



GOLD MEDAL POLITICS

BY PAUL VENEZIANO

The Führer was undoubtedly confounded and infuriated as he glared at the cheering crowds inside the Berlin Olympiastadion. With his Aryan champions soundly beaten and thousands of German spectators chanting “Yess-say! Oh-Vens!” Adolph Hitler must have wondered how this had happened. How had the African-American athlete Jesse Owens, the son of a sharecropper and grandson of a slave, won over his crowd? Hadn’t the plan been to use the Olympics as a grand propaganda event—an international spectacle highlighting Germany’s revived strength and racial superiority?

With any study of the past, placing events into proper context often reveals a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their significance. As History Associates discovered in our content and script work for the recently opened Sports Museum of America in New York, sports history is no different.

Hitler’s exploitation of the 1936 Berlin Olympics as a political platform upon which he hoped to impress, deceive, and manipulate the world is not uncommon to the Olympic movement. Despite the Olympic Charter’s mission statement opposing any political or commercial abuse of sports and athletes, the Games have a long history of politicization. The 1916,



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Jesse Owens at the 1936 Olympics.

1940, and 1944 Olympics were cancelled because of the World Wars, and those held between 1948 and 1988 became proxy battles between Communist East and Democratic West. As one sportswriter observed, “little the IOC [International Olympic Committee] does occurs without the intervention of politics.”¹

Indeed, politics routinely influence the host city selection process. The 1988 Seoul Olympics highlighted South Korea’s “economic miracle” and, accord-

ing to some, played a role in the country’s democratization.² Such recent successes provide a compelling backdrop for the IOC’s controversial selection of Beijing as the host for the 2008 Summer Games. Activists fiercely criticized the IOC’s decision based upon China’s human rights abuses, its environmental failures, and its harsh treatment of Tibet. Recently, a chorus of critics has also condemned China’s involvement with Sudanese oil and its impact in Darfur. Echoes of Olympics past are again heard in the renewed calls to boycott the Beijing games.

In the end, any worries that Hitler may have harbored that day in the Olympiastadion were unfounded. Though Owens became the runaway star of the Games and one of Berlin’s enduring legacies, Hitler scored a propaganda coup. Despite Owens’ four gold medals, Germany was the “undeniable victor of the Games,”³ besting the second-place United States in the medal counts. Thousands of visitors left Berlin impressed with the city’s sports venues “and a vague impression that National Socialism wasn’t as dreadful as they thought.”⁴ The Olympics had served its political purpose—a familiar role over the years.

(Footnotes can be found on page 3.)

So, You’ve Saved a Battlefield ... Now What?

BY MARY BAYS

Each year, preservation organizations join federal, state, and local governments in the fight to save endangered Civil War battlefields from development and destruction. “You and I are part of

‘The Last Generation’ that will have the chance to save the nation’s most significant Civil War battlefield land,” wrote Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) president James Lighthizer. “This task,” he said, “has fallen to us, and how those hallowed, sanctified fields of valor will

look to all future generations is now on our shoulders.” While fighting an uphill battle, CWPT and other preservation groups, such as the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation and the Central Virginia Battlefield Trust, have managed

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So, You've Saved a Battlefield . . . Now What?

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to save tens of thousands of battlefield acres in eighteen states.

But what good is saving land if no one sees it or understands what happened there? That's where History Associates comes in. Compelling interpretation attracts people to historic sites. It's the vehicle through which we share history, stir emotions, and allow visitors to truly experience echoes of the past. To do this, we rely on a combination of expository text, vivid quotes, maps, and contemporary photographs or illustrations. Together, these resources not only introduce the facts and significance of historic events but also add detail, color, and human elements to the stories that resonate with visitors and connect them to the land.

Working closely with a battlefield landowner, our goal is to educate and engage the public and turn visitors into modern-day witnesses to historic battles. At CWPT's Third Winchester Battlefield, interpreted by History Associates and opened in September 2007, we want visitors to feel the surprise of the soldiers fighting in the Middle Field, the anticipation and fear of Union troops as they prepared to charge the Confederate lines, and the Confederate Army's stoicism as



The First Day at Chancellorsville Battlefield Trailhead.

it retreated toward Winchester. Accordingly, our interpretive plan for the site allows visitors to experience a wide range of emotions on the ground where events actually happened.

