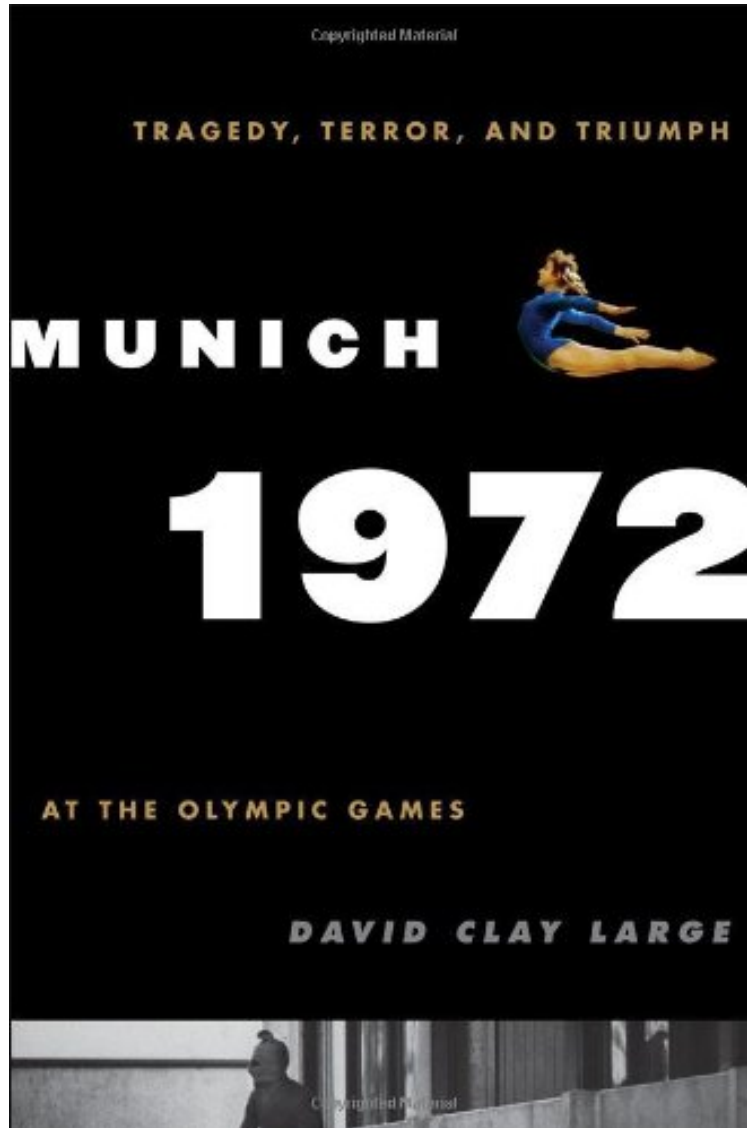


# Munich 1972: Tragedy, Terror, and Triumph at the Olympic Games

*David Clay Large*

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**David Clay Large : Munich 1972: Tragedy, Terror, and Triumph at the Olympic Games** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Munich 1972: Tragedy, Terror, and Triumph at the Olympic Games:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Munich 1972 for Everyone By Michael Griswold Giving a proper treatment to the 1972 Munich Olympics is a complex task because the Black September hostage taking tends to act as the gigantic elephant in the room that everyone either remembers or wants to know something about. David Clay Large takes a different tack in Munich 1972: Tragedy, Terror, and Triumph at the Olympic Games. While there are

approx. two chapters that deal with the hostage taking, bumbled response by the West Germans and eventual repercussions that can still be felt during Olympic Games today. Large also dedicates significant portions of the book to the athletic competitions, the various political impediments and challenges to holding a games in Munich including: the Nazi Legacy, one or two Germanys, African boycotts, and Cold War tensions between the US and the Soviet Union. Beyond the international intrigues, there was also a battle within West Germany over how to construct and pay for the games [leaving aside the debate whether they were worth the cost]. This debate continues down to present times as we see less cities bidding to shoulder the cost of the Olympics. For those persons interested in cultural activities, there's a section on German cultural attractions as well. I consider David Clay Large's *Munich 1972* to be like a sampler because there's a little bit of everything for different audiences, but readers will have to look elsewhere if they want to dig deeper on a given topic. It is overall, a good introduction to the 1972 Munich Olympics.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding Account of a Tragic, Yet Fascinating, Historical Event ... By DACHokie

