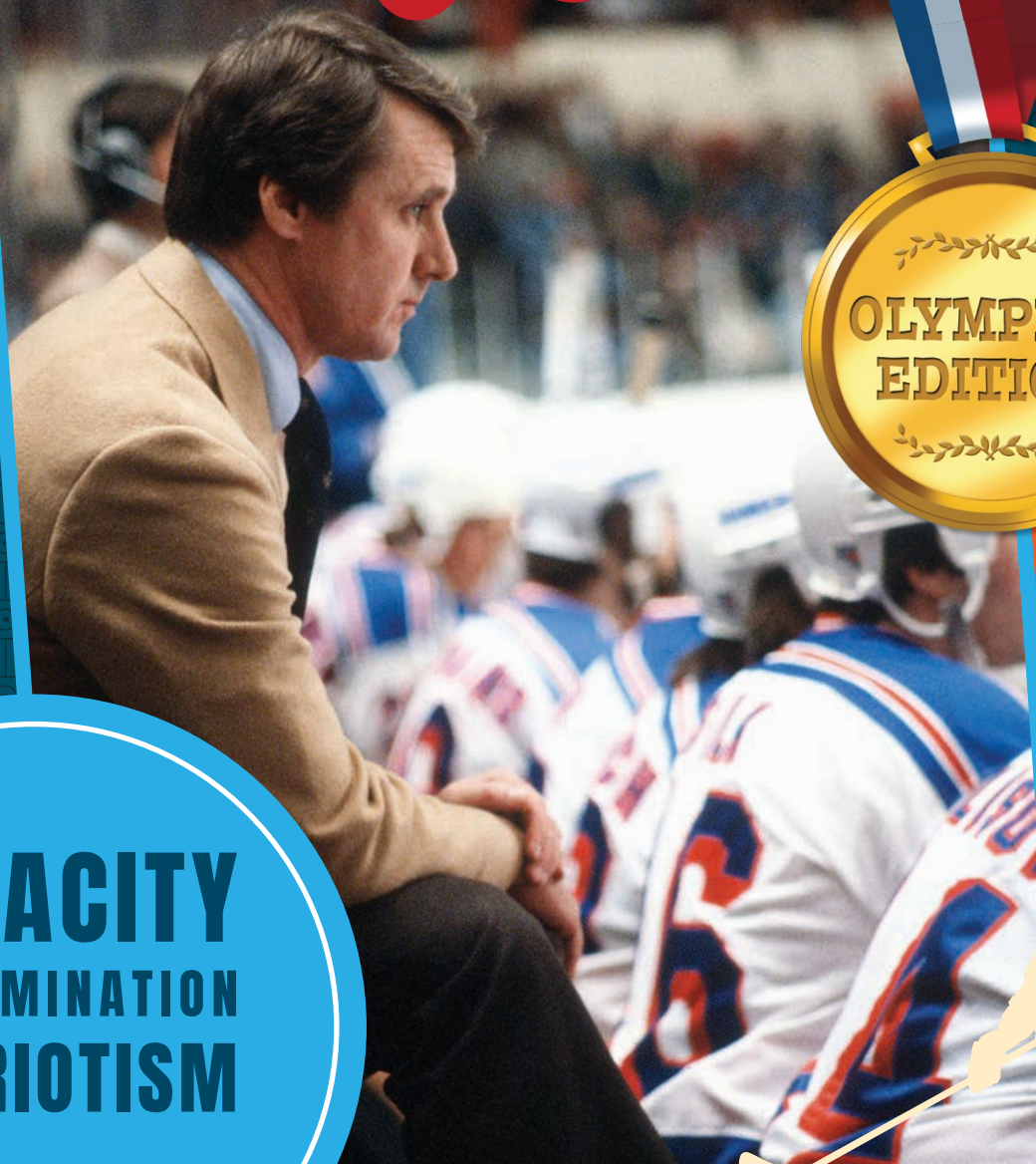


SPORTS Legends



TENACITY
DETERMINATION
PATRIOTISM

HERB BROOKS



Early Life

Herbert Paul Brooks might as well have been born with a hockey stick in his hand. On August 5, 1937 in St. Paul, Minnesota, Pauline and Herbert Brooks Sr. welcomed their son Herb, sometimes known as Herbie, to the world. Hockey was a staple in the Brooks household, so Herb took to it from a very early age. His father played **amateur** hockey in the 1920s, and his younger brother, David, played competitive hockey too. The sport was practically in his blood.

