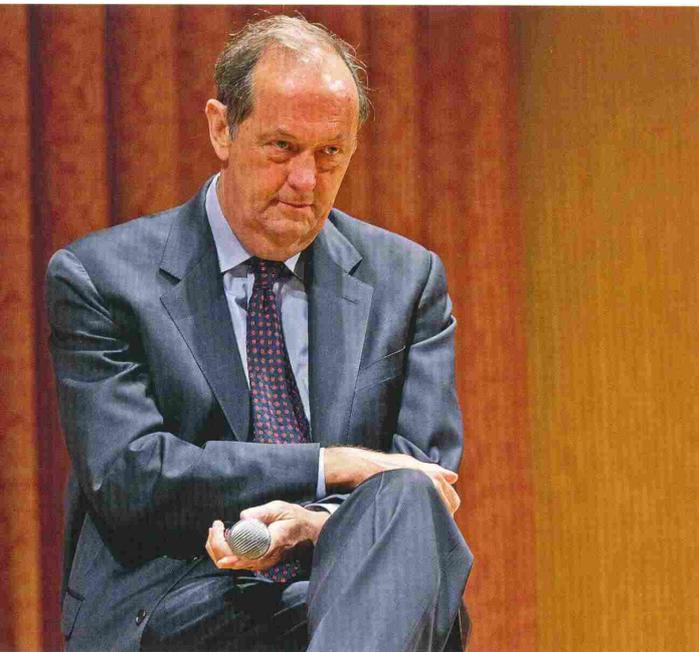


Bradley's Evolution on Olympic Reform and its Influence on 1980 US Debate*

By Jason Winders



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realities. The final product of that journey influenced Congressional debate on the 1980 Moscow Games boycott in January 1980. In doing so, this paper will showcase the inner workings of the only member of this debate to have participated in the Olympics, and then debated their fate as an elected official.

* * *

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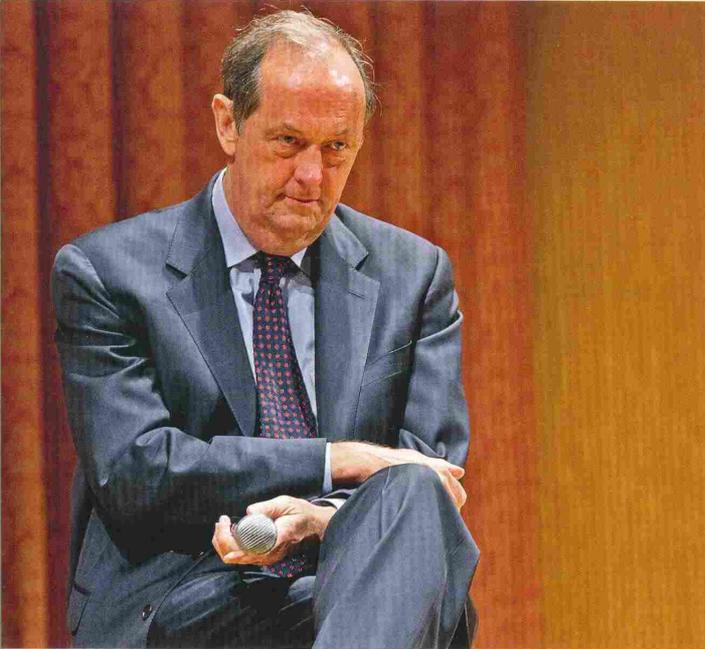
Born a child of privilege to a Missouri bank president father and a schoolteacher mother, Bradley started playing basketball at age 9. He never put the ball down. After being twice named an All-American at Crystal City (Missouri) High School, he was considered the top basketball prospect in the country by his senior year. More than 70 universities recruited him – nearly all offering scholarships. Yet, he landed on the one school that offered him no money at all – Princeton. In the fall of 1961, he entered the prestigious university. In four years, Bradley led the Tigers to two straight Ivy League titles. He left owning Ivy League career and single-season basketball records for total points, scoring average and free throws made. In addition to holding those same records at Princeton, he also held the school's single-game scoring record of 51 points. Experts suggested he would be the first college player selected in the National Basketball Association (NBA) draft when he graduated. It's a suggestion at which he balked. "I'll certainly consider any offer, but that doesn't mean I'll turn pro," Bradley said in 1964. "I'll have to weigh all alternatives



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because it sometimes can be disillusioning to a young man to get too much money too soon. More important than that, perhaps, is this: Am I good enough?"¹⁵

