

Framing the Soviet Athlete in American Media

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Abstract

This study looked at how the athletes from the Soviet bloc were portrayed in the U.S. print sports media during the first and last Olympic Games during the Cold War. It looked at one-third of the articles published in the New York Times and the Washington Post during the two Olympics and examined how often the press mentioned the Soviet bloc athletes, how they referenced them, how the coverage of Soviet wins and losses reflected reality and whether the athletes were mentioned within a Cold War context. The findings showed that while about 50 percent of the articles studied covered Soviet athletes and athletes were depicted as simply athletes, the coverage did not entirely match reality of success of the Soviet bloc athletes.

I. Introduction

Sports and politics go hand-in-hand, mirroring each other in the ways they show the human character, institutional relations and the ideology behind those relations. By pitting team against team, as politics often does with political parties, countries or sets of allies, it ultimately gives sports a relationship with politics in the most inherent way. The two institutions, sport and politics, are inseparable, and the connection is unavoidable (Edwards, 1984). This connection can be seen most easily on the international scale with the Olympic Games. Due to the linkage between sports and politics, as well as the basic characteristics of the Olympics, the Games have become a suitable tool for foreign policy (Riggs, Eastman and Golobic, 1993). In modern times, almost as many political journalists have attended the Olympics as sports journalists. In many media outlets, this has translated into stories from both political and sports angles, giving audiences pieces from both sides of the same coin (Hill, 1999). No example of this has been greater, however, than directly after World War II. It was then that the world was able to witness the “Cold War drama being acted out in the international sports arena by two titans locked in an ideological struggle” (Edwards, 1984).

With the presence of the television becoming more extensive by the first Olympic Games of the Cold War, the media was able to begin politicizing the Games for the public, which amplified the effects of the East-West battle in the international sports arena (Riggs, Eastman and Golobic, 1993). The media used framing to shape what people saw, which can be thought of as a sub-part of agenda setting. It affected the saliency of a certain viewpoint and the way in which the audience interpreted it (Scheufele, 1999). Scholar Dietram A. Scheufele described framing as such: “Within the realm of political communication, framing has to be defined and operationalized on the basis of this social constructivism. Mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewer use to interpret and discuss public events” (1999). Because the media intentionally chooses to tell one story and not another, it has the ultimate control over what the public sees within a certain event, such as the Olympics. Therefore, it was the media that exploited the political battle of the Cold

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War throughout the Olympics, accentuating the politicalization of the games. It used politics and nationalism to increase viewer interest and up revenue, which brought upon an overwhelming sense of ideological battle to the Cold War (Riggs, Eastman and Golobic, 1993). It used images, such as national flags and teamwork, as well as rhetoric of patriotism and unity to perpetuate the idea of nationalism in the Olympics (Wenner, 1988).

II. Literature Review

Every two years, the mass media turns its eyes to the Olympic Games. The Olympics is an event that is extensively covered by the media and has been covered on a large scale, even back when the Winter and Summer Olympics were in the same year (Puijk, 2009). Aristotle described a spectacle as a “weak hybrid form of drama, a theatrical concoction that relied upon external factors (shock, sensation and the passionate release) as a substitute for intrinsic aesthetic integrity” (Farrell, 1989). Farrell asserted that the Olympics have become a spectacle due to the rhetoric used in the mass media to cover it (1989). The review of the literature in this field looked scholars’ findings on how the mass media has approached the Olympics in the modern era (since the Winter Olympics began in 1924), especially in terms of how it approached the Games during the Cold War.

Framing and sports media

Many scholars have defined agenda-setting framing as the selection of information about a topic to convey one story to an audience over another (McCombs and Shaw, 1972, Neuman, Just, Crigler 1992, Entman, 1993). Neuman, Just and Crigler argued that these two methods have been the tools with which the media has worked (1992), and McCombs and Shaw suggested that such tools have been used to create an idea of what was and was not important (1972). Entman described framing as such: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (1993).

Scholars have recognized sports media’s role in framing and agenda setting (Billings and Angelini, 2007, Zaharopoulos, 2007). The mass media has an agenda, even in sports media, and it uses its communication to create frames of information for the public to consume (Zaharopoulos, 2007). Zaharopoulos found that the frames have primarily reflected journalistic values, such as impact, relevance and proximity, and so these values have shaped what stories were told and how they were portrayed to the audience (2007). Many scholars have argued that because sports media have acted as gatekeepers to information, sometimes the representations in stories have not necessarily matched reality (Hardin, Dodd, Chance and Walsdorf, 2004, Billings and Angelini, 2007). For example, Billings and Angelini found that oftentimes in Olympic coverage, Americans have been portrayed more in the United States media than other athletes from other nations, even though Americans haven’t always been the ones who are winning events (2007).