The 1972 Munich Olympics will forever be identified with the massacre of eleven members of the Israeli team by members of the Black September terrorist group. It is, understandably, the most logical icon of those Games. In fact, other than a few images or video clips of Mark Spitz, Olga Korbut or the masked Black September gunman on the dormitory balcony, there really isn't enough information available for anything else to be associated with the Munich Olympics. Thankfully, with *MUNICH 1972*, David Large fills that void with zeal and offers the complete story of the "most beautiful Olympics ever to have been wrecked". Considering the author was actually in Munich during those Olympic Games (as a grad student working on a dissertation, not as a spectator), there is a sense that this book was written to satisfy his own quest for understanding the tragic event that unfolded down the road from him; as he is so thorough in his approach to the subject matter. Covering every imaginable facet of the 72 Olympics, from the controversy of Munich being awarded host-city status to the immediate and long-term aftermath of the Games and everything in-between, Large makes a case that Munich may arguably be the most important Olympics of the modern era. Rather than focusing solely on the obvious (the massacre), Large reminds us that up until the tragic event, the Games provided some astounding athletic performances that seemed destined to make Munich one of the most successful Olympics ever. This detailed, balanced and rather unbiased overview of the entire 72 Olympics proved to be a fascinating and educational read. We get the good, the bad and the very ugly facts behind this tragic event. Large dedicates the first third of the book to the build-up to the Games. Starting with the controversial decision to award host city status to the birthplace of the Nazi Party, readers are reminded of the last time Germany hosted an Olympics, under Hitler. Large details the painstaking efforts of West Germany and Munich took to prove to the world that a new Germany had arisen from the ashes of its destructive past ... the Munich Games were to be a showcase of this rebirth. Paralleling this story of Munich's herculean attempt to rebrand itself (and Germany) is the rumbling of the global political violence that existed at the time (including trouble from its estranged brother-country, East Germany). It is clear that the planners knew the likelihood of the Munich Olympics being targeted for a violent political statement was high to almost certain. I was astonished to read that months before the Games started, a security advisor pretty much laid-out a potential Palestinian terrorist attack ("scenario 21") in the exact manner in which it actually happened. And while security was important in theory it was superseded by the effort to soften reminders of Germany's Nazi past (pastel jackets and baseball hats in lieu of anything remotely militant-looking). In other words, the door was left wide open for anyone with ill intentions. The remaining two-thirds of the book are dedicated to the two weeks the Games played out. What is sometimes difficult to remember is that the athletic performances at Munich were quite stellar. Rather than a glossing overview of the athletics, Large opts to provide intimate and colorful details of a variety of events, their participants and eventual outcomes. An excellent overview that is full of interesting obscure stories and controversies. I felt that the author's thorough attention to sports at the Munich Games was integral in making the book balanced and complete. Following the first week of events, comes the chapter dedicated to the day of the Black September attack. Again, the author provides explicit detail that puts readers at the horrific scene and takes us through the tragedy, step-by-step, from the hostage-taking to the disastrous "rescue attempt" at a nearby airfield. Reading this chapter confirms that the security for entire Munich Games was nothing more than a house-of-cards and that most of the organizers were simply crossing their fingers, hoping to ride the good fortune of the first week all the way to the closing ceremony. The West German response to the crisis is characterized as being inept and helpless. Large does hand out a heap of blame to virtually everyone ... even Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir is shown to have callously conceded the hostages' lives rather than accommodating the terrorists' demands. If there is one source of obvious bias exhibited by the author throughout the book, it is his obvious distaste for IOC President Avery Brundage, who infamously insisted the Games continue following the massacre. The final week of competition has a few bright moments, but readers will sense the Olympic spirit as being long gone as the controversy of continuing the games elicits a myriad of reactions from those athletes whose events were scheduled for that second week, after the massacre. Thorough, informational and entertaining ... a totally absorbing read. Quite simply, *MUNICH 1972* left me with no unanswered questions regarding the Munich Games, but a strong desire to share the fine details with others. I believe David Large has done a magnificent job documenting an event that, for 40 years, has been steeped in darkness and mystery. This book should appeal to anyone interested in sports and/or history. Reading it as the London