In April 1964, Bradley was one of six unanimous selections for the 12-man US Olympic basketball team set to compete in the Tokyo Games that fall. At 20, he was the team's youngest player and its only undergrad. He was also the first Ivy League player ever to make the Olympic cut.¹⁶ His Olympic coach, Hank Iba, had only one reservation: "The only flaw in Bill Bradley as a basketball player is that he is too eager to do well. He may be too tense when we play our first game of the Olympic tournament on Sunday. Except for that, he can do everything a basketball player needs to do. He can be terrific and I have to rate him as one of the finest players and finest gentlemen I've ever met."¹⁷

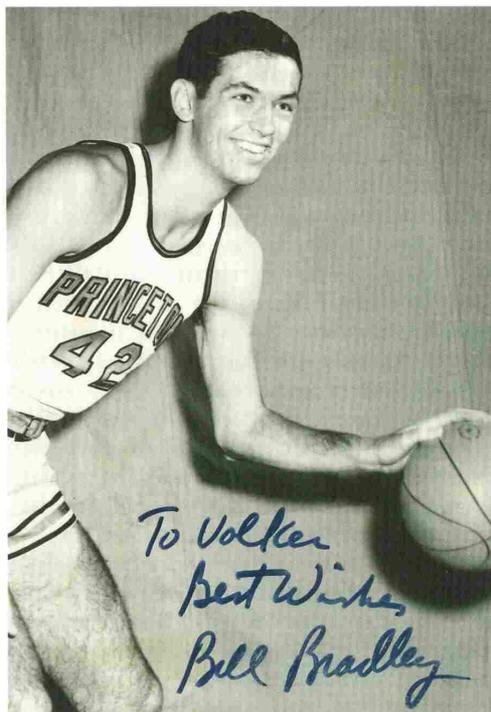
Since basketball entered the Olympics in 1936, the Americans have dominated. Going into the 1964 Games, the Americans had won five straight gold medals. That streak reached seven, before the Soviets beat the Americans in 1972. To date, the United States has won 14 of 18 Olympic men's basketball titles, including five of the last six featuring professional players.¹⁸ However, there long has been a looming spectre. In 1955, Col. Harry Henshel, US Olympic Basketball Committee chairman, named the Soviet Union as the United States' "major threat to our basketball supremacy. The Russians are giving basketball their fullest attention. They are buying and studying as many films on basketball as they can. What's more, it would not surprise me if they came up with an American coach."¹⁹

By 1964, some observers saw cracks in American dominance of basketball when the team had to rally to beat Puerto Rico, 62-42, after trailing at the half of the semi-final matchup. But the worry was unnecessary. In the gold medal game, the Americans faced the Soviets, who had defeated Brazil 53-47 to earn the nod. The two Cold War sparring partners played a tough, defensive game.²⁰ Bradley drew the Soviet's best man – Yuri Korneyev – as a defensive assignment. At 1.96 metres, 109 kilo, the 27-year-old Soviet national team hero was a monster who liked to drive, often taking the ball on the edge of action then starting for the basket "like a fullback, blasting everything out of the way until he got close enough to ram in a point-blank shot."²¹ Bradley gave away 20 kilo to Korneyev; he held the Soviet to eight points. Tempers flared in the second half of the game. Bradley and a visibly frustrated Korneyev "exchanged a few hot words"²² before the Soviet was removed from the game. Aggressive play on both sides led to 50 total fouls – 28 against the Soviet Union, 22 against the Americans. Neither team shot 50 per cent from the field. The audience was more partisan than at most Olympics. Raucous shouts and boos from the crowd of 6,000 made the bright, new National

Gymnasium Annex resemble an American college gymnasium.²³ The United States won, 73-59, behind American centre Lucius Jackson's team-leading 17 points. Bradley scored 10.

With the help of three Australian players who spoke Russian, Bradley got to know several members of the Soviet team during his six weeks at the Games, and soon began to sympathize with them. "All we do is play basketball," one of them told him. "After we go home, we play in the Soviet Championships. Then we play in the Satellite championships. Then we play in the European Championships. I would give anything for five days off."²⁴ The Soviet players were paid \$85 per month, plus housing. Given their depressed approach, Bradley said, it was hard to get excited for the United States-Soviet Union gold medal game. "It was tough to get chills," he said. "I had to imagine we were about to play Yale."²⁵

In December 1964, Bradley shunned immediate entry into professional basketball – and an expected \$20,000 contract from the New York Knicks²⁶ – for a Rhodes Scholarship and two years study at Oxford University.²⁷ Perhaps that decision was no surprise to those who knew Bradley. "They retire at 30 with nothing more than a scrapbook of clippings," the 21-year-old told the *New York Times* about professional athletes. "It's hard to live more than half your life on some old pieces of newspaper."²⁸ Bradley was 17 years old when he realized "life was much longer than a few winters



Bill Bradley began to play basketball at the age of nine. Although as an outstanding high school player he received numerous lucrative offers, he decided to study at Princeton University at his own expense.