In the best interest of the media

Several scholars have found that the mass media, especially television, directly benefits from coverage of the Olympic Games (Slater, 1998, Farrell, 1989, Billings and Angelini, 2007, Riggs, Eastman and Golobic, 1993). Slater argued that network executives realized quickly that the Olympics drew in a multitude of viewers and they were willing to do whatever it took to attract the most viewers possible (1998). In the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, the American Broadcasting Company spent \$91.5 million for the rights to air 22 hours of prime-time coverage of the Games (Farrell, 1989).

Scholarship also has looked at how the most common sports with the biggest American names have been chosen to air during the Olympics because that has been what the target audience wanted to see (Billings and Angelini, 2007). Other scholars have found that the media also exploited the political situation during the Cold War for its own purposes, using politics and nationalism to increase viewer interest and up revenue (Riggs, Eastman and Golobic, 1993).

The Olympics as a political playing field

In general, scholars have argued that media coverage of sports has emphasized two things—conflict and animosity (Salwen and Garrison, 1987). One basic example of this is the way it has provided updates and commentary on nations viewed as political enemies during the Olympics, such as the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War (Dai, 2006). Salwen and Garrison noted that “politics cannot be divorced from sport” (1987), and this has been shown in sports’ ability to divide people into groups based on nationalities and politics (Cho, 2009). The Olympics has provided a perfect model for seeing the politicalization of sports in the media, as it has always been used as an arena for diplomatic struggle for dominance (Trbic, 2008, Schillinger and Jenswold, 1987). Puijk suggested that the U.S. media has done this often, framing stories in terms of “long-lasting battles between enemies, transforming single events into continuing melodramas” (2009).

Hill argued that this politicalization has caused as many, if not more, political journalists to attend the Olympics as sports journalists. With this has come many political and athletic stories, covering the same event but from a different angle (1999). Research during the 1984 Summer Olympics found that the Los Angeles *Times* even reported athletic results in political terms, referring to event titles as victories for the country or even the ideology of that country instead of simply an athletic victory (Salwen and Garrison, 1987).

Nationalism and the American athlete

Many scholars have argued that the typical mass media outlet has tended to convey the ideology of the nation in which it reports and has extended to political and economical realms, which in the case of the United States, has meant showing things that related to America first. (Dai, 2006, Billings and Angelini, 2007). Dai also noted that media coverage has related to the news interest of the state in which it is being shown, and thus the Olympic coverage in the United States has related to the country as a whole (2006). The mass media also has been found to be ethnocentric in coverage, and so it has focused on the country to which it catered (Zaharopoulos, 2007). Billings and Angelini described U.S. media coverage of the Olympics as “unabashedly American,” used to strengthen the country’s sense of self-importance in the world (2007).

Several scholars have explored how the mass media uses images, such as national flags and teamwork, patriotic rhetoric and heroic profile pieces of American athletes to perpetuate the idea of nationalism in the Olympics (Wenner, 1988, Farrell, 1989). Billings and Angelini argued that this has translated into less coverage of obscure sports where foreign athletes win most medals and more coverage of events in which there is a chance for American athletes to win medals (2007). Puijk found that the commentators for the events also have used what they said—and what they didn’t say—to frame the competitions to take on a national angle (2009). For instance, Schillinger and Jenswold found that in the 1980 and 1984 Games, the *Washington Post* carried a nationalistic tone in its coverage of the Olympics (1987). Even *TV Guide* was found to have a nationalistic bias, demonstrated by its cover story on February 4, 1984, which was entitled, “Viewer’s Guide to America’s Golden Opportunities in Sarajevo.” It focused on which events the Americans should succeed in and ignored athletes from other countries (Farrell, 1989).

