and precision passing exhibited by the best European teams with the physical toughness and close checking of North American hockey. He encouraged his team to do this not by demonizing the Soviet Union, but by teaching his players how to beat the world's best at their own game. Having observed the development and evolution of Soviet hockey for years, Brooks understood what he needed to compete at Lake Placid and implemented a strategy that would give his team a chance to win. As will be discussed, he was not interested in being a spokesman for the Carter administration, although the embattled president would undoubtedly have welcomed his support, or for conservatives looking to lambaste the Soviet Union at every turn. He saw himself as a coach who could work with players willing and able to adapt quickly to a new style of hockey. Brooks had had a carefully constructed and painstakingly detailed game plan in his mind for years. He was simply waiting for an opportunity to implement it.

A brief overview of the events leading to the US-Soviet game will then be provided. Among other things, it will become apparent that as the US Hockey Team began to rack up an impressive list

of wins in Lake Placid, the American public, with the encouragement of the media, began to rally around their new-found heroes. Indeed, by the time the US-Soviet matchup was announced, millions of recently converted hockey fans began to learn more about the players, the towns in which they grew up, and the struggles they had to overcome to make it to the Olympics. Even if Al Michaels of ABC was correct in speculating that millions of Americans watching the US-Soviet game probably “don’t know the difference between a blue line and a clothes line,”⁵ the public became captivated by this quintessential American story of a bunch of college kids squaring off against the greatest hockey team in the world. It didn’t matter if those watching the so-called Miracle on Ice unfold had little, if any, knowledge about hockey. What mattered was that those tuning in to this historic event could take part in an All-American narrative about a team of young hockey players who went from rags to riches. It was the perception of millions of spectators that this phenomenal story could happen only in America, the world’s greatest democracy—where if you work hard enough, you can accomplish anything—that helped fuel the politicization of the US-Soviet showdown.

In the third section of the paper, an analysis of how the US victory over the Soviets and later the Fins became politicized will be provided. As will be discussed, the response of the United States to the success of its hockey team not only gave rise to nationalistic pride. It laid the foundation for some of the most blatant forms of political opportunism. As American voters were preparing to decide President Carter’s fate in the November 1980 election, the president and some of his challengers tried to align themselves with the US Gold Medal Team. On several occasions, President Carter and other leading political figures drew upon the success of the US Hockey Team to mobilize support for their campaigns. As Lou Cannon and David Broder, two veteran reporters for the *Washington Post* observed, “[A]s he has done so often in the past, Carter immediately attached himself to a powerful positive national symbol, the U.S. hockey team that won an Olympic gold medal.” In fact, some of the players, including Mike Eruzione and Jim Craig, were asked to join presidential candidates on the campaign trail in an effort to woo voters. Significantly, they declined to participate. But it is important to recognize the efforts some politicians were prepared to go to, to cash in on the team’s success. Interestingly enough, once the presidential election had been decided, the political dividends of establishing and solidifying ties to the US Hockey Team greatly diminished, and political interest in the team all but

disappeared. In fact, despite President Carter's pronouncement at a White House ceremony on 25 February 1980 that the US Hockey Team's gold medal victory was one of "the proudest moments" of his presidency (Cannon and Broder), he barely reflected on what the team accomplished when he penned his memoirs two years after leaving office. Carter's "modern-day heroes" (Cannon and Broder) had all but vanished from his memory. By contrast, in the sporting world, the team continued to be honoured with an impressive array of awards.

Finally, I will discuss briefly why the US victory in Lake Placid needs to be put in proper perspective. The US-Soviet game may have provided a perfect platform for politicians and other opinion-makers to make claims about the superiority of their country, its political institutions, and its strength of its character, but along the way they overlooked what the hockey team accomplished. Unfortunately, as will be discovered, the fact that the United States, a country not known for its love of hockey, produced highly skilled players who could compete successfully with the best Eastern European teams was of secondary importance. What mattered was that the United States beat the Soviet Union and later Finland, although in keeping with the central argument of the paper that policy-makers, the media, and the American public were more interested in politics than in hockey, far more attention was devoted to the matchup with the Soviets than to the gold medal game with the Fins.

In an ideal world, spectators would simply relish what athletes are able to accomplish in the sporting arena. But as events in US sports history have demonstrated, including the 1980 US Men's Hockey Team victory, sport is as much about politics as it is about athletic prowess. As a result, it is critically important to understand why sporting events become politicized and what efforts coaches and players must go to, to ensure that they do not lose sight of their purpose. Nations should continue to celebrate the success of their athletes. It is when political leaders seek to transform victories on the playing field into rhetorical victories in the political arena that we need to take notice.

From St. Paul to Lake Placid: The Hockey Genius of Herb Brooks

"He's just a guy from the east side of St. Paul," remarked Dan Brooks (qtd. by Raguse), who joined several former players and

coaches to pay tribute to his late father during the first intermission of a Minnesota Gophers hockey game on 27 October 2003. Brooks was killed in a single-car accident less than three months earlier on his way home from a golf fundraiser and dinner for the US Hockey Hall of Fame. Given his stature in US and international hockey circles, it is not surprising that news of his death “generated shock and grief among friends and colleagues all over the country” (qtd. by Blount). The 10,159 fans who had come to watch the Gophers take on Minnesota-Duluth listened intently as Dan Brooks commented on his father’s legacy. “All he wanted to do is play hockey like the great John Mayasich, coach like John Mariucci and spend time with his grandkids. You can safely say his dreams were realized” (Raguse).

