



TOP FIVE OLYMPIC FILMS

22 Jul 2016

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The team. The triumph. The punishing physical preparation and dizzying heights of world recognition. The Olympics are fertile ground for movie makers looking for inspiring tales of human endeavour and awe-inspiring visuals to wow us with.

Who doesn't want to watch an underdog's journey from zero to hero? Especially if it involves a sobriety montage that neatly condenses years of repetitive, boring training sessions into a zippy few minutes scored by a hit song. Gold!

In honour of the Rio 2016 Games, here are our five favourite Olympic flicks.

COOL RUNNINGS (1993) (G)



© Walt Disney Pictures

A Jamaican bobsled team in the Winter Olympics? Madness! This smash hit fish-out-of-water comedy was based on the true story of the team's debut in the Calgary 1988 Winter Olympics. Real footage of the team's crash in the Games was used in the film's climactic sequence. In true Olympic spirit, however, the other teams were reportedly very welcoming of the Jamaican team in real life – the Games themselves was film fiction.

Special note: Cool Runnings was the last film starring John Candy to be released before the much-loved comedian's death. Sob.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE (1981) (G)



© Allied Stars Ltd, Goldenrod Films, Enigma Productions

Even if you have never seen this Olympic classic, you know the theme tune, thanks to it being used in countless slow mo sports in film and TV. Also based on a true story, Chariots won four Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Screenplay and Soundtrack, of course.

The film follows two sprinters on their path to represent Great Britain the 1924 Olympics as they negotiate thorny questions of religion, duty and class. There's also some romance and a jolly Lord who trains on his estate by leaping hurdles with glasses of champagne balanced on them. Good show, or chaf!

Special note: Ye olde Olympians look so normal! No bulging muscles, no Lytta, no problem.

BLADES OF GLORY (2007) (M)



© DreamWorks Pictures, MTV Films, Red Star

Starring Will Ferrell and Ripstone (played himself), Jon Heder, Blades of Glory is the figure skating movie you never knew you needed in your life until you see it. Can we add Ferrell and naive Heder put aside their differences to compete as the first same-sex pairs team in the "World Winter Sport Games"? Can they execute the terrifying Iron Lotus move without decapitating one of them – a fate that befell another pair? Why are the slyling villains (Will Arnett and Amy Poehler, still married at the time of shooting, sorry so, ahem, into each other? Not based on a true story.

Special note: Jon Heder actually broke his ankle while skating for this very special take on the inspirational sports film genre.

SALUTE (2008) (PG)



© Paramount Pictures and Warner Brothers

The image of two medal-winning athletes giving the Black Power salute as they stood, heads bowed, on the Olympic podium in Mexico City in 1968 is iconic. The protest against racial inequality by Americans Tommie Smith and John Carlos shocked the world but the fascinating documentary Salute also tells the story of the third man on that podium, silver medal winner in the 200 metres and Australian Olympian, Peter Norman.

Norman wore a human rights badge on the podium in solidarity with Smith and Carlos, and was also treated harshly in his home country as a result. Salute was made by Norman's nephew, Matt Norman, and is a moving tribute to three men who very publicly stood up for what they believed in.

Special note: Tommie Smith and John Carlos remained friends with Norman and were pallbearers at his funeral in 2006.

MUNICH (2005) (MA 15+)



© Amblin Entertainment, The Kennedy/Marshall Company, Alliance Atlantis

Directed by Steven Spielberg, Munich follows an Israeli assassination team seeking revenge for the murder of 11 Israeli athletes and officials during the 1972 Munich Olympics by Black September, a Palestinian terrorist group. The film's release was not without controversy, but it's a riveting watch that reveals a truly tragic chapter of the Games' history and its aftermath. Featuring a fine performance by our own Eric Braeden as the Mossad agent leading the mission who becomes progressively plagued by fear and suspicion.

Special note: Actor Gari Weinberg plays his own father, Moshe Weinberg, one of the Israeli team members killed during the attack when Gari was only a month old.

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