

1980 WINTER OLYMPICS

For the second time, the Winter Games were hosted by Lake Placid, New York, since the only other competitor was Vancouver, Canada, and they withdrew from the bid before the final vote.

President Jimmy Carter decided to boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow due to the Cold War, but both the U.S. and the USSR took part in these Winter Games. Thirty-seven nations competed with 1,072 athletes from Feb. 13 to Feb. 24. Lichtenstein became the smallest participating country to produce an Olympic champion when Hanni Wenzel won the women's giant slalom and slalom events.

Since Olympic memorabilia became popularized by 1980, the Olympic mascots were two raccoons, Roni and Ronny. The animal's natural mask reflects the hat and goggles worn by athletes in many winter sports events. Many critics complained about the poorly planned transportation, and the Olympic village accommodations, which were later turned into prison cells. However, artificial snow was used in Olympic competition for the first time at Lake Placid.

Compiled of mostly collegiate athletes, the upstart U.S. ice hockey team entered the Winter Games as the underdog and surprised the world by winning gold against favored Finland and the USSR. This achievement, referred to as "Miracle On Ice," was later made into a 2004 movie, "Miracle."

In the medal tally, the U.S. finished third with 12 medals (six gold, four silver, and two bronze). Leah Poulos-Mueller won silver in both the women's 500- and 1,000-meter speed skate events, and Beth Heiden went home with a bronze medal in the women's 3,000-meter event. Linda Fratianne was awarded a silver for her performance in the ladies singles figure skate, while Charles Tickner earned a bronze in the men's singles figure skate. The only American to place in any alpine events was Phil Mahre, who won a silver in the men's slalom event.

Eric Heiden became the first person to win five gold medals in individual events during one Olympiad. Setting four Olympic records and one world record, Heiden won the 500-, 1,000-, 1,500-, 5,000-, and 10,000-meter speed skating events.

A member of the 1980 and 1988 U.S. Olympic Ski Teams, Gary Crawford is a native of Denver and competed internationally in the Nordic combined for 12 years. He skied for two-and-a-half years for Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado after competing for the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club. In the Nordic combined event, Crawford placed 28th in 1980 and 41st in the 1988 Winter Games, and also competed in the 1982 World Championships. Afterwards, he became a top-level golfer, coached with the Ability Team for three years, and was the head golf professional at the Sheraton Steamboat Golf Club. As the Nordic combined development coach for Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, Crawford is still involved with skiing. His father, Marvin Crawford, competed at the 1956 Winter Olympics in the Nordic combined and cross-country events.

1984 WINTER OLYMPICS



Figure 1 John McMurtry (right) after Debbie Armstrong's gold medal slalom run during the 1984 Winter Olympics

The first Winter Games held in a socialist country were hosted by Sarajevo, Yugoslavia (now Bosnia and Herzegovina) from Feb. 8 to Feb. 19, 1984. A record 49 countries and 1,272 athletes arrived to compete in 39 winter sports events. Vucko, a wolf cub, was chosen as the official

Olympic mascot. Egypt, Monaco, Puerto Rico, Senegal, and the Virgin Islands made their Winter Games debut, and the Republic of China entered the Olympics as “Chinese Taipei.”

During the peaceful and beautiful 1984 Winter Olympics, there was no indication of the tragic civil war that would engulf Yugoslavia 8 years later. The only major problem that arose was a huge snowfall during the Games, which delayed the alpine skiing events.

For the first time, disabled skiing was an Olympic demonstration sport, with 29 participants in this event. These races were held in addition to the alpine and cross-country events at the 1984 Winter Paralympics in Innsbruck, Austria. Additionally, a 20-kilometer race was added to the women’s Nordic events.

Yugoslavia’s first Winter Olympics medal was won by Jure Franko, who placed second in the giant slalom.

Figure 2 Debbie Armstrong and Christin Cooper on the medal stand in Sarajevo after winning gold and silver in the women’s slalom

The U.S. went home with 8 medals (four gold and four silver), placing third in the medal tally. Scott Hamilton was awarded a gold medal for the men’s singles figure skating, and Rosalynn Sumners won silver in the ladies singles figure skating. Another silver medal was earned by Kitty and Peter Carruthers in the pairs figure skating, but the rest of the medals were won in alpine skiing events.

John McMurtry, the slalom and giant slalom coach for the 1984 U.S. Women’s Ski Team, remembers Sarajevo as their best Olympics ever. The U.S. Olympic Ski Team took five out of 18 total possible medals in alpine skiing, more than any other country had done previously. As Topper Hagerman, the 1984 U.S. Men’s Ski Team trainer, and John McMurtry expressed, this accomplishment was truly a team effort.