Herb's hockey career began in high school, where he played from 1952-1955 as a member of the St. Paul Johnson Governors. He led his team to a state championship his senior year, and became the stand-out star of the final game. In it, Herb scored two of the three goals for the Governors, and they took home the championship title with a 3-1 victory. He recounted that he enjoyed winning the state championship because "[it] represented your neighborhood. I would have to say that it was my biggest thrill ever. It was just the guys in the neighborhood and that was special."

College Life

Then came time for college, where he was a top prospect for **recruiters**. He would eventually choose to attend the University of Minnesota, where he would train under John Mariucci, a coach who would have a profound impact on him. Immediately, Herb stood out for his ability to outskate anyone on the ice but admitted that he was frightened of his coach when he started.

"At first I was scared to death of him. I was fresh out of high school. I remember in practices my first year he used to call me Pete. For the longest time he never knew my name, and I was terrified of him."

Eventually, Herb recalled that John became "like a father to me, we were very close. He wasn't long on words, and didn't want to be everybody's buddy like some coaches try to be [...] He was such a great guy." Over his three-year career as a University of Minnesota Golden Gopher, Herbie scored a grand total of 45 points. He graduated in 1961 with a degree in **psychology**.





Herb was sitting at home with his father in Minnesota watching his former teammates take home the very first gold medal for the United States against Czechoslovakia.

Cut at the Last Minute

Competing in the Olympics was a lifelong dream of Herb's, and in 1960, the Winter Games in Squaw Valley, California, came calling. Herb would stop at nothing to make his Olympic dream come true. He tried out, trained his hardest, and thought he earned his spot on the team only to receive some crushing news the day before the Olympic Games. His coach, Jack Riley, brought in a new player, who he thought was the missing link that would make the team go from contenders to champions. That meant that Herb was sent home. Sitting at home with his father in Minnesota watching his former teammates take home the very first gold medal for the United States against Czechoslovakia, was bittersweet for Herbie. On the one hand, he was happy for his teammates, but he was also envious. Olympic gold was within his grasp, but it just wasn't

in the cards for him in 1960. After the game, Herb Sr. turned to his son and said, "Well, it looks like Coach Riley cut the right guy, didn't he?" Ouch. Those words stung, but Herbie was left feeling more determined than ever. He hadn't achieved his Olympic dream yet, but the fire was lit within him to work even harder. He knew the Olympic Games were his destiny.

Between 1961-1970, Herbie got to live out his Olympic dream twice more, playing for the United States in the 1964 and 1968 Games as well as on five national teams, which is more than *any other player* in United States hockey. But the gold medal still evaded him — for now.



A New Path

After his career as a player came to an end, Herb wanted to go into coaching. He first served as the assistant coach for his **alma mater**, the University of Minnesota, which was a homecoming for him. In 1972, he was offered the head coach position, and at 35 years old, he became the youngest college hockey coach in the country. He accepted the challenge of coaching the Gophers, who had just come off a very disappointing season, having taken last place. This was not daunting to Herb, and he saw the idea of shaping *his* team *his* way, very exciting. He was eager to leave his imprint on the institution he once called home. Within the seven years he served as head coach, he created a team that was a force to be reckoned with.

He would lead his players to three **NCAA** championships, in 1973, 1976, and 1979 — the first NCAA championships the Gophers would ever win. He was also named Coach of the



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Year for the 1973-1974 season by the Western Collegiate Hockey Association. To say that the Gophers dominated under Herb's coaching would be an understatement. Not only did he have championship winning seasons, but he also bred a team that took great pride in representing the University of Minnesota. That was always very important to Herb — working with players who were hungry and who played with a lot of heart. Of his time coaching for U of M, Herb stated:

"We went to the finals four of my seven years there, and we made a great run of it. I think I put a lot of pressure on the players, and I had a lot of expectations of them. I didn't give them an 'out,' [...] The common denominator of all the guys who played throughout my seven years was that they were really competitive, very hungry, very focused, and mentally tough — to go along with whatever talent they had. I think that really carried us."