Photo: Volker Kluge Archive

As the outstanding player in the Ivy League, Bradley was selected three times for the All-American team and chosen as 'Player of the Year' in 1965.

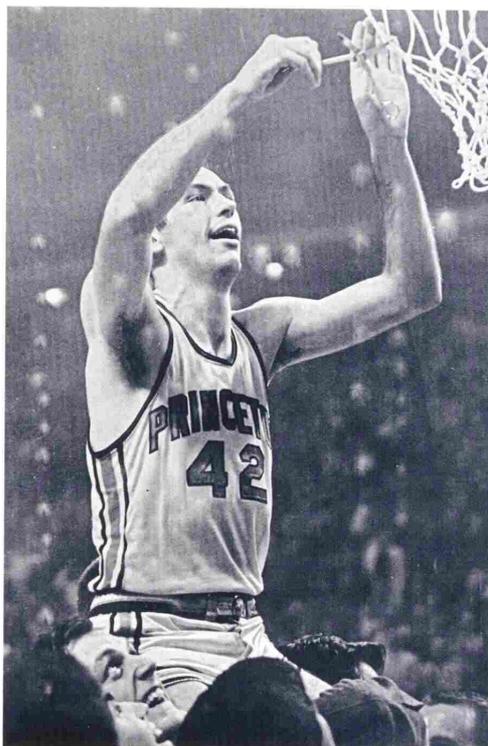
Photo: Princeton Alumni Weekly

of basketball."¹⁹ His love for the game ran deep, but his interest in the world was wide. While at Oxford, he did everything except play basketball, including extensive traveling around Western Europe, Middle East and Soviet Union.²⁰ Years later, Bradley recalled those journeys as a student traveler, in particular, one incident from 1966. Leaving the Soviet Union by car into Hungary, he was detained – for four hours – until a Soviet border guard finished perusing Bradley's copy of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.²¹ It was a moment in which Bradley did not see irritation, but treasured as it showed the connectedness of the two people outside their governments.

During his time at Oxford, Bradley didn't pick up a basketball until the end of his second year of studies. At that point, he played one season of European professional basketball. Twice a month, he commuted from Oxford to Milan to play as a semi-pro for an Italian club team. There, he stumbled onto some familiar 'comrades.' While competing in the European Cup, his team met – and again defeated – a Soviet squad that was "man for man ... the same as the Soviet national team in Tokyo, except now they were called the Soviet Army Club Team."²²

Once back in the States, Bradley served six months in the US Air Force Reserve, and then finally joined the Knicks in 1967–68. In 1972–73, Bradley experienced the greatest season of his hall of fame professional basketball career. He appeared in every regular season and playoff game for the Knicks and ended up with career highs in nearly every category including 1,319 points and 367 assists – second on the team in both categories to the great Walt Frazier. That same year, Bradley made his only NBA All-Star Game appearance – scoring 4 points in 12 minutes. The Knicks finished second in the Atlantic Division with a 57–25 record, and then went on to defeat the Baltimore Bullets, Boston Celtics and, eventually, Los Angeles Lakers in the playoffs to claim the organisation's second – and latest – NBA title. Bradley was a key cog in both championships.²³

That same season, Bradley also entered the arena of Olympic reform debate – although few immediately noticed. Historians have often referenced a *New York Times* article from 1976 written by Bradley – *Five ways to reform the Olympics* – as his first foray into the politics of the Games. Most notably, Nicholas Evan Sarantakes leaned on the article for his book *Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, the Olympic Boycott and the Cold War*. Sarantakes dealt only briefly with the role of the US Congress, and when he did, it centred on Bradley's *Times* piece, and his later testimony expanding on the same subject in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Foreign Relations) in January 1980. Both the *Times* piece and the testimony will be discussed later in this paper. However, to understand those later



incarnations, one must understand a relatively obscure – and unexamined – work published a few years earlier.

On 6th October 1972²⁴, Bradley penned a letter – *Bill Bradley's Olympics* – to the *Forum for Contemporary History*, an informal historical/political newsletter. In it, he set down for the first time "one champion's drastic, and lively, proposal for transforming the Olympics into something better."²⁵ The article was penned in advance of a United States Olympic Committee (USOC) meeting to address "serious problems in preparing for the 1976 Games in Montreal."²⁶ An earlier *New York Times* investigation into USOC operations revealed an organisation over-burdened by committee personnel (714 members for 37 sports), struggling with inadequate lines of authority and working under a reluctance to adjust current practices that led to the "chaos and confusion that accompanied America's showing at the 20th Olympics in Munich."²⁷ "We are being clinically scrutinized by an aggressive and probing press," said Robert Kane, USOC second Vice-President. "We can no longer tolerate tawdry politics. We can no longer treat our athletes like mindless chattels. If we don't put our house in order, someone else will put it in order for us."²⁸ Bradley echoed many of the criticisms raised in the *Times* article in his submission. *Intellectual Digest*²⁹ re-printed the piece word-for-word in its March 1973 issue. In Olympic literature, as well as the literature surrounding the 1980 Olympic boycott, no historian has

