

Something in the Air: American Passion and Defiance in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics

Richard Hoffer



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In the tradition of *Seabiscuit* and *The Summer of '49*, a gripping sports narrative that brilliantly tells the amazing individual stories of the unforgettable athletes who gathered in Mexico City in a year of dramatic upheaval.

The 1968 Mexico City Olympics reflected the spirit of their revolutionary times. Richard Hoffer's *Something in the Air* captures the turbulence and offbeat heroism of that historic Olympiad, which was as rich in inspiring moments as it was drenched in political and racial tensions.

Although the basketball star Lew Alcindor decided to boycott, heavyweight boxer George Foreman not only competed, but waved miniature American flags over his fallen opponents. The sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos became as famous for their raised-fist gestures of protest as their speed on the track. No one was prepared for Bob Beamon's long jump, which broke the world's record by a staggering twenty-two inches. And then there was Dick Fosbury, the goofball high jumper whose backwards, upside down approach to the bar (the "Fosbury Flop") baffled his coaches while breaking records. Though Fosbury was his own man, he was apolitical and easygoing. He didn't defy authority; he defied gravity.

Witty, insightful, and filled with human drama, *Something in the Air* mixes Shakespearean complexity with Hollywood sentimentality, sociopolitical significance, and the exhilarating spectacle of youthful, physical prowess. It is a powerful, unforgettable tale that will resonate with sports fans and readers of social history alike.

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