Olympics are playing out gave the book more special meaning and certainly puts things in perspective. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. "They were the most beautiful Olympics ever to have been wrecked" By Jill Meyer David Clay Large's book, "Munich 1972", is a well-written examination of the 1972 Olympics. Beginning with the background of the games - why was Munich chosen as the host city, particularly after the memories of the Berlin 1936 Summer games - and how did internal West German politics play out in the "landing" of the Games. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG - West Germany) was in heated competition with the German Democratic Republic (GDR - East Germany) on a whole range of issues, beginning with the "politics of sport" and ending with the "sport of politics". And if the two Germanys were at odds, so were various other countries and political systems. The sentiment of Muncheners was not always in favor of hosting the Games; cost overruns, overcrowding, and just general disruptions of daily activities during the Games clouded the positives that came with the "honor" of being awarded the 1972 Olympic games. But, as is usually the case, the politicians won out and Munich was chosen. In the six year run-up to the Olympics, factions worked together on all parts of the presentation of the games. Special thought was given to security at the games but the memories of the Berlin 1936 games with oppressive, heavy security was also in the mix. No one wanted a repeat of those games and so police and other Munich officials erred on the side of putting basically unarmed men as guards at the Olympic village for these "friendly" Olympics. The Village itself was not surrounded by high fences and there was little stopping of athletes coming and going. All was going well until the evening of September 5th. I think people today have tended to forget the terror groups who were active in the 1970's and 1980's. Certainly there were many; the list included German radicals, the IRA, and, of course, Arabs protesting Jordan's King Hussein, Egypt, and Israel. It was "Black September", whose murky origins and beliefs were splayed onto the front pages of newspapers and televisions world-wide, who kidnapped and murdered nine Israeli athletes from their apartments in the Olympic Village. Helped along by the inept response of the German government security services, the world was again looking at Jews murdered on German soil. The powers-that-be of the games - Avery Brundage among them - don't come out looking too good in their response to continuing the games after the massacre. Author Large does a good job at fitting the "terror" parts of the Munich games together, but doesn't fail at looking at the triumphs of many of the athletes who competed there. It's a good, all-round telling of those games and their hopes for a coming-together of athletes that ended in tragedy.

Set against the backdrop of the turbulent late 1960s and early 1970s, this compelling book provides the first comprehensive history of the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, notorious for the abduction of Israeli Olympians by Palestinian terrorists and the hostages tragic deaths after a botched rescue mission by the German police. Drawing on a wealth of newly available sources from the time, eminent historian David Clay Large explores the 1972 festival in all its ramifications. He interweaves the political drama surrounding the Games with the athletic spectacle in the arena of play, itself hardly free of controversy. Writing with flair and an eye for telling detail, Large brings to life the stories of the indelible characters who epitomized the Games. Key figures range from the city itself, the visionaries who brought the Games to Munich against all odds, and of course to the athletes themselves, obscure and famous alike. With the Olympic movement in constant danger of terrorist disruption, and with the fortieth anniversary of the 1972 tragedy upon us in 2012, the Munich story is more timely than ever.

David Clay Large's Munich 1972 is an almost ideal matching of historian and subject. Mr. Large has written one excellent book about Munich under the Nazis and another on the Berlin Olympics of 1936. Moreover, he was in Munich in 1972. In this superb chronicle, Mr. Large evokes the febrile atmosphere of that time and place, as the sporting festivities that were supposed to celebrate Germany's return to the fellowship of democratic nations turned into a nightmare: the ideology-driven murder of Jews on German soil. . . . Many Germans still regard the Munich massacre as the darkest day in the history of the Federal Republic, yet to date Germany has not commemorated the victims properly. With the captivating Munich 1972, Mr. Large offers a memorial of sorts and a reminder that, long before 9/11, a war on Western civilization, emanating from the Middle East, had already been declared. (The Wall Street Journal) Outstanding. . . . [A] meticulous reconstruction of the tragedy. . . . Large has turned up fascinating material in archival research. . . . Munich 1972 is a massively researched, eminently readable history. Although his prose is calm and his approach evenhanded, for most readers his book will evoke astonishment, exasperation, and, finally, grief. (Jewish of Books) To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, West Germany where outstanding performances by U.S. swimmer Mark Spitz and USSR gymnast Olga Korbut were overshadowed by the slaying of 11 Israeli team members by Palestinian gunmen Montana State University history professor Large (Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936) provides a densely detailed look at what he calls 'history's first globally televised act of terrorism.' Using newly released sources, he chronologically explores the political, social, cultural, and athletic dimensions of the Games of the XX Olympiad, focusing on the hostage crisis that began on Sept. 5 when members of the Black September organization broke into the Olympic Village's Israeli living quarters, claimed hostages, and demanded the release of 236 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. The subsequent standoff and botched rescue attempt resulted in the deaths of all the captives and most of their captors. Though the deadly stalemate

takes up the bulk of Large's book, and will therefore make this comprehensive take on the games appeal primarily to historians, the author doesn't forget his sports fans. While the tragedy unfolded, the games continued on, and Large devotes considerable attention to the many athletic feats and conflicts. (Publishers Weekly)