Herbert Paul Brooks was born on 5 August 1937 in St. Paul, Minnesota.⁶ The son of a salesman and part-time hockey coach, Brooks grew up in a modest duplex on St. Paul’s East Side, a working-class neighbourhood that had been settled by Italians, Swedes, and Poles. In a lengthy tribute to Brooks, a man whose name would become synonymous with American hockey, Rachel Blount noted, “[W]hat Brooks lacked in material wealth, he more than made up for in hard work and ambition.” His strong work ethic and driving ambition had a profound influence on his development as a hockey player and a coach. As a tough and gritty young hockey player at Johnson High School and later at the University of Minnesota (1957–9)—the “U”—Brooks made his presence felt. But playing before his hometown fans was not enough for Brooks, who had his sights set on achieving even greater goals. When tryouts opened for the 1960 US Olympic Team, he decided, against his father’s advice, to leave the U in the hope of representing his country. Although Brooks played well in the months leading up to the Squaw Valley Olympics, he sensed that his position on the squad was far from certain. His worst fear was realized when, a day before his team was to leave for the Olympics, a tournament in which they would secure America’s first hockey gold medal,⁷ he was cut from the team, leaving a scar that never fully healed. Yet, despite this setback, he did not give up his dream of wearing his country’s colours. On the contrary, Brooks became even more committed to playing for the United States, which he did in 1961 and 1962 as a member of the US National Team. Two years later, he made the 1964 US Olympic team, an achievement he was able to repeat in 1968.



Figure 1: Herb Brooks during his coaching days at the University of Minnesota.

Photo permission: USA Hockey.

By 1970, Brooks knew that his playing days were over, but his career in hockey was only beginning to take shape. After years of observing the evolution of North American and Eastern European hockey, Brooks turned his attention to coaching. In 1972, he took on the monumental task of coaching the University of Minnesota Gophers, a team that had posted an 8–24 record the year before. In his first year behind the bench, the Gophers won almost twice as many games and completed the 1972–3 season with a 15–16

record. During the second season under his demanding and watchful eye, the team went 22–11 and in 1974 won their first of three NCAA championships. With Brooks at the helm, two other championships followed in 1976 and in 1979.⁸

Most college coaches could only dream about achieving what Brooks did in his seven years at Minnesota. He had posted one of the most impressive winning records in Division One Hockey and had, in a short time, established a reputation as one of America's premier college hockey coaches. But even before the 1979 season culminated in a third national championship, Brooks became pre-occupied with what he could bring to the US Olympic Hockey program. As Brooks acknowledged years after the 1980 Olympic Games, he took on the coaching position at Minnesota in the hope that success in the college ranks would increase his chance of coaching the US Hockey Team.⁹ When Jack Parker, head coach of the Boston University Terriers, and Bill Cleary, former head coach of the Harvard Crimson, turned down USA Hockey's offer to coach the 1980 US Men's Hockey Team, they invited Herb Brooks to interview for the position.¹⁰ Although Brooks's plan for introducing a new style of hockey—a hybrid of Eastern European and North American hockey—was not warmly embraced by USA Hockey, in the end he was selected as head coach. The message Brooks conveyed was simple. For the United States to compete internationally, players could no longer rely on the North American game of dump and chase—dumping the puck into the opposition's end of the rink and chasing after it. To compete on considerably larger ice surfaces like those used in the Olympics, players had to focus on puck possession, passing, weaving in and out of lanes, and all at tremendous speeds. As Brooks pointed out, unless the US Team could make the transition to this unique style of play, their efforts at Lake Placid would prove futile.

For Brooks, selecting players who would represent the United States would not be his greatest challenge. As Jim Craig, the starting goalie for the 1980 US Team stated recently, even before Brooks was asked to coach the US Olympians, he had worked out a roster. "He [Brooks] knew all his team. He recruited many of the players ... and had constant contact with them; it was nothing but a formality."¹¹ The formality Craig referred to was the National Sports Festival that Brooks helped organize in Colorado Springs the summer before the Winter Olympics. The purpose of the festival was ostensibly to invite the best amateur hockey players in

the United States to compete against each other in a round robin tournament so that coaches and members of the Hockey USA advisory body could assemble a team. However, as Craig maintains, with few exceptions, Brooks knew whom he wanted on his team. Not surprisingly, the majority of players Brooks selected were from Minnesota. Many of them, including Rob McClanahan, Neal Broten, Phil Verchota, Eric Strobel, Buzz Schneider, Steve Janaszak, Bill Baker, Mike Ramsey, and Steve Christoff had played for Brooks at the "U," while a handful (Mark Pavelich and John Harrington) were standouts at Minnesota-Duluth. The remaining players on the roster came from Boston University (Jim Craig, Mike Eruzione, Jack O'Callahan, and Dave Silk), the University of Wisconsin (Mark Johnson and Bob Suter), Bowling Green (Ken Morrow and Mark Wells), and the University of North Dakota (Dave Christian).

Over the next six months, Brooks and his coaching staff worked tirelessly to teach his players a new style of hockey. The emphasis was on skating, passing, and puck possession. For the first time in their hockey careers, forwards were not required to stay on their wings, moving up and down the ice like plastic figures attached to medal rods in an arcade hockey game. They were taught to weave in and out of lanes, creating a fluid and seamless web on the ice. Players had to be fast, they had to think, and most importantly, they had to buy into Brooks's strategy. The tactics and mental games Brooks employed both on and off the ice, the demanding practices, and his relentless pursuit of perfection clearly paid off. In the team's sixty-one game pre-Olympic schedule, they compiled an impressive 42-16-3 record. Although few hockey aficionados would remember most of the games the US team played, the one difficult to forget was their 10-3 defeat at the hands of the Soviets less than a week before the start of the Winter Games. For many, this confirmed what hockey analysts had predicted all along—that the US team could not be expected to put in a strong performance at Lake Placid. Before the Games began, the United States was seeded seventh, well out of medal contention. Even Brooks acknowledged that the best the United States could hope for was a bronze medal or possibly a silver if some of the top teams fell apart. But the gold medal belonged to the Soviets, Brooks proclaimed. "That was a lock."¹²