referenced either incarnation. Only Phillip K. Shinnick, a former Olympian, noted the *Intellectual Digest* article in his opinion piece – *Progressive resistance to nationalism and the 1980 boycott of the Moscow Olympics* – which was published in the September 1982 edition of the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*.

In *Bill Bradley's Olympics*, Bradley was interjecting himself into the internal USOC debate, while bringing some long-held beliefs on the overall Games to the table at the same time. His prescriptions were quite clear. Simply stated, his article was revolutionary in its thinking, yet reflective of the progressive sentiment of many in the US Olympic Movement, on a number of issues. In one page of text, he advocated for changes to the rules, procedures and personnel that governed the Games based on a renewed focus on athletes, transparency in governance and Bradley's growing distaste for nationalism. That final element festered over the next decade and a half. It became the chief threat to the Games in Bradley's opinion.

In *Bill Bradley's Olympics*, Bradley opened with his thoughts on the folly of amateurism. "The only eligibility requirement should be a man's skill," he wrote. "Amateurism is impossible to interpret or to enforce with uniformity."³⁰ The roots of this belief are clear. He saw hypocrisy in action with the Soviet team. Straight from the athletes themselves, he heard about their careers as state-sponsored basketball players. Bradley knew he wasn't advocating for radical change; he was bringing an existing condition into the open in the name of a level playing field. Note, he did not advocate for the elimination of professionals from the Olympic ranks. Instead, he asked organisers to embrace them. His reasoning was not one of sport, but of opportunity.

Bradley stressed a renewed focus on the individual athlete throughout the article. He believed swinging the spotlight back toward the individual – and not continuing to shine on the nation they ostensibly represented – diluted the nationalistic tendencies of the Games. Certainly, that was why a man who won gold in a team sport advocated for the elimination of team sports. "Team sports emphasize nationalism, and the thrust of a purified Olympics is away from nationalism," Bradley wrote. "The individual, as envisioned by most Olympic propaganda, is the central figure. With team sports he gets lost among the team regimen, national transference and group pressure."³¹ Although initially jarring, the belief was in line with Bradley's Coubertinian mindset. Throughout his leadership of the IOC, the Baron also strongly believed the Olympic slate should exclude team sports to maintain focus on the individual.³² Toward the end of the article, Bradley became more "participant oriented." To him, that meant spreading the Games over a longer period of time – perhaps even over four months – and returning

to the festival or exposition roots of the early 20th century. This approach ran counter to the accelerating influence of television, already compressing the Games into tighter schedules in the early 1970s. Bradley sought to ease that pressure, and return a sense of community to the Games. In part, he would accomplish that by expanding the offerings beyond athletics. "Why not recognise creativity, spirituality and tolerance?" he asked.³³ To him, that meant incorporating a film festival, poetry readings, concerts and cultural shows into the Olympic Games. It would be a celebration of the "whole person." And there would be no winners.

*There would be no bronze or silver medals. The gold medal would be given only when the Olympic record was broken. Thus, the athletes would compete against a standard and not against each other or against another's nation. The obsession with 'one's event' would decrease and TV might in a truer sense report on a 'global village.'*³⁴

This picture of 'competition without competition' is difficult to imagine. But in service of the elimination of nationalism, Bradley stood by the position throughout his career.

Nationalism also played a part in Bradley's advocacy for the article's expressing of funding mechanism recommendations. He suggested international organisations – namely the United Nations (UN) and World Bank – underwrite the cost of the Games for each host nation. The financial support would democratize hosting by deepening the pool. Although not radical, per se, this point is important to keep in mind for reasons noted later. Needless to say, Bradley did not envision a Soviet Union-hosted Games at this point in time.

Bradley also looked at the governance of the Games. He called on the US Government to subsidize directly its Olympic athletes through aid to beginning sports programmes and the construction of training facilities. "With adequate funds and open competition, Olympic officials will be freed from undesirable compromises with commercial sources," Bradley wrote. "Assuring facilities for all citizens will give everyone the chance to excel." He demanded the USOC adopt a more transparent stance when selecting coaches and officials, as well as on all financial matters. Bradley pushed for athlete representation on both the IOC and National Olympic Committees. These prescriptions echoed almost exactly the findings of the *New York Times* investigation. "One of the biggest problems with the ruling body on international competition is that it has lost touch with the time," Bradley wrote. "Disqualifying (US Olympian Wayne) Collett and (US Olympian Vince) Matthews, the two American runners who slouched on the victory stand, is the action of old men, unwilling to understand."