The battle between the US and the USSR

During the Cold War, the Olympics were largely seen as a political arena, and with the rise of television coinciding with the first Olympic Games of the Cold War era in 1952, the East-West tensions were found to be amplified by the mass media (Nendel, 2002, Riggs, Eastman and Golobic, 1993). Scholars have found that Soviet success was attributed greatly to the “machine-like” quality of its political system and that the athletes were much like robots with little or no emotion (Nendel, 2002, Pedersen, Miloch and Laucella, 2007). The *Reader’s Digest*, in 1955, was found to have credited the success of the athletes from the USSR as due to “conscripted and early training, hard work, excellent coaching and, above all, to generous assistance by the state,” and it pushed for the United States to assist its athletes so they could get on the same level as the Soviets (Nendel 2002). Nendel found that when the Soviets failed, it was seen as proof that Communism could not succeed, but when the Soviet athletes were victorious, the media was flippant, saying this was not surprising because of the unfair advantage the Soviet athletes had (2002).

Guttman argued that the subtle idea that the Games were a chance to show superiority over the Soviets pervaded throughout the media coverage of the Olympics during the Cold War (1987). Several scholars have suggested that the media chose to show American superiority by emphasizing American sportsmanship and highlighting the medal count (Nendel, 2002, Hill, 1999), which Hill found to have interested the United States’ public mainly because it wanted to see America defeat the Soviets, not because it cared about the

athletes or the sports (1999). The United States media also was found to have said the Soviet presence in the Olympics posed a threat to the future of the Olympic movement because the USSR was so focused on nationalism and winning (Nendel, 2002). Farrell argued that the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid stirred up more Cold War zeal, as the Games became a symbolic confrontation with the Soviets that the country hadn't had yet in the political sphere (1989). This idea that the Olympics were characterized by the Cold War was so pervasive that even in the 1984 Summer Olympics, when the USSR was not present, Salwen and Garrison found that the United States-USSR relationship was still the focus of many stories throughout the Games (1987).

Overall, the literature shows an overarching trend in the American mass media to frame the coverage to emphasize U.S. athletes and U.S. principles, pitting them against other nations. The Cold War era was no exception, and the mass media during this time was characterized by the dichotomy of "Us versus Them"—the United States versus the Soviet Union.

All of the literature in this field shows the American mass media's general approach to the Olympics. It focuses on large topics, such as the interaction between nations such as the United States and the Soviet Union. It does not, however, look at the smaller players in that battle. It discusses the pawns for the United States—the American athletes—but it leaves out the other side. Information on how the Soviet athletes were covered in the U.S. mass media is missing. This study examined that missing link in order to better understand the Olympic Games during the Cold War era. It looked at how the U.S. mass media portrayed Soviet Olympic athletes during the Cold War.

III. Methods

The study was aimed to look at the depiction of athletes from the Soviet Union during the Cold War. There were four main research questions that have been answered in the study.

RQ1: How often did the U.S. print sports media mention Soviet athletes, and was the frequency different from one Olympics to the other?

RQ2: Did the U.S. print sports media reference the athletes by name, or did it identify them by nationality/ideology?

RQ3: Were the mentions of successes and failures of the Soviet athletes comparable to their actual successes in the Olympics?

RQ4: Were the Soviet athletes mentioned within a Cold War context, or were they seen simply as athletes?

The research looked at print media during the 1952 and 1988 Summer Olympics. Print media was chosen because it is readily available for both time periods. Because television was just beginning its rise in 1952, broadcasts are not easily attainable for that year. The newspapers that were examined were the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, chosen for their prevalence in American society and their availability for study. Both were accessed through the ProQuest Historical Newspaper database.

The time frame was during both the 1952 and 1988 Summer Olympics. These two years were chosen because they were the first and last Olympics of the Cold War in which both the United States and the Soviet Union participated. This allows one to see how the media functioned at the beginning and the end of the ideological battle. It enables one to not only see how the media worked during the Cold War, but also to compare how U.S. media coverage of Soviet athletes was at two opposite points in the Cold War and see how it changed over time. The study looked at newspaper articles during the 16-day period in which the Olympics ensued. The 1952 Summer Olympics took place between July 19 and August 2, while the 1988 Summer Olympics were from September 17 to October 2. Articles were chosen during this time period to look at how the athletes were portrayed as the events were happening, rather than after the fact when more reflecting and analyzing could go on. This ensures that the research gathered looked at how the U.S print media covered the athletes in real time.

