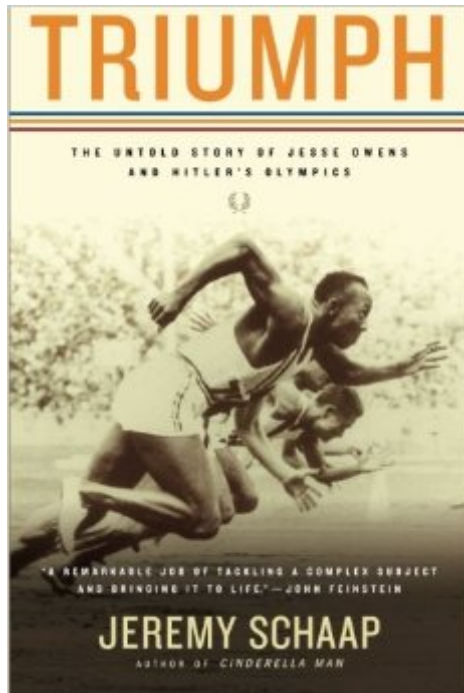


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Triumph: The Untold Story Of Jesse Owens And Hitler's Olympics



Synopsis

At the 1936 Olympics, against a backdrop of swastikas and goose-stepping storm troopers, an African-American son of sharecroppers won a staggering four gold medals and single-handedly demonstrated that Hitler's myth of Aryan supremacy was a lie. The story of Jesse Owens at the Berlin games is that of an athletic performance that transcends sports. It is also the intimate and complex tale of one remarkable man's courage. Drawing on unprecedented access to the Owens family, previously unpublished interviews, and exhaustive archival research, Jeremy Schaap transports us to Germany and tells the dramatic tale of Owens and his fellow athletes at the contest dubbed the Nazi Olympics. With his incisive reporting and rich storytelling, Schaap reveals what really happened over those tense, exhilarating weeks in a nuanced and riveting work of sports history.

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Customer Reviews

This is a very entertaining and well-written account of Jesse Owens' track career culminating in his 4 gold medals at the notorious 1936 Olympics hosted in Berlin by the Nazi regime. Given Owens' iconic and historic importance, Schaap needs to exercise the skills of an historian in parsing through the evidence and sifting fact from legend. In this regard, Schaap does an excellent job. In particular, Schaap dispels the myth of Hitler's supposed "snub" of Owens. What really happened is that on Day 1, Hitler congratulated only a select few Nordic athletes. The Olympic officials told Hitler that he had to congratulate everyone or no one at all. Hitler complied with this directive, so he had a good excuse for not meeting with Owens after his first victory on Day 2. Indeed, the evidence is that Hitler

waved congratulations to Owens. Years later, Owens retracted this version to tell a more marketable "snub" story on the lecture circuit. Schaap is also excellent at recounting the controversy regarding Marty Glickman and one other fellow American Jew left off the 4x100 relay team at the last minute. Legend has it that this was a craven effort by the Avery Brundage crew to appease Hitler. But Schaap tells the facts and it seems that, while this angle may have helped the strategy go through, the real reasons were twofold. First, Owens' celebrity was such that there was a desire to accommodate his expressed desire for a fourth medal. At the time, American runners were so dominant that the U.S. usually fielded a relay team that did not include the best four runners, but instead used the relay as a device for spreading medals around. But as the star of the Games, how could Owens be left off this event? And second, the Olympic track coach was head coach at U.S.C.

The accomplishments of Jesse Owens in the 1936 Summer Olympics is still revered and celebrated now, eighty years later. Not just for the athletic achievement of earning four gold medals, but also for dispelling the myth of Adolf Hitler's notion of Aryan superiority is this feat remembered. In this excellent book by Jeremy Schapp, the reader will learn more about what made a humble black man from Ohio turn into the fastest man on Earth. There are many aspects about Owens' story that Schapp writes about beyond the wins on the track. From the coaching of Larry Snyder at Ohio State to the story about how Owens became one of the members of the 4 x 100-yard relay team to the alleged "snub" by Hitler after Owens won his first medal, there are many different subplots that are recalled in great detail. The story of the "snub" is very interesting in that the myth is dispelled by Owens himself by recalling that Hitler waved at him after his first medal. It was only later during the lecture circuit did the story of the snub become well known. Not everything written is about Owens, either. Schapp wrote very good pieces about filmmaker Leni Reifenstahl, the American boycott of the games that almost happened and the controversy about leaving the two American Jewish runners off of the relay team in which Owens replaced one of them and won his fourth medal. Avery Brundage is also prominently portrayed in the book. These and other aspects of the 1936 Olympics make the book complete and an excellent source of information on this topic. The only thing that could have made this better would have been a little more coverage of life after the Olympics for Owens as the book does not make it clear what really became of Owens after that historic event.

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