Matthews and Collett won gold and silver, respectively, in the 400-metre run in the 1972 Munich Games. During the playing of the US National Anthem during the medal ceremony, the men "stood together on the No. 1 step, shuffled their feet, stroked their chins and talked, paying no attention to the National Anthem as it was played. They didn't even face the flag."³⁵ The German crowd whistled the pair off the field. Collett responded to the heckling with a clenched fist salute.

That last action struck too close to home for the IOC. In the 1968 Mexico City Games, American sprinters John Carlos and Tommie Smith showed up the IOC with a silent clenched-fist – or 'black power' salute – atop the podium. The IOC took no action then, although the USOC sent the athletes home. Matthews and Collett had a different fate just four years later. Despite both men being scheduled for later races, the IOC barred them from future competition. As an athlete, Bradley never came to terms with that injustice. "Athletes know the issues that most concern their fellow athletes," he concluded.

With the publication of these articles, Bradley made his feelings known – albeit to an extremely small audience. While they lacked in immediate impact, the articles served as a 'first draft' for the future US Senator for a fight less theoretical than the one presented in 1973.

* * *

In July 1976, Bradley entered his final season as a professional basketball player. Although the Knicks finished out of the playoff hunt that season, a 'consolation prize' of some significance awaited the soon-to-be former forward in the US Senate.³⁶ Perhaps with an eye on that future, he wrote an opinion article for the *New York Times* on 21st July 1976 – only four days after the opening ceremonies of the Montreal Games. In the article, "Five ways to reform the Olympics," Bradley further codified his beliefs on the overt nationalism he saw as plaguing the Games, and offered remedies to returning them to what he perceived as a purer event. The structure of the article – and many of the arguments – drew on his previous articles for *Forum for Contemporary History/Intellectual Digest*. The edits he made between 1972–3 and 1976 were sparked by two factors: reforms undertaken by the USOC and the looming Moscow Games.

By 1976, many of Bradley's suggested USOC reforms had begun – support to help lower- and middle-class athletes, athlete representatives at many levels, federal subsidies and democratic process of choosing officials. Change began in November 1972 when John Kelly Jr. and E. Newbold Black IV, both young, former Olympians, were nominated for the offices of Vice-President and Secretary of the USOC, respectively. The pair held strong views toward reshaping the organisation in terms of

athlete's voice and redefining amateurism as well as committee priorities.³⁷ Their elevation was the first step in a series of internal reforms. Obviously pleased with the progress, Bradley dropped the USOC discussion from his *Times* article, and refocused on the threat of nationalism. Certainly, nationalism had a place in his earlier articles; however, it was elevated in prominence when Moscow was awarded the Games by a 39–20 vote at the 75th IOC Session in October 1974. By 1976, Bradley was not the first to signal potential problems with these Games, but was among the first to prescribe solutions. Unlike the *Forum for Contemporary History/Intellectual Digest* articles, Bradley's contention in the *Times* was directed more broadly at the Olympic Movement: "The United States should discontinue its participation in the Games unless the promotion of mutual understanding among nations becomes a more central focus of the quadrennial festival." Even during the most heated moments of the 1980 boycott debate, nobody wanted to walk away from the Games permanently. Even Bradley, once elected, tempered those remarks somewhat.

Short of foreseeing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the *Times* article rang remarkably true in hindsight. After a fictional, doomsday introduction, Bradley entered into his prescriptions for saving the Games. Like the previous piece, he employed a list to get his points across. The article echoed previous arguments – open access, elimination of team sports and a participant-oriented focus. While many similarities existed between the articles, the differences were reflective of a changing atmosphere, and changing geopolitical realities. In 1972–3, the 'Soviet boogeyman' was not preparing to host the world. This forced shift in Bradley's thinking led to the introduction of one of the more interesting – if not original – suggestions: a permanent site for the Olympic Games.