However, as will be discussed in the following section, the US defeat at Madison Square Garden was the last game the Americans would lose in its quest for the gold medal. Indeed, rather than

being disillusioned with their poor performance against the Soviets, a team that had trounced a team of NHL All Stars months earlier, Brooks felt that it was the type of reality check his players needed to get ready for Lake Placid. His players might have been in awe of Mikhailov, Kharlamov, and Tretiak at Madison Square Garden, but that soon would change. As Brooks repeatedly told his players, the Soviets were not hockey gods, they were human, just like them. To make his point, Brooks even joked about the appearance of some of the Soviet players and coaches, comparing Mikhailov to Stan Laurel and Soviet coach Tikhonov to a chicken. As Jack O'Callahan recently remarked, when Brooks made these comparisons, "he was only goofing around."¹³

He was just trying to help us relax. He sensed from our first game against them that perhaps we had a little too much respect for them to the point where it had affected our mental preparation. Most of us, and for that matter, the entire world hockey community, viewed the Russia team as the greatest ever and the Russian players as the greatest players on the planet. Herb tried to break down the myth that nobody could beat them. He tried to humanize them.¹⁴

What Brooks did not have to do to motivate his players, according to O'Callahan, was cast the Soviet Union as America's bitter foe.

[Brooks] may have said something about our way of life, their way of life, etc., but Herb was pretty transparent with that stuff and it did not really serve to get us any more patriotic than we already were ... We were all children of parents born in the 20s and 30s who grew up in patriotic times. Many had fought in either WWII or the Korean War. Also, most of us had lived through the 60s and early 70s and seen the turmoil of the Vietnam era, so we were a patriotic bunch of kids who loved our country and who were proud of the role played by the U.S. in world politics. Herb didn't have to wave the flag at us. We knew and respected what we were doing in Lake Placid and we highly respected the honor of wearing the USA across our chests.¹⁵

John "Bah" Harrington, one of O'Callahan's teammates, who, until recently, was head hockey coach at Minnesota's Saint John's University, agrees: "I can't really remember Herb ever making any reference to the Cold War, or what the Russians stood for in any of his addresses to the team. I saw the Russians as World Champions who defeated the NHL All Stars, 4 time defending Olympic Cham-

pions, and a team that beat us 10–3 a few weeks back ... I saw them as the competition.”¹⁶ Harrington’s teammate from Minnesota, Phil Verchota, concurs: ‘I don’t think that any political tensions found their way into the locker room. Actually, I think the US players had the feeling of being second-class citizens when it came to hockey. We needed to prove ourselves in the arena. So, for me, we were playing for pride at a game we loved. I don’t recall being politically motivated at all.’¹⁷ However, well before the US team could even contemplate a rematch with the Russians, they had to make their way through the opening round of the Olympic Games. After their gruelling pre-Olympic schedule, it was time to put Brooks’s game plan into effect.

Let the Games Begin

The Olympic torch had not even been lit when the puck was dropped at the Olympic Field House on 12 February 1980, to begin the first game between the United States and Sweden, an event that drew little media interest and even less fanfare. Over half the seats in the arena remained empty as the young US team began its quest for gold. After a lacklustre first period that saw the Swedes pull ahead by a goal, Brooks felt compelled to remind his players that they were no longer playing exhibition games against teams in the American Hockey League (AHL) or in the NCAA. Brooks made this point painfully clear when he ripped into Rob McClanahan, who had gone to the locker room early with the team doctor to attend to a severely bruised leg. In an effort to light a fire under his team, Brooks used McClanahan as his whipping boy, calling him a “gutless SOB” and a “candyass” for too easily accepting the team doctor’s advice to sit out the rest of the game.¹⁸ When McClanahan charged after Brooks, Brooks knew he had pushed the right button. In Brooks’s mind, he and his players had come too far and worked too hard to allow their Olympic dreams to be shattered in the first game of the tournament. The United States had been assigned to the Blue Division along with Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Norway, and West Germany. Going into the Olympics, Brooks knew that his team would have to at least tie Sweden, a team the United States had not beaten since 1960, to have a fighting chance of making it to the medal round.

At 19:32 of the second period, Team USA finally struck back when Dave Silk beat Swedish goaltender Pelle Lindbergh, a second-round draft pick of the Philadelphia Flyers, with a ten-foot wrist

shot. The United States went into the third period with a 1–1 tie, only to watch the Swedes take the lead again on a goal by Thomas Eriksson at 4:55. For the next fourteen minutes, Brooks paced the bench calling out instructions as his players tried desperately to even the score. Finally, with thirty-seven seconds remaining, defenceman Bill Baker, a standout at the “U,” took a pass from Mark Pavelich and from the right point launched a low slapshot that found its way through Lindbergh’s pads. The US bench exploded as Baker raised his stick in the air. Final score, Sweden 2, United States 2.

With Sweden behind them, the United States could now focus its sights on Czechoslovakia, a team that had won the world championship in 1972 and in 1976, a team that was seeded second behind the Soviet Union and a team that had just demolished Norway 11–0. Although few would have predicted that the United States could even skate with the Czechs, they stunned the hockey world by defeating them 7–3. Outshot by the Czechs 31–27, Jim Craig’s stellar performance in goal gave his team the confidence they needed to unveil their offensive power. It was more than a fluke. The United States had crushed the Czechs on home ice and, in the process of defeating a team whose country was firmly under the political control of the Soviet Union, had ignited a flame under the nation. As John Powers and Arthur Kaminsky observed in their detailed account of the US gold medal performance, “In two hours they’d [the US team] become instant celebrities, their backgrounds, idiosyncrasies and breakfast preferences matters of national concern.”¹⁹

Anticipating that his team could become the main attraction in a media circus, Brooks refused to allow his players to take part in post-game press conferences, electing instead to handle the media himself. Although some journalists questioned Brooks’s motivation for keeping the spotlight on himself and not on his players, his star goalie recognized the importance of what Brooks was trying to do. According to Jim Craig, “[W]e weren’t trained to handle media questions and more importantly, Herb didn’t want any of the players to become bigger than the team. He didn’t want Mark Johnson or Jim Craig, or anybody else to be the focal point. He didn’t want it [the media] to become a distraction, or for us to say something that could add fuel to the fire. He protected us from that.”²⁰ Captain Mike Eruzione added, “[W]e were in a cocoon. We weren’t allowed to talk to the media, so we weren’t doing inter-

views. People weren't asking us questions. We just went to the rink and played hockey and went back to the [Olympic] village."²¹

Despite his efforts to keep his team insulated from the press, Brooks could not prevent the media frenzy surrounding future games. By the time his players squared off against Norway on 16 February, media and fan interest in the US team was in full swing. The win against the Norwegians (5–1) was followed by victories over Romania (7–2) and West Germany (4–2). Having made their way through the initial round undefeated, the United States entered the medal round. Its first opponent—the Soviet Union—on 22 February.