The articles were chosen by using the search term "Olympics" for each newspaper during the specified dates. Because this key word was so overarching to the topic and provided so many results, it was the only one chosen. The search resulted in 952 pieces, which were then sorted through and all articles relating

to the Games were selected for examination. Results not used were photos and cutlines with no accompanying articles, duplicated articles, information boxes, advertisements, columns, news summaries, letters to the editor, articles that did not mention sports in the first three paragraphs and therefore were not seen as being primarily about the Olympics, event statistics and Associate Press/United Press International articles present in both newspapers—in this case, only one was looked at. The reason for this was because none of these things provide accurate information relating to this study. Items without articles, such as photos, cutlines and information boxes, give quick information without detail, which eliminates a lot of opportunities for framing. Also, because the media is providing a service to the American public, these quick pieces of information were mostly about American athletes. Items such as columns, letters to the editor and advertisements are supposed to be opinionated, and therefore these pieces do not accurately depict the majority of United States' print stories. Finally, stories that are not directly about sports oftentimes reference the Olympics and different happenings with athletes in order to make a point, but the writer uses these references for his or her own agenda. This means that the references are not purely sports, and that was not what this study is about.

All articles from both Olympics were reviewed for mentions of Soviet athletes. If the team or athlete was referenced only as the country name, then it was not counted (i.e. the Soviet Union versus Soviets). The reasoning for this was based on a couple ideas. First, a lot of literature has already been published on how the Soviet Union as a whole was portrayed in the United States' media, and by coding for those mentions, the study would simply be repeating what has already been done. Second, by only looking at references to actual people, it would see how the press treats the athletes themselves, who have names and faces and emotions. It is much easier for the press to stereotype something that does not have a concrete entity, but this study was aimed to see how the print media depicted living, breathing souls.

Athletes from the entire Soviet bloc were included in the study, so the following countries were identified: the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany (in the 1988 Olympics — it was not allowed to compete in the 1952 Games), Hungary, Poland and Romania. The reason for this was that because of the close relations with the Soviet Union, many of these countries were grouped together with the nation in the minds of the American public. Therefore, the athletes from these countries should be examined for the same reason that the Soviet athletes should be examined. All of these countries were on the opposite side of the Cold War from the United States, so in a Cold War context, it would make sense that they would be portrayed in the same way as the Soviet Union.

All the articles that mentioned Soviet bloc athletes were recorded. One third of those articles, 62 total, were chosen as a sample for this study. The author carefully investigated the sample to look for several specific parts. First, how the athletes were referenced was recorded, whether it be simply by nationality/ideology or by name (i.e. the Soviet runner vs. Emil Zatopek). Then, the mentions of wins and losses were tallied. If the athlete won an event, it was marked as a Soviet win. If the athletes that are referenced do not win the event, regardless of the finish, then it was tallied as a loss. This way one could determine how often the U.S. press gave Soviet athletes coverage when they weren't winning gold medals. Finally, direct mentions of United States-Soviet Union relations were noted. These mentions included if Americans were depicted as having interaction with any number of Soviets outside of the actual competition, if the article implicitly mentioned the Cold War or if it mentioned the "East" and the "West."

There was an expected outcome for each of the research questions.

H1: Soviets would not be mentioned very often in the U.S. print media, and there would be a lower percentage of articles mentioning Soviet athletes in the first Olympics than the last.

H2: The U.S. print media would refer to the athletes more times by nationality/ideology than by their actual names, thus tying their identity entirely to their association with the Soviet Union.

H3: The media would favor mentioning Soviet losses, regardless of how well the Soviet bloc's overall performance actually was in the Olympics.

H4: The athletes would be seen more often in a Cold War context; however, in the 1988 Games, the press would begin to depict them more as athletes, although still in a Cold War setting a fair amount.

Each of these hypotheses was developed based on knowledge of the Cold War and the previous research done on the general depiction of the Soviet Union during the Olympics of the Cold War era.

IV. Results

A total of 337 articles were examined during the two Olympics using this method—96 from the 1952 Games and 241 from the 1988 Games. Of those articles, 186 mentioned Soviet athletes in some capacity. A full breakdown of the raw article data can be found in Table 1.

During the Helsinki Olympics, 59.4 percent of the articles mentioned competitors from the Soviet bloc, while 53.5 percent of the articles from Seoul mentioned them. The breakdown between the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* are very similar, with 55.2 percent of *Times* articles and 55.2 percent of *Post* articles referencing the Soviets. In both years, 55.2 percent of the stories mention Soviet athletes, while 78.6 percent mention American athletes. It was not surprising that more stories were written about American athletes because American mass media was catering toward an American audience. The 55.2 percent, though, was 13.9 percent more than the amount of articles referencing athletes from all the other countries combined. That means that 66 other nations' athletes combined had less press coverage than the Soviet bloc athletes received. This can be interpreted as part of the Cold War context in the media. The U.S. mass media showed what will draw the most viewers, and the first thing the American public wanted was to see American athletes. The next thing on the list is to see Soviet block athletes.