*The Olympics should be permanently in Greece, the country of their origin. All nations who compete in the Games should help underwrite the expense of a permanent facility that ultimately might become self-sustaining. Every four years, the world's youth would return to Mount Olympus in a spirit of friendship to compete in the finest athletic installation in the world.*³⁸

Gone from this article was his previous call for UN and/or World Bank funding of the Games. That point was no longer necessary, as his single-site solution required contributions from all participating countries. There was no longer a burden to potential host nations, as there will be only one host nation from then on. The argument for a permanent site goes back to the re-ignition of the Games in the late 19th Century when parties advocated for Athens as a permanent site, but that notion ran counter to Coubertin's vision of a traveling Games. Bradley

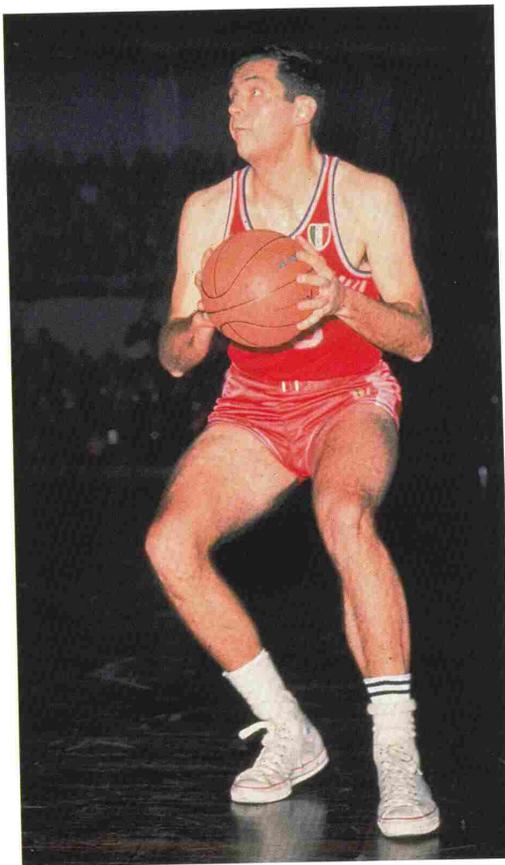
never mentioned a permanent site in previous work, even though it fit his anti-nationalist mindset perfectly in 1972-3. He saw the solution in shared funding by global bodies. Location was never the issue – until the communists entered the picture.

In the *Times* article, he again advocated for the near-elimination of Olympic medals. “Everyone in the Olympics should get a participant’s medal. Silver and bronze medals should be eliminated. Gold medals should go to someone who breaks an Olympic record,” Bradley wrote. “Then, an athlete would compete against a standard, not against another athlete or another country.” Like his advocacy for the elimination of team sports, the watering down of Olympic competition did not seem to fit with an elite athlete. But Bradley has always been nuanced in his views on the subject. He saw the dangers in an event rooted in pure competition without benefit from “mutual understanding.”³⁹ He carried that feeling from sport into politics.

Unlike the previous articles upon which it was based, Bradley’s *Times* article resonated in both the sport and political world. But the sentiments he had been expressing for five years were about to get tested on the biggest stage possible. In November 1978, Bradley defeated Republican Jeffrey Bell with approximately 56 per cent of the vote for a seat in the US Senate representing the State of New Jersey. He had been preparing his whole life – both on and off the court – for what awaited him in that august body. And his first test would have a familiar ring.

* * *

In August 1979, Bradley returned to the Soviet Union. No longer a student traveler, he arrived as a member of a US Senate delegation invited by the Supreme Soviet for preliminary talks on SALT II. The delegation was young. Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), 36, headed the group of six. Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), 47, was the veteran. The remaining four senators, including Bradley, were all first-termers.⁴⁰ Their youth contrasted even more when sitting across from their Soviet counterparts – a group “considerably older and, by contrast, stolid and formal.”⁴¹ The majority of the three-day visit was dominated by Cold War talk of arms accumulation, Eastern European Theatre tank positioning and Backfire bombers. Bradley said the visit got across the Senate’s view that the next round of arms negotiations would have to encompass the NATO and Warsaw Pact forces in Europe, “and that the advantage the Soviet Union has in those forces can no longer exist to the degree it does.”⁴² Even though only months away, and already buried in controversy, the Moscow Olympics were not on the table for discussion during this visit. That fact did not keep Bradley from drawing conclusions about a Soviet Games, however. “After my visit to Moscow last summer along



Although the New York Knicks had chosen Bill Bradley in the 1965 draft, he had won a Rhodes Scholarship and opted to study at Oxford. During his stay in Europe he played for Olimpia Milano. In 1967 he finally moved to the NBA.