The Red Scare: Not Quite

Much had changed since that fateful night at Madison Square Garden when the Soviets reminded the Americans why they were considered the greatest hockey team in the world. Having finished the preliminary round with four wins and a tie, the Americans had found their confidence. As Jack O'Callahan observed, "[W]e were more relaxed, and more focused."²² And apparently, they were no longer in awe of the big Red Machine. In the practices leading up to the US-Soviet game, Brooks repeatedly told his players that he had noticed something about how the Soviets were playing that, in his mind, made them more vulnerable. "Herb kept telling us in practice that they're ripe to be beaten. If anybody can beat 'em, you can," Mike Eruzione stated. "Watch how they practice ... They don't practice as crisply as they usually do. Watch the goals they score. They're taking everybody for granted here. It's not the same team. You can beat them."²³

Brooks reminded his team that Canada had lost to Russia 6–4 but could easily have pulled off a win. According to Powers and Kaminsky, Brooks said, "They're not into it. For some reason, the Russians are off their game. They're ready to slit their own throats. All we have to do is give them the knife." Brooks added, "What do they have left? Half a dozen of the Russians were playing in their third Olympic Games and already had two gold medals gathering dust in Moscow apartments. How many times can they win it? How many times do they *want* to win it?" (201). In short, Brooks's message to his team was clear. After their long road to the Olympics, they were in a position to upset the Russians, a far cry from the prediction that he and countless sports journalists made about his team's chances before the Games.

A day before Team USA would take to the ice for this historic matchup, the players tried to focus on Brooks's message. They also reminded themselves of what their coach had said repeatedly—that they were in Lake Placid to play hockey, not politics. As Brooks stated, his team did not practise for six months to prove to the world the superiority of the American way of life. He said, "If we think we have to win a hockey game or win a medal to prove that our system is the right system, or the way we live is the right way to live, then we are in big trouble. It isn't that at all. We cannot skate with the White House on our shoulders" (qtd. by Verdi). Even before they arrived in Lake Placid, Brooks conveyed a similar message. "We're going to the Winter Olympics. Not to the United Nations Building" (qtd. by Verdi). But ironically neither Brooks nor his players had much control over how this contest would be viewed.

The national mood was malaise; the citizenry was gloomy, frustrated, angry, helpless. Suddenly, twenty unknown kids, playing a game maybe 20% of the populace knew much about, were finding themselves billed as America's Team . . . They were one day away from facing the Russians now, and found themselves carrying the load for the President, the Pentagon, the hostages, General Motors, Dow Jones, the *Saturday Evening Post* and the For Freedoms. When you think about it, Jim Craig mused, we're a bunch of kids playing against a whole country. (Powers and Kaminsky 203)

The US Hockey Team demonstrated over the course of two weeks that they could compete with the best in the world. Yet, at some point in the tournament, their success on the ice had less to do with scoring goals than scoring political points. By the time the US-Soviet contest was announced, the players began to understand that they were not simply preparing for another hockey game. Like it or not, they were carrying the weight of the country on their shoulder pads. As Dave Silk remarked, "Heading into the game against the Russians, the only thing that gave us a feel for what was going on outside were all the telegrams Herb had put up on the wall outside the locker room . . . One telegram read, 'Kill those Commie bastards.' At that point, we began to understand what this game meant to people" (Carroll). In the context of increased Cold War tensions that resulted in, among other things, President Carter's decision to boycott the Moscow Summer Games, this game was viewed by millions of Americans as a superpower confrontation that pitted good against evil, freedom against totalitarianism, and right against wrong.

As the Americans prepared to take to the ice, Brooks offered some final words of wisdom. In the months leading up to Lake Placid, his interesting and at times off-the-wall sayings, jokingly referred to as “Brooksisms,” were dutifully recorded in a notebook by John Harrington. But what Brooks was about to say did not qualify as a Brooksism—it wasn’t off the wall. It came from the heart. He said, “You were born to be a player. You were meant to be here. This moment is yours. You were meant to be here at this time” (Powers and Kaminsky 203). Brooks had said all he could. It was now up to his team to prove to themselves and to the country whose colours they wore with pride, what they were capable of.

In the late afternoon on 22 February 1980, the Americans walked briskly from their locker room and stepped onto the ice. But unlike at their first game in the Olympic Field House against Sweden, there were no empty seats. Over 8,500 people had jammed into the arena to cheer on their new-found heroes. As the players tried to loosen up before the game, they could feel the excitement and electricity in the air. Even before the puck was dropped, thousands of fans began chanting, “USA! USA!” The United States was about to face the Soviet Union, a team that had sailed through the preliminary round outscoring their opponents 51–11. At stake was more than national pride, although you wouldn’t know it by the reaction of the fans that night. What was at stake was a chance to play for the gold medal, which the United States had not done since 1960. Now they were three periods away from making history.

Providing colour commentary for ABC was Al Michaels and Ken Dryden, the Hall of Fame goaltender of the Montreal Canadiens. Michaels was well aware of how the game was being viewed—as a political confrontation between East and West, a battle between David and Goliath—but tried to remind viewers that what was about to take place was “manifestly a hockey game being played on a sheet of ice in Lake Placid.”²⁴ As a result of scheduling conflicts, the game was tape-delayed for viewers in the United States, but this had no effect on the hundreds of people unable to secure a ticket to the event who had gathered outside the Field House to receive up-to-the-minute news about the game.