The Olympics Come Calling Again

Herb would go on to coach the U.S. National Team in 1979 in the World Games, and right after that, he was recruited to coach professional hockey for the **NHL** Minnesota North Stars. But Herbie had his heart set, once again, on the Olympics. But this time he wouldn't be playing — he would be coaching. Coaching at the university level was meaningful to Herb, but coaching at the Olympics would have been a dream come true. He was chosen to be the head coach for the 1980 Olympic Winter Games, which were going to be held in Lake Placid, New York. Herb was delighted at the news and said, "It gives me an awfully warm feeling to be selected as head coach for the 1980 Olympics. I'm extremely honored and humbled. To be picked when there are so many outstanding amateur hockey coaches in the nation, well, let's just say it's something I never really expected to happen." Herb took great pride in representing his country.

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Picking the "Dream Team"

Now came the tough part — picking just the right players who would be able to compete at such a high level but who were also the kind of players Herbie loved to work with — ones with drive, determination, and heart. Twenty players were needed to complete his roster — 20 players, out of all the amateur hockey players in the *entire country*. It wouldn't be easy, but Herb was up for the challenge. He wanted players he could count on, and he knew just where to look — his old University of Minnesota roster. Nine of the 20 players were young men he had coached as Gophers, and three more were also from Minnesota. But he had to be careful that it didn't look like he was playing favorites by picking only Minnesota players. He would end up rounding out his team with young men from Boston University and the University of Wisconsin, among others. When carefully picking his team, Herb's brother, Dave, recounted, "I remember Herbie calling the high schools of the potential Olympians to find out their records on grades, if they got into trouble, [...] and what kind of people they were. When I asked him why [...] he said that he wanted to know what kind of player he was going to have when it came down to the last two minutes of a game. He wanted to know which kids he should have on the ice come clutch time."





The Team to Beat

For the 20 years leading up to the Lake Placid Games, the Soviet Union had cemented their legacy as the greatest hockey team in history, having won Olympic gold in 1964, 1968, 1972, and 1976. Their success could be attributed to their strict hockey regimen, with their lives being focused on hockey from sun up to sun down. The players' lives were controlled by the Soviet government. Their most dominant player, Boris Mikhailov, once said, "For the most part, we were fully devoted to hockey. Sport was tied with politics, and any victory had big political undertones, especially during the Olympic Games [...] Our task was only to place first." The Soviets lived in and trained together in hockey camps nine months out of the year.

They had practices three times a day. The Soviets destroyed any team that crossed their path.

Herb was completely aware of the strength of their biggest opponent. But he was devising a plan. He said of the Soviets,

"They could execute at such a high level of speed — skating, passing, shooting, thinking. I tried to develop a team that would throw their game right back at them."

How can you relate to Herb Brooks?

Settling Old Rivalries

Before Herb could even think about defeating the Soviets, he would have to work on squashing old **rivalries** on his own team first. The University of Minnesota and Boston University were the most well-known adversaries in all of college hockey. The Minnesotans hated the Bostonians, and the Bostonians hated the Minnesotans right back. They had played in the NCAA against each other in the past, and tensions were high on the team right off the bat. But Herb knew that these tensions needed to be dealt with quickly and strategically. He said, “I wanted to blur the boundaries of our country...build a ‘we’ and an ‘us’ in ourselves as opposed to an ‘I, me, myself.’ Our spirit was going to be a big asset.”

Herbie knew that he was on the verge of building a strong team but regional cliques were not going to help create his ideal dynamic. His strategy to achieve team unity would probably be seen as unusual, but this is where his degree in psychology came in handy. To unify his team, Herb would need them to all have a common enemy — and that enemy would be him.

Herbie's Coaching Style

Herbie was known to be tough, no-nonsense, and even harsh at times. Defenseman, Bill Baker, said, "Herb always liked that, where it would be you against him [...] He liked being in that bad guy role." He took much of his style from his own college coach and made it clear to his players from the very beginning that he would be their coach, but he wouldn't be their friend. In treating his players this way, he wanted them to feel like they were always needing to prove themselves to him, and that's how he would get the best out of his players at all times. He might not have been the most fun to play for, but his players respected how much he knew about the game.