Photo: Olimpia Milano Archives

with Senator Biden and a number of other senators,” Bradley said in January 1980, “it was clear to me that the Soviets will spare nothing to make the Olympics the biggest peacetime propaganda event since Sputnik.”⁴³

* * *

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. This set off a chain reaction around the globe. In the United States, President Carter answered with a series of measures designed to place pressure on the Soviets to withdraw. These measures included the threat of a grain embargo, withdrawal of the SALT II agreement from Senate consideration and a possible boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow. Western governments first considered the idea of boycotting the Moscow Olympics in response to the situation in Afghanistan at the December 1979 meeting of NATO representatives. On 20th January 1980, the Carter Administration set a deadline by which the Soviet Union must pull out of Afghanistan or face consequences including an international boycott of the Games.⁴⁴

Historians have trod this ground frequently. Much has been written about the diplomatic aspects of the crisis with, deservedly, the president and USOC chair at the



Bill Bradley was considered as early as 1988 as a possible candidate for the US presidency, but it was 1999 before he had the confidence to make an attempt. In the photo he greets his supporters together with his wife Ernestine at the last campaign event in Manchester. In the end Bradley lost the primary election to his only competitor, the incumbent Vice-President Al Gore.

Photo: picture-alliance

centre of the discussion. Most historians skim past the Congressional role in the buildup. During the months leading up to the boycott, the elected representatives of the people provided no drama; there was near-unanimous, bipartisan support of the President on this issue. Their actions also had no force of law behind them; what they eventually passed were strictly nonbinding resolutions. However, do not discount Congress' role as inconsequential. The discussions surrounding these votes – both in committee and on the floor – provide a window into wider thinking on the boycott.

Going into the debate, both houses of the US Congress signaled strong support for the boycott. The House of Representatives voted 386–12 on 23rd January 1980, to support a resolution calling on the USOC to press for the transfer or cancelation of the Moscow Games if the Soviet Union did not withdraw from Afghanistan within one month. The resolution also called on the committee to boycott the Games if they could not be transferred or canceled.⁴⁵ The vote represented Congress' first official response to the Soviet invasion.⁴⁶ With the House vote down, attention traveled one week later across the Capitol.

On the eve of Bradley's appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee considering President Carter's call for a boycott, the press rediscovered Bradley's earlier *New York Times* opinion piece. The *Times* called his earlier words on their pages "prophetic, wrong only in a few details"⁴⁷ while the *Washington Post* called his prediction "unsettling accurate."⁴⁸ Even his colleagues were spellbound. Sen. John Glenn called it a "soothsayer's article." These descriptions ushered Bradley into chambers that day. Already standing taller than his peers as the only sitting member of Congress to participate in the Olympics, now he sat for questioning with the brand of 'a prophet.'

On 28th January 1980, Foreign Relations convened its one-day hearing. Bradley led off the day. He leaned heavily on his *Times* article during his testimony. In fact, the entire text of that article was entered into the *Congressional Record* from the hearings. His fellow senators remained somewhat spellbound by Bradley's previously published prescience. "I don't know if you are as prophetic on other matters," offered Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.) during the hearing, "but if you have an extra crystal ball let me know."⁴⁹ Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.) applauded the junior senator's "foresight that was reflected in his article" and offered that its insights were "very helpful to the committee."⁵⁰

Bradley opened his testimony with a tribute – and an apology – to Coubertin and his vision of an Olympic Movement based on "the ideals of mutual understanding and peace around the world and brotherhood."⁵¹ He said the world had failed Coubertin by turning athletes into "agents for the state."⁵² And then, the junior senator offered a stern warning:

*Mr. Chairman, because of all these developments and others I concluded several years ago that the spirit of the Olympics was being extinguished, that an Olympics which encourages political exploitation can be harmed by politics, and that some political conflict between major powers inevitably would bring the Games to a halt or destroy them altogether unless they were changed in fundamental ways.*⁵³

He then offered his support for a boycott if the Games were not moved or postponed, as well as made his pitch for their permanent site to be located in Greece.

*By withdrawing from the Moscow Games in the face of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, we will show not only that we condemn that invasion, but also that we no longer will participate in the political corruption of the Olympics. ... I ask my colleagues to act now, before it is too late, and the spirit of the Olympics is lost forever. If we act in time, 1980 will be remembered not as the year that politics defeated the Olympics, but instead as the year the Olympics rose above politics and regained its position as the 'Truce of Gods.'*⁵⁴

Following Bradley's statement, his fellow senators offered a handful of questions/comments on the testimony. The desperation of the situation was evident in the discussion. Most focused on ways to salvage something from the Games: Could they move the Games? How about postponing them? Perhaps, they could set up a rival Olympics? Biden even asked if returning them to the site of the 1976 Games in Montreal was a possibility. (It wasn't a possibility, Bradley reminded him, as Canadian families already occupied the athlete facilities.) The bulk of the discussion centred on Bradley's long-held belief in a permanent site. His answers echoed directly his previous seven years of arguments, although he said the "chance was never better to achieve a permanent site in Greece than it is today."⁵⁵ Bradley brought a grounded reality to each answer. All solutions were possibilities, he stressed, but only as possibilities for future Games. For these 1980 Games, the decision was go or no go.