The United States team were dressed in white, the Soviets in red, and after the referee blew his whistle, the puck was dropped. In net for the Americans was Jim Craig, the Boston University All-American whose performance between the pipes was nothing short

of exceptional. Over the course of the Winter Games, Americans got a chance to learn more about the goalie who had fulfilled his late mother's dream by playing in the Olympics. His father, Donald Craig, became a fixture in the stands, cheering on his son who would soon embark on a brief professional career with the Atlanta Flames. At the other end of the ice was Vladislav Tretiak, widely regarded as the greatest goalie in the world.

Unlike at their first meeting at Madison Square Garden, the red light behind Craig's net did not flash until midway through the first period when Vladimir Krutov found a hole in his defence. But less than five minutes later, Buzz Schneider broke in on Tretiak and with a hard slapshot beat the goaltender. The Field House erupted as Schneider was mobbed by his teammates. When play resumed at 14:03, the scoreboard clock read 1–1, but it would not take long to break the tie. Sergei Makharov scored at 17:34 and once again the Soviets took the lead. Although their team trailed the Soviets, most American fans were relieved that the United States would head to the locker room only one goal behind. However, with three seconds remaining on the clock, Mark Johnson, the University of Wisconsin sensation nicknamed "Magic" (for basketball legend Magic Johnson) because of his superb skills on the ice, split the Soviet defence and with one second remaining picked up a Tretiak rebound and shot it past the startled goalie. Once again, the crowd broke into celebration as Johnson evened the score. After one period of play, United States 2, Soviet Union 2.

The second period would result in only one goal—Maltsev from Krutov at 2:18. For the remainder of the period, both teams would have their chances, but neither would be able to capitalize. With one period of play remaining, the Soviets led 3–2. The United States had found themselves in a similar position several times during the tournament when they were forced to come from behind to win. Brooks reminded them that this time was no different. They had twenty minutes to prove to themselves and to the world that it was indeed their moment.

At 8:39 of the third period, Mark Johnson proved again that he could perform magic by taking a pass from Dave Silk and beating Vladimir Myshkin, who had replaced Tretiak in goal at the beginning of the second period. Johnson was swarmed by his teammates, the fans were ecstatic, and, with less than twelve minutes remaining, the United States and Soviets were tied. With ten minutes left,

Mike Eruzione, the captain of the US squad who, in many ways, exemplified the rags-to-riches story of the American team, moved into the slot and blew a twenty-foot wrist-shot past Myshkin. The red light went on and Eruzione ran on his skates along the boards only to be joined by the rest of his team, who had cleared the bench to take part in the celebrations. With the Field House roof about to come off, the Americans had taken the lead for the first time in the game and now had to fend off the Soviets during the second half of the period. The Soviets were relentless. Shot after shot they looked for a way to beat Craig, but to no avail. The star goaltender who learned to play hockey on a frozen pond in North Easton, Massachusetts, a small town outside Boston, was spectacular. The minutes that must have seemed to the players and fans like hours finally ticked away and, with three seconds remaining on the clock, Al Michaels, anxiously anticipating a US victory, excitedly asked his famous question, “Do you believe in miracles?” The answer seemed obvious. Or was it?

The buzzer sounded. It was pandemonium. Powers and Kaminsky describe the reaction on the ice and in the stands.

In the American end of the rink, as the spectators halloed, snapped pictures, slapped hands and waved flags, the players melted into a white-jersey pudding. Five players buried Craig. Strobel embraced Bah Harrington who still had his stick in the air. Mike Ramsay lay on his back, roaring with laughter and irony. And O’Callahan, arms up, open mouth showing all those missing Charlestown upper teeth, was on his knees, exulting over him. (Powers and Kaminsky 216)

Al Michaels had run out of words. The US Hockey Team had accomplished what few thought they could. An emotional Jim McKay of ABC compared the US win to a Canadian university football team defeating the Pittsburgh Steelers. Other comparisons would follow. The United States had been outshot 39–16, but they had not been outplayed. They had brought the great Russian bear to its knees. A miracle? Not according to Brooks, Eruzione, Craig, and their teammates who, in the months and years following this historic event, attributed their team’s success to hard work, perseverance, incredible conditioning, a brilliant strategy, a wealth of talent, and an opponent who might have been overconfident.²⁵ However, what mattered to the players was not whether divine intervention was responsible for the victory—a question that will



Figure 2: Team celebration after defeating the Soviets 4–3 on 22 February 1980.

Photo permission: USA Hockey.

undoubtedly be debated for years. It was that the United States had defeated what many believed was the greatest hockey team ever to take the ice. For many fans, this was a gold medal performance. They didn't have to wait until the United States played Finland for the gold two days later. After all, how could the United States possibly accomplish anything greater than defeating the Soviets?

As the celebrations continued in the Field House, news of the US victory spread like wildfire through the village of Lake Placid. Cars honked their horns, people took to the streets, US flags and banners were seen everywhere, and, within hours, T-shirts depicting the US win were for sale. Ironically, the results of the game had not been conveyed to viewers across the United States who, as noted, would be watching the event later that night. Amid the chaos, Herb Brooks found a quiet spot to take a phone call from President Carter congratulating him and his team on their win. Perhaps the president did not realize that the US players had to win one more game before they could be assured a medal. Or perhaps defeating the Soviets at something so important to their national identity was sufficient justification for the White House to call.

The reaction of the Soviet players was mixed. While some appeared dumfounded by what had happened, others smiled as the US players celebrated their success. Perhaps, as some of the US players

observed, after being the world's best for so many years, the Soviet players had forgotten what it felt like to win. What they did not forget, however, was the importance of good sportsmanship. In the days and months following their defeat, a defeat that sent shockwaves through the streets of Moscow, the Soviet players and coaches did not try to undermine what the United States had achieved. On the contrary, they praised the US team for their conditioning, clean play, and superb goal tending.