And his master plan was working. Herbie's team was coming together, and their old rivalries were fading away. Forward, John Harrington, said "Our Olympic team got very tight with the idea that it was us versus him. And we're constantly as a group trying to prove to him that we're good enough to play." Assistant coach, Craig Patrick, saw the benefits of the players rallying together against Herb and acknowledged that, "It really made them a unit."

During pre-Olympic **exhibition** games against teams they would eventually face, Herbie's team would test out their newly honed skills together in Europe in September of 1979. They ended up playing well, winning six out of their first eight games. During a match against the Norwegian team, Herb wanted to send the message right then and there that the United States was a force to be reckoned with. He said, "We're gonna have to play the Norwegians in **qualifications**, so we do it tonight. We send the message right now." Unfortunately, his players fell short and ended up tying Norway 3-3, who were arguably the weakest team they had played in that series. Herbie was angry and most of all disappointed. As the players were skating off the ice, Herb decided to teach them a lesson. He made the boys line up at the goal line and had them do a strenuous skating drill



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"Brooks-isms"

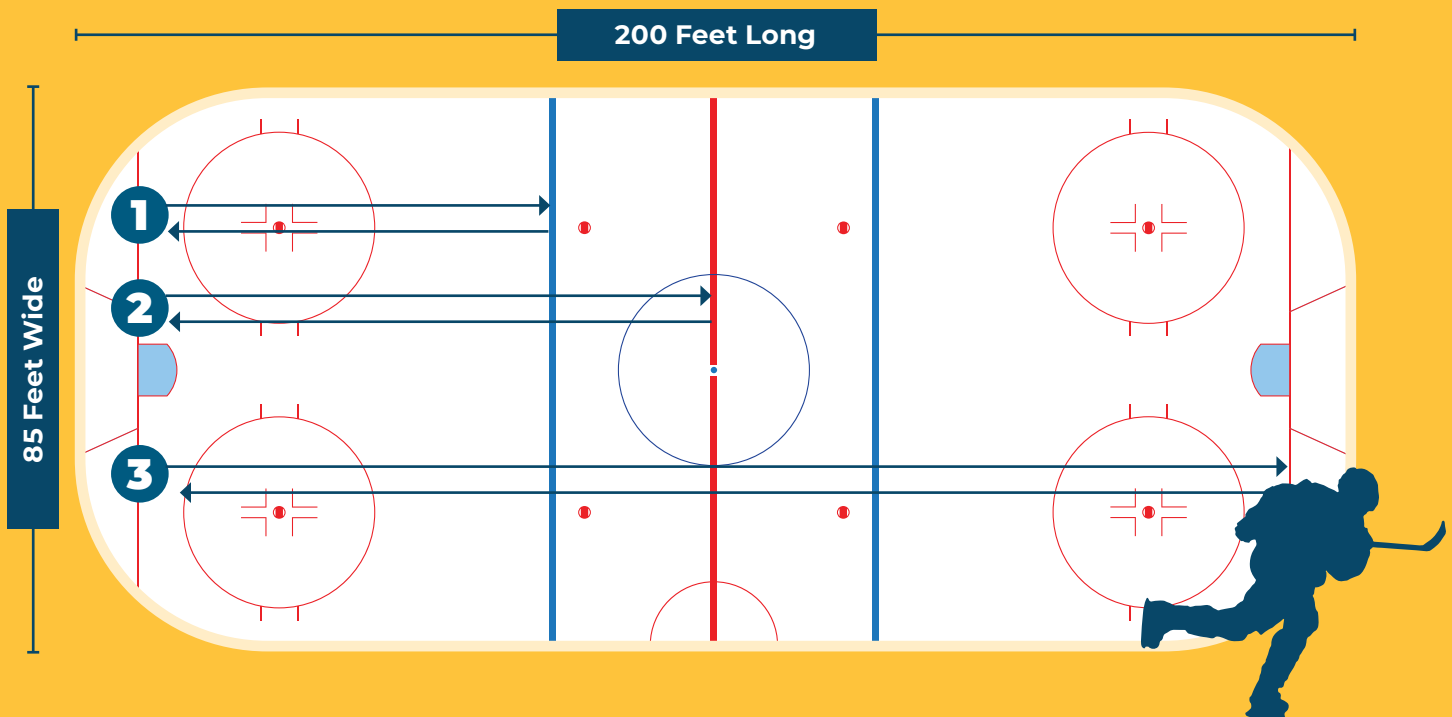
Members of the 1980 Olympic team began writing down the many things Herb would say during their time together. They called his sayings "Brooksisms." Some quotes were inspirational, while others were, shall we say, not so much.