On 28th January 1980, Foreign Relations voted unanimously to urge the United States not to participate in the Moscow Games. The next day, the Senate followed its committee's lead and voted 88-4 in favour of a resolution calling for the United States to boycott the Moscow Olympics regardless of whether Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan. Note how the Senate action differed from the House – even from the President. The boycott was not linked to any action by the Soviets in Afghanistan.⁵⁶ The senators were signaling they saw no hope of a withdrawal. One senator went so far as to warn that a conditional boycott might encourage the Soviets to "finish their dirty work" expeditiously.⁵⁷

In recommending the unconditional language, Foreign Relations felt "the decision to boycott the Moscow Games should be a clear policy stand, a firm response to the invasion itself and to the fact that the Soviet breach of international law made it unfit to host games whose high aim is the promotion of international goodwill and peaceful competition. ... (It would be) improper to tie our position of principle to a goal we did not realistically hope to obtain."⁵⁸ If you listen closely enough, you can hear the voice of Bradley coming through in those words. The Senate resolution also called for the creation of a permanent home for the Games in Greece. That step would end a "moveable propaganda feast."⁵⁹ Bradley called the Senate action a "painful" but necessary step. "The imperatives of a Free World order are more important than the imperatives of the playing field," he told the *Washington Post*.

When Carter's deadline passed a month later without any change to the situation, the President pushed US allies to pull their Olympic teams from the upcoming Games. Technically, the decision of whether or not to send US athletes to the Olympic Games did not actually rest with either the President or Congress. It

was the USOC that made the final determination in such a situation. In the face of such broad support, however, the USOC expressed its willingness to respect the decision of the US Government with regard to the Games.⁶⁰ Carter declared the boycott on 21st March 1980. Still, athletes could have independently traveled to Moscow to compete. Carter blocked that possibility with an executive order making such travel illegal.

The United States had officially boycotted its first Olympic Games.

* * *

Bradley's beliefs on the Games were neither the impetus nor the determining factor for the 1980 Olympic boycott. The issue was far bigger than one man. However, his influence played a determining role in both the tone and direction of debate in the US Congress. Without his multiple perspectives, including that as an Olympian, it is not difficult to see the possibility of this debate veering off into the Cold War hyperbole that dominated the era. Anchored in Coubertinian principles, Bradley's reasoned critiques of and solutions for the Games gave lawmakers a safe pathway for action. While this paper only explores the roots of Bradley's influence on the 1980 Olympic boycott debate, he was not done there. The senator continued his advocacy for a purer Olympic Games throughout his legislative career, which ended in 1996.

In 1993, Bradley led the charge demanding the IOC reject Beijing's bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games because of the nation's human rights record. "By associating itself with the positive symbols of the Olympic Movement," Bradley told the *New York Times*, "the Chinese leadership seeks to erase the memories of Tiananmen and divert attention from its human rights record."⁶¹ In addition to authoring Congressional action, the senator personally wrote IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch and members of the selection committee calling for the bid's rejection. He wrote, in part: "I do not believe we should allow the Chinese Government a huge propaganda victory while it routinely tortures and imprisons political dissidents, severely restricts freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, brutally suppresses religious practices and oppresses the native population of Tibet."⁶² Although the IOC was enraged by what they saw as Bradley's "political interference akin to the US-led boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics,"⁶³ they rejected the Chinese bid by two votes, 45-43, in September 1993.⁶⁴ Of course, more than Bradley's advocacy was at play in that decision – but that cries of 'boycott as retaliation' did harken back to the debate 13 years earlier.

Nevertheless, Bradley saw victory in the defeat. "This is a good day for those who are struggling for freedom in China and a proud day for the Olympic Movement,"

he told the *New York Times*. "With this vote, the IOC has stated human rights considerations have a rightful place in the Olympic Games. This vote should advance the cause of human rights in China."⁶⁵ In July 2001, the IOC awarded Beijing the Olympic Games for 2008.

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Bradley has carried the weight of expectations his entire life. In fact, these expectations are the single defining aspect of his personal narrative. Be it on the basketball court, in the classroom or in the halls of Congress, his success within that framework has come from a well-defined set of principles in which he has remained remarkably consistent. Call him what you wish – a wonk, a soothsayer, even an idealist – his Olympic Movement expectations, and his critiques embedded within those, are borne upon the same principled consistency. Although his thinking evolved, Bradley has remained centred on a Coubertinian-like belief in Olympism. That trait has allowed him not only to sound the alarm louder and longer than anyone else over threats to the sanctity of the Games, but also with more credibility and influence than anyone offered during the 1980 debate, and, perhaps, more than anyone has offered in the US Olympic Movement during the last 40 years. ■

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