While the Soviets tried to put this game behind them, in the United States, the US victory would be front page news for days. Even before the United States defeated Finland 4–2 for the gold medal, it became clear that, for many Americans, beating the Soviet Union was the top story. After years of domestic and foreign policy turmoil that, in President Carter's words, had resulted in "a crisis in confidence" (qtd. in HBO Documentary) Americans were looking for a reason to feel good about their country again. And what better way to raise the spirits of a nation than to defeat its Cold War adversary at a game that had become such a critical part of its national identity. The United States might have been unable to prevent the Soviet Union from meddling in international affairs, but it had stopped it from claiming hockey supremacy on American soil. The importance of how the US victory in the hockey arena played out in the political arena cannot be ignored. Indeed, as Jack O'Callahan observed years after the 4–3 win, the US victory might have helped the country regain the confidence it needed to move in a more positive direction:

We were not in Lake Placid to be national heroes, to promote capitalism vs. communism, or to be a bunch of Captain Americas. We were there to play hockey and do the best we could. I wasn't surprised that the country went nuts about our victory. It was a very exciting victory against very strong opponents . . . As well, we were underdogs, the Soviets, our Cold War rivals, were the favorites so it made for drama. Looking back, I do believe that our victory was a catalyst for a reawakening of the national spirit that was at a low ebb due to economic, political and social issues. We were the catalyst, but the country was ripe for an awakening. It was all set up and we stepped into the void. We supplied that first big emotional tipping point that got everything else going.²⁶

While the US win over the Soviets might indeed have re-energized the American spirit, to what extent was this important victory responsible for ushering in a new phase in American politics? Did

the US win reawaken nationalism in the United States that had lain dormant for years, as O'Callahan and his teammates suggest, or was it simply seized upon by political leaders, the media, and the public to advance a wide range of political goals? Perhaps it achieved both. Before I examine the implications of politicizing sporting events, the subject of the final section of the paper, I will explore briefly how the US victory in the hockey arena was catapulted to the political arena.

Cold Warriors? From the Hockey Arena to the Political Arena

Like his players who had been educated at some of America's best universities, Brooks was keenly aware of what was taking place in the international community, but as noted, made a concerted effort to keep the White House at bay. He was there to coach, not to become immersed in Cold War politics and global diplomacy, although he realized that "politics and athletics are inseparable and anyone who thinks otherwise is kidding himself" (qtd. in Green). Even if he was willing to assume the role of ambassador, there was nothing he or his team could do to free the hostages in Iran, force the Soviets from Afghanistan, or resolve the energy crisis. Brooks certainly wasn't in Lake Placid to run for political office. He was there to keep his team focused on what mattered most—playing hockey.

However, no sooner had his team returned to the locker room following their gold medal win over Finland, did Brooks intentionally or unintentionally become involved in the politics surrounding the US victory. Shortly after President Carter placed his second call in two days to congratulate Brooks and his players, Brooks stated, "I didn't know if we were going to do it. It was a great win for everybody in sport and the American people in general. From the things we had to overcome, to the different beliefs, ways of life. It just proves our life is the proper way to continue." Carter then told Brooks, "We were working on Iran and economics, but nobody could do business because we were watching TV." "Well the other two are more important," Brooks said. "But we are all looking forward to seeing you tomorrow" (Powers and Kaminsky 228).

It is not entirely clear why Brooks told Carter that "it just proves our way of life is the proper way to continue." As noted, only a few weeks before the Soviet game, Brooks claimed, "[I]f we have to win a medal to prove our way of life is superior, we are in big

trouble." And as previously mentioned, he made similar comments following that historic game by claiming that politics did not make its way onto the ice. Nonetheless, Brooks's remarks have been interpreted by some as evidence that now that the gold medal was in hand, he was more than willing to buy into the Cold War anti-Soviet rhetoric of the day.²⁷ Still, to suggest that Brooks believed that the US Hockey Team won because the American way of life—democracy as opposed to communism—is superior makes little sense. As Dan Brooks revealed in a Fox Sports Net tribute to his father, *America's Coach*, Brooks so admired certain aspects of Soviet hockey that he often travelled to the Soviet Union to observe how their elite teams were coached. Along the way, Brooks established close ties to leading figures in the Russian hockey federation and was given access to hours of footage showing how Soviet players practised, footage he would later share with his players. If Brooks truly believed that better hockey players could be cultivated in a democracy, why would he devote so much time and effort trying to teach twenty US college kids key aspects of the Soviet game? It seems more likely that in the excitement of the moment, Brooks was simply placating President Carter by acknowledging the virtues of living in the United States. Or perhaps he was simply trying to be polite.

If anyone could be accused of engaging in anti-Soviet rhetoric, it would be Jim Craig who, prior to the 22 February game with the Soviets said, "I hate them. I don't hate their hockey players specifically, but I hate what they stand for" (McDonald 229). However, even Craig acknowledges that his statement can easily be taken out of context. As he stated in a recent interview, his views about the Soviet Union had been shaped by several events, not the least of which was learning more about how his team's physician, Dr. Nagobads and his wife, with whom Craig lived for several months, had escaped Latvia in search of a better life in the United States. "The American dream became very, very special to me early on and I had a living example of somebody [Dr. Nagobads] who believed in it so much that he and his family were prepared to risk their lives just to be part of it,"²⁸ Craig said. "I was smart enough to understand that the athletes were doing the best that they possibly could to survive in a place they possibly didn't believe in. And I learned later from a good friend, Vladimir Lutchenko, that winning a game was life and death for how the players and their families were treated."²⁹ It was for these and other reasons that Craig expressed animosity toward the Soviet Union. Interestingly enough,

Craig's impression about life for hockey players in the Soviet Union closely resembled those formed by Brooks, who stated in an interview before the US win over the Soviets, "If I lose, I go back to [St. Paul's] Payne Avenue. If Tikhonov loses, he goes to Siberia."³⁰

After the US team received their medals, they packed their belongings and headed to Washington DC the next day for a lunch at the White House hosted by their biggest fan, President Carter. As the team bus made its way to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the players were amazed to see hundreds of people lining the streets welcoming them and other US Olympic athletes to the nation's capital. Very shortly, Brooks and his team would begin to appreciate the impact their victory was having on the United States.

