

Rusty Wilson
Ohio State University

The Pretense of Romanian Participation in the 1984 Olympic Games

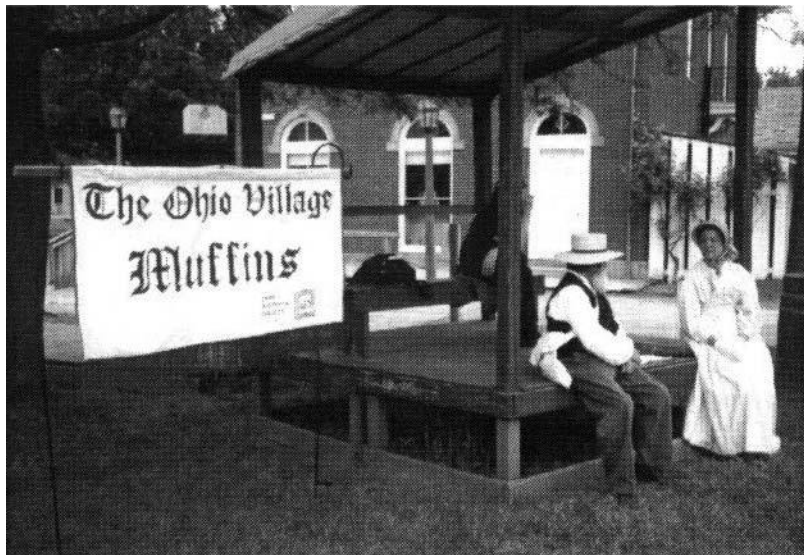
One of the most ignored events in political and sport history in the last 20 years is Romania's participation in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. Its decision to break with their Warsaw Pact allies and send a team to Los Angeles is a casebook study in the political uses of sport in international relations and a rare view in the truth behind East-West relations. It is also a study of the manipulation of the media in order to shape perception and opinion.

Romania relished the media attention it received for fighting the "tremendous Soviet pressure" to join the boycott. For years Romania acted as the lone renegade in the Soviet Bloc, often times charting its own course against the tide from Moscow. In 1984 the country once again gained valuable public relations points by playing David to the USSR's Goliath. As a result, he received the Olympic Order from the International Olympic Committee (IOC). However, as with many political situations, things were not as they seemed.

Using the Olympic boycott situation to his advantage, Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu once again was able to manipulate the West to gain economic, political, and public relations advantages. Although they would have preferred Romania stay away from Los Angeles, the Soviet Union did not hinder the Romanians, since they saw Romanian participation posed no threat to the Soviet Bloc. High US officials were willing to turn a blind eye to this manipulation, as Romania's participation implied a weakness in Soviet domination over Eastern Europe. It was to the advantage of all parties to allow this guise to take place. Studies of the 1984 Olympic boycott crisis accept the conventional

view of Romania as a maverick defying the Soviet boycott. They fail to analyze past Romanian political trends and its historic relationship with the Soviet Union. This paper analyzes Romanian actions and shows that they were not acting as independently as portrayed by the media, the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, the IOC, and others in the West. In essence, all involved for their own agendas manipulated the situation.

"Kranks" at the Muffin Game



Capturing the Historical Moment