Since compelling historic interpretation is the essential fuel that drives successful heritage tourism, when visitors and residents have a moving experience on a battlefield, they will want to explore other historic sites in their area. And with increased interpretation and the coming

of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, 2011-2015, more battlefield land will be preserved, interpreted, and visited. In addition to the Third Winchester Battlefield interpretation, History Associates also completed an interpretive plan for the First Day at Chancellorsville Battlefield, which opened in May 2008. It focuses on the relatively small but critical Confederate victory of May 1, 1863, which led to a pullback of Union forces and cleared the way for the brilliant Confederate flanking counterattack the following day.

Our interpretive experience at both of these battlefields includes battlefield trails with wayside exhibits bringing the battle to life while also providing walking and biking trails for the local community. "The interpretation at Third Winchester is a huge success story," said CWPT policy and communications director Jim Campi. "Visitation among tourists and local residents is greater than we ever expected."

As we celebrate preservation, interpretation, and visitation successes, we also keep an eye toward the future. This ever-present battle is not only a fight to save land but it is also a struggle to excite and engage future generations about the past. And this is one fight in which History Associates will be found on the front lines.



Courtesy Library of Congress

Artist Alfred Waud's May 1863 sketch shows some of the fighting on the First Day at Chancellorsville Battlefield.



RECOMMENDED STAFF SUMMER READINGS

BRIAN MARTIN: *Steel Drivin' Man: John Henry, the Untold Story of an American Legend* by Scott Reynolds Nelson (2006)

Nelson highlights how thorough research can reveal both the germ of truth at the root of a myth and the various historical factors that influence the form and spread of that myth over time.

JASON GART: *Rescuing Prometheus: Four Monumental Projects That Changed the Modern World* by Thomas P. Hughes (2000)

The author examines the role of systems engineering in several civilian and military projects, including the development of ARPANET (the original Internet) and the construction of Boston's Central Artery/Tunnel Project.

JAMIE RIFE: *The Blue Max* by Jack D. Hunter (2007, 2nd ed.)

Originally published in 1965, Hunter's classic piece of war literature follows fictional soldier Bruno Stachel as he rises out of the trenches of World War I to become one of Germany's greatest fighter pilots.

MEGHAN ATTALLA: *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafés, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour* by Joan DeJean (2005)

DeJean demonstrates how Louis XIV and his court influenced everything from street lighting and nightlife to mirror making and haute couture.

HAI AROUND THE WORLD

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE:

cataloged 800 rare books for Petersburg National Battlefield and arranged and described 60 cubic feet of George Washington Birthplace National Monument park records.

ORANGE COUNTY GREAT PARK CORPORATION:

completed collection documentation strategy analysis and archives planning documents for this major park planning project.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON:

completed historical records needs assessment and collection inventory; coordinated with an internationally known archival repository regarding the donation of SCE's historical records and began processing the materials.

CHEVY CHASE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MARYLAND:

interviewing longtime residents of Chevy Chase and preparing final reports for CCHS's oral history project.

FAUQUIER COUNTY, VIRGINIA:

began summarizing significant Civil War engagements in the county and will conduct a seminar to raise public awareness.

LITIGATION RESEARCH DIVISION:

continued to research and analyze documents in federal, state, and local records repositories in Alabama, California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, and Washington, DC.



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STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

PAUL VENEZIANO

History Associates 2006 Employee of the Year Paul Veneziano has successfully managed a number of complex history and litigation projects. But his most vivid memories revolve around work for the recently opened Sports Museum of America, for which he wrote the Heisman Trophy Gallery script. At one point, he had the opportunity to actually hold a real Heisman Trophy, a lifelong dream of many sports fanatics such as Paul. Noting its surprisingly hefty twenty-five pounds, he later observed that it "was a good thing that the winners were in shape."



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References for article on page 1.

¹ Jere Longman, "Olympics: Beijing Expected to Receive the 2008 Summer Games When the I.O.C. Votes," *New York Times*, July 8, 2001.

² Shona Bezanson and David R. Black, "The Olympic Games, Human Rights, Democratization: Lessons from Seoul and Implications for Beijing," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 7 (2004): 1245-61.

³ Guy Walters, *Berlin Games: How the Nazis Stole the Olympic Dream* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 298.

⁴ Allen Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 66-67.



Photo courtesy of
the United States Army

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Before becoming perhaps the best-known U.S. Army general of the Second World War, this young lieutenant participated in the 1912 Summer Olympics held in Stockholm, Sweden.

E-mail your answer and contact information to Jason Gatt, jgatt@historyassociates.com, to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 amazon.com gift card!



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