During the welcoming ceremony for the athletes who participated in the 1980 Winter Games, President Carter said in part, "For me, as President of the United States of America, this is one of the proudest moments that I've ever experienced ... The U.S. hockey team—their victory was one of the most breathtaking upsets not only in Olympic history but in the entire history of sport."³¹ As Carter praised the hockey team and the other athletes for their accomplishments, no doubt he was preoccupied with the success of the US Hockey Team and how he could translate their victory in the hockey arena to his advantage in the political arena. Indeed, by the time the players finished lunch and said their goodbyes, Carter and his advisors had likely already begun to map out a strategy for how the US win could pay handsome dividends for the president as he began his uphill battle to hold onto the presidency. Carter's willingness to draw on the success of the 1980 Hockey Team came as no surprise to Washington insiders. As Haynes Johnson of the *Washington Post* observed, "Jimmy Carter certainly was a political beneficiary of that victory. Millions of Americans heard him congratulating the American hockey team coach, Herb Brooks ... If Carter made the most of the occasion, why shouldn't he? What president would have done less?"

After three years of overseeing a dismal economy and a mismanaged foreign policy that left the United States feeling victimized by the international community, the US victory in Lake Placid had provided Carter with a glimmer of hope. Here they were, twenty college kids—underdogs—who defeated the Soviet Union at a game the Russians revered. And there he was, Jim



Figure 3: Goalie Jim Craig draped in a U.S. flag looking for his father in the stands following the gold medal victory over Finland on 24 February 1980. Photo permission: USA Hockey.

Craig, draped in a US flag, looking for his father in the stands to share this magnificent moment. The US Hockey Team had galvanized the nation. It was a picture-perfect moment that the often-dejected president could not afford to pass up. Ironically, the team had done more to lift the spirits of their country in two weeks than the Carter White House had done since coming to office.

In the days and weeks following their victory, the president, policy-makers on Capitol Hill, and the media went to great lengths to claim that what happened on a sheet of ice in Lake Placid exemplified all that was good about America and all that was wrong with the godless communists. In countless speeches on the campaign trail, Carter drew comparisons between the hope that his presidency offered to the hope the US Hockey Team had given the nation. As one journalist commented, "Even President Carter, who doesn't know if pucks are blown up or stuffed, is ad libbing these days about cross-checks and goal mouth scrambles" (Deeb). The storyline that Carter and other policy-makers and pundits were crafting was clear. The United States had rebounded from years of misery with its integrity and power intact. American hostages were still being held by Iranian militants, but the United States refused to be held hostage. If anything, the victory of the young hockey team has demonstrated that the United States would forever remain a guiding light to all who value freedom and honour.

The efforts of the president and others to score political points by aligning themselves with the US victory did not go unnoticed by several of the hockey players. As Jack O'Callahan remarked,

All that political stuff that people wrote about, trying to make us into the young, all-American boys going against the Russians, that was garbage. None of that dawned on us until we got to Washington after the Olympics and were totally swarmed by reporters at the White House. I knew something definitely strange was going on by the way we were mobbed and questioned. Why, they were asking us questions about politics and stuff like we were senators instead of just kids. That's when I knew things had gotten completely out of hand. (qtd. in Husar)

Some of O'Callahan's teammates were also aware of the lengths politicians were prepared to go to, to take advantage of the team's success. Two other natives of Massachusetts, Mike Eruzione and Jim Craig, were invited by Senator Ted Kennedy to appear with him during the presidential primaries. According to Eruzione,

I remember Ted Kennedy was running for president and he wanted me to go to New Hampshire for the primary and I said yes. And then I thought about it and said, geez, I don't really know much about what's going on politically here because I haven't been around so I kind of snuck out of it because I didn't feel I was prepared to say anything good or bad. I understood though that people were going to try to capitalize on moments like that, that's just the way life is. But as long as I understood what it was, that was important for me.³²



Figure 4: 1980 US Men's Hockey team receives gold medals at Olympics. Photo permission: USA Hockey.

88 Eruzione might have been prepared to forgive politicians like Jimmy Carter and Ted Kennedy for trying to capitalize on his team's victory, but some Americans who had observed how the win in Lake Placid was being politicized were less forgiving. In a letter to the sports editor of the *Hartford Courant*, Frank Francisconi of New London, Connecticut, wrote,

Since the U.S. victory over the Soviets, I have heard more jingoistic claptrap than I care to admit. I also think it is disgraceful that President Carter used the hockey team for political purposes . . . Be real! This is a hockey game! I'm not saying patriotism is a bad thing. However, I abhor politicians using a bunch of college kids who play hockey for fun. It is foolish for anyone (including the print medium) to try to turn a game into a symbol of the struggle and/or victory of one economic and social system over another . . . Let's rejoice in the U.S. hockey victory. But let's keep it in perspective, too. (Francisconi)

Perhaps President Carter read and took to heart Francisconi's advice in the *Hartford Courant* that day. Only a few years later, when the defeated president sat down to write his memoirs, he made only passing reference to the 1980 team. One of "the proudest memories of his presidency" received little attention in the more

than six-hundred-page account of his White House years. "It was one of the high spots of my year when the young Americans won—a very emotional moment . . . I was hoping this victory and the gold medal were an omen of better days ahead. But that was not to be" (Carter 489). Had Carter been re-elected, it is conceivable that he would have devoted more than a paragraph or two to the greatest sports moment of the twentieth century. But perhaps not.