Figure 3 : John McMurtry (right), the slalom and giant slalom coach for the 1984 U.S. Women's Ski Team, after Debbie Armstrong’s gold medal slalom run during the Winter Olympics, Sarajevo, 1984.

Bill Johnson became the first American male to ever win a gold medal in the downhill event. The twin brothers Phil and Steve Mahre took gold and silver in the men’s slalom, respectively – despite losing to John Atkins, the women’s trainer, and Topper in a pick-up basketball game the previous night, as Topper recounts. For the women, Debbie Armstrong earned gold, while Christin Cooper took silver, in the giant slalom. Tamara McKinney missed bronze by just .43 seconds.

Debbie Armstrong, as the

Figure 2 Tamara McKinney (left) and Erika Hess of Switzerland in Furano, Japan, March, 1983, at the World Cup awards ceremony with Tamara and Erika holding crystal globes as Tamara became the first U.S. women to win the overall World Cup title.

first U.S. gold medalist in a women's alpine event since Andrea Mead-Lawrence in 1952, has an impressive skiing record. She placed second in the combined event during the 1983 U.S. Nations, and was third in the World Cup super-G in 1984. After winning the 1984 women's giant slalom in Sarajevo, Debbie placed fourth in the giant slalom at the 1985 World Championships and sixth in the super-G in 1987. With a World Cup career of 18 top-10 finishes, she retired from ski



racing following the 1988 World Cup season. Afterwards, Debbie began promoting various humanitarian causes, including the Debbie Armstrong Say No to Alcohol & Drugs Campaign, SKIFORALL Foundation, and Glocal ReLeaf Sarajevo. Today, she works at the Alpine Technical Director for Steamboat Springs Ski & Snowboard School.

1988 WINTER OLYMPICS

Calgary, Canada won the 1988 Winter Olympic bid, which was held from Feb. 13 to Feb. 28, and featured 46 events in 6 sports. Other contenders for the host city were Falun, Sweden and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. Fifty-seven countries arrived with 1,423 athletes to compete.

This was the last year that the Winter Paralympics and Winter Olympics were held in separate cities. Starting with Albertville, France in 1992, both competitions were in the same city.

ABC paid a record \$398 million for broadcast rights, while the Canadian CTV channel paid \$45 million for domestic rights. These Games also fueled a \$70.5 million endowment, which is now worth \$185 million and helps to fund Canadian sport. Citizens of Calgary had the option of buying a brick engraved with their name that was put in the main medal presentation plaza. Furthermore, this year marked the first time the Winter Olympics were smoke-free, and athletes could sit in stands next to the spectators. These opportunities kept ordinary people involved and close to the Games.

Calgary's mascots were Hidy and Howdy, male and female polar bears. The torch relay was the longest one yet, traveling through all 10 provinces and both territories (Nunavut was not established at the time), and going beyond the Arctic Circle for the first time. Concern was raised about the "Chinook winds," which are periods when the weather becomes unseasonably mild. Owing to these warm winds, the bobsled run had to be redone due to sand blowing on the track.

A number of new events were added, including the super-G slalom, the alpine combined, and team events in the Nordic combined and ski jumping. The Nordic combined event had been absent since 1948.

The U.S. finished ninth in the medal tally, with two gold, one silver, and three bronze. All six medals were won in skating events. Brian Boitano was awarded gold in the mens singles figure skate, and Debi Thomas won bronze in the ladies single figure skate event. In the pair figure skate event, Peter Opegaard and Jill Watson received bronze medals. Eric Flaim won silver in the mens 1,500-meter speed skate, while Bonnie Blair earned gold in the women's 500-meter and bronze in the 1,000-meter speed skate races.

COLORADO COMPETITORS

Todd Wilson, a member of the U.S. Nordic Team for 9 years, was born in Denver. He competed at the World Championships in 1985 and 1987, the 1988 Winter Olympics, where he placed 40th in the individual Nordic combined and 10th in the team Nordic combined, and finished 39th in the individual Nordic combined at the 1992 Winter Games. After attending Colorado Mountain College, Wilson became a ski coach in Steamboat Springs, and in 2000 became the Nordic Director for Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club.

A native of Boulder, Rick Mewborn was named to the 1988 U.S. Olympic Ski Team. He began ski jumping near Steamboat Springs on Howelsen Hill, named for Carl Howelsen, who helped popularize ski jumping in Colorado in the 1930's. While jumping, Mewborn earned several titles, including 1986 U.S. Champion on the normal hill, 1987 U.S. Champion on the large hill, and the Canadian National Champion. At the 1988 Winter Olympics he placed 54th in the normal hill event. Today, Mewborn is a resident of Steamboat Springs, where he runs an excavation company, and still returns to Howelsen Hill to watch his children ski.

“Spirit of America’s Champions”
exhibit in the Colorado Ski &
Snowboard Museum, featuring
the Olympics during the 1980’s.

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.