The Cold War battle played out through the Olympics. This explains why the Soviets were in the media more often than other nations. The public wanted to see the superiority of the United States by comparing U.S. and Soviet block athletes.

In 1952, it was found more common for reporters to simply reference the athletes by their countries, not giving them a name or identity outside of their home nation. The *New York Times* only gave the athletes an identity in 30 percent of the articles sampled, while grouping them with their birthplace 90 percent of the time. In 1988, a turnaround in this trend was found. Of the articles sampled, 63 percent lumped the athletes under the country's name, but 93 percent of these same articles identified the athletes by name. This showed that the U.S. media began to frame the athletes more as simply competitors in the Olympics, and not as part of a larger country. Earlier when the United States was on its way into the Cold War, rather than on its way out, it saw things more in terms of countries and which country was against which. But in 1988, when the Cold War was coming to a close, the competitors were simply seen as individual competitors and the articles focused more on the Games themselves.

When the athletes were named in the articles, most of the time it was just in a list of finishes. The media would report on various events, oftentimes listing the top finishers, their home countries and the appropriate event statistic. It would also mention the favorites for those events, but little else would be said. For example, one article read as follows: "In other races, Tamas Darnyi of Hungary set a world record in the 400-meter individual medley and Silke Hoerner of East Germany set a world record in the 200-meter breaststroke. Dave Wharton of Warminster, Pa., won the silver medal in the 400 IM. Heike Friedrich of East Germany won the 200-meter freestyle, in which defending gold medalist Mary Wayte of Mercer Island, Wash., finished fourth."** There is not a frame surrounding these athletes, except to say that they are competitors in the Olympics.

A large difference between the two games could be seen in the way the two newspapers approached Soviet wins and losses. In the 1952 articles, for every one article, 1.2 losses were discussed, while .7 wins made it into the copy. The *New York Times* was rarely found talking of results, where only .6 losses and .2 wins were mentioned per article. The *Post* was found more likely to print how the Soviets performed, with 1.9 losses and 1.2 wins per article sampled. In 1988, the *Times* was still less likely to talk about results, printing 1.1 losses and .6 wins for every one article. In contrast, the *Post* printed 1.3 losses and 1.4 wins per article. All in all, based on the sample, readers in 1988 would have seen 1.2 losses and 1.0 win for every one article they read. Although more parity can be seen between the losses and wins mentioned in 1988, more Soviet losses made the papers than wins. This comes in contrast with the reality of the medal counts in both Olympics. By emphasizing the losses more than the wins, it makes the reader assume that athletes from behind the Iron Curtain did not succeed in the Games. In reality, Soviet bloc athletes took home the most gold medals in both Olympics.

In 1952, the Soviet Union came in second, with 22 gold medals. Hungary and Czechoslovakia were also in the top-10 in the gold medal count. The Soviet bloc finished with 47 gold medals, compared to the

** Christine Brennan, "Biondi Atones for Mistake Anchors World Record Win," *Washington Post*, Sept. 21, 1988.

United States' 40. In 1988, the Soviets won the gold medal race with 55, while East Germany came in second. Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria also finished in the top-10. The Soviet bloc earned 118 gold medals that year, while the United States won 36. The large disparity in losses-to-wins in the earlier Olympics can be interpreted as a bias against the Soviets in a Cold War context because the press wanted to emphasize what the Soviets were doing wrong, rather than what they were doing right. While it is not explicit, it is a way that the press can shape what information the audience sees. In the later Games, there is still more losses reported than wins. The press reported fewer wins for every loss than was accurate. Since that does not match reality, it causes one to stop and ponder why the press would choose to represent the Soviets as such. Because of the Cold War context, it can be concluded that the United States press still was trying to show the Soviets in a negative light because they were the enemy of the United States.