Conclusion: Nationalism, Political Opportunism, and the Legacy of Lake Placid

Years after the United States Hockey Team struck gold at Lake Placid, people in the sporting world and beyond continue to reflect on what that victory meant to the country. As has been discussed throughout this paper, the success of the US team came at a critical juncture. In the wake of the Vietnam war, the Watergate scandal, and several trying years under President Carter that indeed contributed to a crisis in confidence, the United States found a group of young men who, despite tremendous odds, captured the imagination of the people and the respect of sports enthusiasts around the world.

The extent to which the gold medal victory was politicized by federal and state policy-makers, the media, and the American public was not surprising. As noted, any major contest that took place between the Americans and Soviets during the Cold War was bound to play out in the political arena. However, while policy-makers and journalists became preoccupied with equating the US victory on ice with American political supremacy, Coach Brooks and the team he assembled to represent the United States refused to allow themselves to become pawns in a global political game. As Brooks and several of his players stated, they came to Lake Placid to play hockey, not to engage in politics.

The United States had every right to feel proud of what the US Hockey Team accomplished and had good reason to celebrate. Moreover, if, as Mike Eruzione, Jack O'Callahan, and their teammates observed, their victory served as a catalyst to reignite confidence in what the United States could achieve at home and abroad, all the better. The importance of boosting national morale, or what others have broadly referred to as feelings of nationalism, should not be overlooked. From time immemorial, political leaders have relied on different tactics to shore up public support for launching

major undertakings, including committing the nation to war. As Eruzione stated, the 4–3 win over the Soviets and the 4–2 victory over Finland did not result in the American hostages being freed any earlier. Tough negotiations with the Iranian leadership, which included freezing their considerable assets held in the United States, ultimately led to their release.³³ Nor did the US victory in Lake Placid lead to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. Years of poor leadership that resulted in a mismanaged economy and an overly aggressive foreign policy were among many factors that led to the dismantling of the Soviet Empire. By most accounts, the United States hardly had to win a hockey game to demonstrate that the American political system was superior to the one implemented in the former Soviet Union. Hundreds of years of history, rather than three periods of hockey, could more effectively make that point. Had the United States lost to the Soviets in Lake Placid, could anyone legitimately make the argument that the US political system was inferior?

The temptation to equate success in sport with superiority in politics remains strong but in many respects is completely without foundation. Unfortunately, so long as political leaders believe that they and their country can benefit from making such claims, the relationship between sport and politics will continue to be exploited. The legacy of Lake Placid should not only be that the US Hockey Team mounted a stunning victory. It should be that the US Hockey Team sent a clear message to policy-makers, journalists, and other opinion-makers that hockey should be about hockey, sport should be about sport, and politics should be about politics.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

1. Several books have chronicled the U.S. hockey team's gold medal victory in Lake Placid: Anderson and *New York Times* staff, *Victory for America*; and Allen, "The 1980 Miracle on Ice"; Powers and Kaminsky, *One Goal*; Coffey, *The Boys of Winter*; Wendel, *Going for the Gold*.
2. For more on the militarization of hockey, see McDonald. Also see Scherer, Duquette, and Mason.
3. There is a rich body of literature that explores how President Reagan managed America's relationship with the former Soviet Union. Several

- should be consulted, including Anderson, *Revolution*; Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*; and Collins, *Transforming America*; Reagan, *An American Life*.
4. See Esposito and Golenbock. For more on the 1972 Canada-Russia Summit, see Henderson, *Shooting for Glory*; Macskimming, *Cold War*; Martin, *The Red Machine*; Morrison, *The Days Canada Stood Still*.
 5. Pre-game comments by Al Michaels during NBC's coverage of the US game against the Soviets, 22 February 1980. He said, "I'm sure there are a lot of people in this building who do not know the difference between a blue line and a clothes line. It's irrelevant. It doesn't matter. Because what we have at hand is the rarest of sporting events. An event that needs no build-up, no superfluous adjectives. In a political or nationalistic sense, I'm sure this game is being viewed with varying perspectives, but manifestly, it is a hockey game—the United States and the Soviet Union on a sheet of ice in Lake Placid, New York."
 6. For more on the life of Herb Brooks, see Bernstein's *America's Coach* and *Remembering Herbie*.
 7. For a history of the 1960 Gold Medal U.S. Hockey Team, see O'Coughlin, *Squaw Valley Gold*. On the 1972 U.S. Silver Medal Team, see Caraccioli and Caraccioli, *Striking Silver*.
 8. For more on Brooks's coaching career at Minnesota, see Bernstein, and Powers and Kaminsky.
 9. Brooks in interview with Gavin O'Connor, director of the Hollywood film *Miracle*. Available in special features section of the DVD.
 10. Interview with Jim Craig, 10 July 2007.
 11. Craig, 10 July 2007.
 12. Quoted in HBO, *Do You Believe in Miracles?*
 13. Email correspondence with Jack O'Callahan, 11 May 2007.
 14. O'Callahan, 11 May 2007.
 15. O'Callahan, 11 May 2007.
 16. Email correspondence with John Harrington, 12 Sept. 2007.
 17. Email correspondence with Phil Verchota, 25 July 2008.
 18. See Powers and Kaminsky 172. Also listen to comments made by Brooks about this incident during his interview with O'Connor in the special features section of the DVD.
 19. Powers and Kaminsky 183.
 20. Craig, 10 July 2007.
 21. Interview with Mike Eruzione, 18 July 2007.
 22. O'Callahan, 11 May 2007.
 23. Eruzione, 18 July 2007.
 24. Pre-game comments, 22 February 1980.

25. Eruzione, 18 July 2007.
26. O'Callahan, 11 May 2007.
27. See, for example, Nickerson, "Red Dawn in Lake Placid."
28. Craig, 10 July 2007.
29. Craig, 10 July 2007.
30. HBO Documentary, *Do You Believe in Miracles?*
31. See United States, *Public Papers of the Presidents* 379.
32. Eruzione, 18 July 2007.
33. For more on this, see Sick, *All Fall Down*.

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