

PRACTICE

Building Character Through Soccer



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Teamwork:

*To work together as a group toward a common goal
Synonyms: collaboration, cooperation, coordination*

Teamwork Story

If you google, “Greatest sporting win in US history?” you will inevitably get the event noted as the “Miracle on Ice.” It was a singular hockey match in the 1980 US Winter Olympics hosted in Lake Placid, NY. The historic moment has had two movies produced, the latest in 2004.

The setting was the height of the “Cold War” between the US and the Soviet Union. The Soviets were seeded #1 and won five gold medals and a bronze in the previous six Olympics. The US team, a clear underdog, was seeded #7 as a conglomeration of college all-stars, average age 22. The Soviet dream team were seasoned professionals who routed the US team three days before the Olympics began, 10-3, in Madison Square Garden.

The US team training began seven months before the Olympics started in February 1980. Teamwork was at the forefront as Coach Herb Brooks determined the only way to win a “bronze” medal was for the US team to be better conditioned than any other Olympic team. A respectable Olympic performance was not going to happen by these unheralded college players without teamwork, relentless training sessions and conditioning. Coach Brooks selected his final roster based on conditioning, not just hockey skills. The team reward for conditioning was in the seven games the US team played, the US team was outscored in their matches 9-6 in the first period, but outscored its opponents, 16-3 in the third period.

The US team had the toughest draw, first facing Sweden the #2 seed and then Czechoslovakia the #3 seed. They tied Sweden 2-2 with a last-minute goal and US patriotic pride began to swell when the US Team beat the Czech team 7-3. Then they went on to win against Norway, Romania and West Germany—each game starting out slow, then the conditioning took over and they finished with a win.

The “Miracle on Ice,” came against the Soviets in the semi-final game on George Washington’s birthday, Feb 22nd, 1980. Coach Brook instilled in the team’s young minds they were better conditioned than the Soviets and to keep the score close into the final period. They achieved that goal by scoring a 3-3 tying goal at 8:39 in the third period. Then at the 10-minute mark, the US went ahead for good with a goal making it 4-3. The final seconds of the third period clicked off with broadcast announcer Al Michaels shouting out, “Do you believe in miracles?” The US team went on to beat Finland in the final for the gold medal. An improbable result for a 7th seed.

There are many storylines to what sportswriters will agree as the “Greatest US Sports Victory” of all time. However, the most important lesson from this great story is that teams with the best talent (Soviets in this case) don’t always win when matched against teams that are prepared, conditioned and put the team first!

