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Hitler's Olympics - The Facts

John R. Webb

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In this diligently researched and annotated work, the author sheds light on the controversial Berlin Olympics of 1936, the success of which is often distorted, probably as a result of the imperative to conform. The first matter tackled by the author is the international campaign to boycott the Games. This was a failure because, as the President of the International Olympic Committee said, it had no significant support among the athletes themselves. In fact, more nations than ever, 12 more (or 32% more) participated than in the previous Games at Los Angeles. New ideas adopted at the Games, which became standard features of future Games, are highlighted: the Olympic Torch, the Olympic Bell and the direct relay of television. The traditional Olympic Salute is also discussed, though it has now been effectively banned by the tyranny of political correctness. Controversies relating to the following participants are investigated: Gretel Bergmann, the Jewish athlete dropped from the German team less than three weeks after equalling the German women's high jump record; Dora Ratjen, the German high jumper later exposed (by the Germans) as a man; two Jewish sprinters replaced by the US team (by two African-Americans) in the men's relay; and the Peruvian football team, required to replay a match with Austria. In particular, the author deals at length with the Jesse Owens saga, establishing that it was President Roosevelt, not Hitler, who snubbed the great athlete and showing that African-American athletes were treated far better in Germany than in their own country. Includes over 60 original B&W and colour photographs.

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