The research produced many fewer Cold War frames than expected. In 1952, only just over 30 percent of the articles gave any explicit reference to United States-Soviet Union relations when talking of the athletes themselves. The ones that did often spoke of how well the Soviet athletes were getting along with the American athletes. One article described a scene as such: "As the Vaulting Vicar [Robert Richards, an American athlete] got up after his third failure and smilingly waved his hands to the applauding crowd, Peter Denisenko [a Soviet athlete] rushed over to him, grabbed him in a bear hug and lifted him off the ground."*** There were no such scenes as describing athletes from other countries celebrating or congratulating each other—only the Soviets and Americans. There was an entire article devoted to the American rowing team "fraternizing" with the Soviet rowing team. The article starts out: "American's eight-oar Olympic rowing champions were wined and dined by the Russians today at the Soviet's camp at Otaniemi. The midshipmen from the United States Naval Academy drank vodka, ate caviar, hugged pretty Russian girls and toasted international friendship."**** The rest of the article went on to detail the entirety of the socializing between the two teams. None of the other articles talked about how athletes from other countries spent their time, but because it happened to be the Soviets and the Americans during the Cold War, this is what showed up in the newspapers. However, it appeared much less than expected, with only 31.6 percent of articles during the Helsinki Olympics showing any mention of such a frame and less than one percent in the Seoul Games. Two articles out of the 43 sampled from the Seoul Olympics mentioned the Soviet athletes in a Cold War context.

One frame that did appear during the 1988 Games was that of illegal substances and Soviet athletes. During the Games, the Bulgarian weightlifting team withdrew from competition after two gold medals were stripped from the team for the use of banned substances. A Hungarian was also penalized for such drug use. The United States' media mentioned the incidents in 18.6 percent of its articles during the Olympics. Even in some articles in which the main subject had nothing to do with the weightlifting incident, references to the controversy would creep into the story. One article was entirely about Bulgaria, listing all of the issues that the country had during the Olympics. There was no reference to a specific athlete, but the article specifically mentioned all the troubles that the country encountered during the Games. These mentions influenced the way the audience viewed Bulgarian athletes, even though the weightlifting team was the only one affected by the positive drug tests. There also weren't articles about other countries dealing with such controversy—just the Soviet bloc.

The terms "Soviets" and "Russians" were used interchangeably. The Soviet Union encompassed not only Russia, but also Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Regardless, the U.S. media felt as though the two terms were substitutable. This shows the lack of knowledge of the U.S. media about the Soviet Union, presumably because it was not worth knowing. The United States only saw the Soviet Union as the enemy because of the Cold War, but it didn't take the opportunity to even understand the nation. Therefore, the mass media, and thus the American public, saw the Soviet Union and Russia as the same entity, even though the Soviet Union was so much more than just Russia.

*** Allison Danzig, "U.S. Takes 3 More Track Titles but Russia Keeps Olympic Lead," *New York Times*, July 23, 1952.

**** "U.S., Russia Agree on Steaks, Rowing," *New York Times*, July 25, 1952.

Table 1. Raw data from the examination of 337 newspaper articles

	1952 Summer Olympics	1988 Summer Olympics
Total articles under search term "Olympics"	96	241
Total articles mentioning Soviet bloc athletes	57	129
Total sample size of articles mention Soviet bloc athletes	19	43
Total Soviet bloc wins mentioned in sample articles	13	42
Total Soviet bloc losses mentioned in sample articles	23	51
Total Soviet bloc athletes mentioned by name in sample articles	8	40
Total Soviet bloc athletes referred to only by country in sample articles	14	40

V. Conclusion

Although there were hints of Cold War mentality throughout the samples of the U.S. print media analyzed, for the most part, the press did a good job of portraying Soviet athletes as athletes first, Soviets second. It emphasized the athletic competition without bringing in a lot of Cold War subtexts to distract attention from the sporting events. While some of the athletes and athletic events were specifically chosen to fit a frame that the media were trying to tell, the fact that the frames were as minor as they were showed that the journalists were thinking about the Soviets as fellow athletes, rather than enemies of the Cold War. It must be kept in mind, however, that this is only in terms of references to the athletes themselves. The U.S. media approached the country as a whole differently than they did the athletes themselves.

This study has several limitations, though, that keep the U.S. media's portrayal of Soviet athletes from being generalized. First, it only examined two major newspapers on the East Coast, while there were thousands of others across the United States that may have done things differently. Second, it did not look at any other forms of media, such as television or news magazines. Each medium approached the news differently, and so the portrayal of Soviet athletes may have been different from what was found in these two newspapers. Third, the research was only done for two Olympics during the Cold War (the first and last). There are eight other Olympic Games between the two that were left out of the study. Analysis of those games would have shed some light on the process of changes in the coverage of the Olympics.

In these articles, there were mentions of the North Korean teams and the Cuban teams who were not present because of boycotts. While these countries were big in the news at the time, they were not as big in the news as the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Research could be done to see how the press discussed Soviet athletes when they boycotted the 1984 Olympics.

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