"You're playing worse every day, and right now you're playing like it is next month."

"Gentlemen, if you don't have your teammates' respect, you don't have anything."

"You look like you have a five pound fart on your head."

What “Herbies” Look Like on the Ice



known as “Herbies.” Players would skate to the near blue line and back; to the red line and back; to the far blue line and back; and then all the way to the opposite end of the rink, and back.

As the boys skated back and forth, again and again, Herbie’s voice echoed throughout the entire arena, “If that’s all we can do is tie the Norway national team 3-3 and you think you’re gonna go to the Olympics and be successful, you got another guess coming!” Forward, Dave Silk, recounted, “Two or three [Herbies] would be tiring. 10 or 12 of them would be excessive.” But Herb had his team skating back and forth for what seemed to be an eternity. Herbie wanted his players to take him and what they were about to embark upon seriously. “The message went out right then. They’re not gonna go out and play the game like that and disgrace their abilities or our collected efforts,” Herbie said. He knew his team was better than

that. He knew they had more to give, and he was going to be the one to get them there — no matter what.

That grueling night changed the team’s mentality, surprisingly, for the better. Dave Silk noted the shift in the team’s dynamic and said, “That moment probably had more to do with us **gelling** as a team, feeling like we were a group, a family. We looked at each other and said, basically he can do anything he wants to us. He’s not gonna break us.”



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On the Verge of Greatness



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A few weeks before the Olympics, Herbie was still playing mind games by bringing in new players for tryouts, similar to what his Olympic coach had done to him in 1960. He knew firsthand what that felt like and wanted to instill that same worry in his players to drive the point home that everyone was still on the chopping block. Team captain, Mike Eruzione, didn't even know if his place on the team was a guarantee. "Two weeks before the Olympic Games, [Herb] calls me in...he's gonna cut me from the team. 'You're not good enough. You shouldn't be here. I never should have taken you. I'm gonna send you back.' And I'm thinking, 'He might just do this.'" Nothing was set in stone, but that was how Herb wanted everyone to feel so they would prove to him that they deserved to proudly represent their country. Finally, the players were tired of his shenanigans and took a stand. Defenseman,

Jack O'Callahan, told Herb, "I don't think you should [be bringing in new players]. I think it's wrong. We're going to Lake Placid in a week. Stop it. Get rid of these guys, and let us get serious about this." Bingo. This is what Herbie had been waiting for: "I was looking for that moment where their cohesiveness and strength of association was such a strong bond, and then I would just cut the cord. And that was the moment." Herbie could sense that his team was on the verge of greatness.

Herbie's boys were coming together and bonding over their dislike of him, which is exactly what he wanted. By banding against him, there wasn't enough time for them to hold grudges against each other anymore, and he gladly bore that brunt for the betterment and success of his team. Goalie, Jim Craig, eventually understood and realized what Herb was doing. "Herb Brooks trained us and treated us the way he did because he only had six months [to get us ready for the Olympics]...He knew how to take us to this different level...Herb Brooks just had this ability to reach into your soul and see something [...] To me, the greatest thing about Herb was that he realized what our potential was and he treated us all differently to get there. And then when we got there, he became our confidence and protector... He was a special man."

"Herb Brooks just had this ability to reach into your soul and see something [...]"

– Goalie, Jim Craig



Training Days

Herb and his team continued their training in the United States after the exhibition games in Europe. Throughout the fall of 1979, they continued their demanding 6-month, 61-game, pre-Olympic schedule, playing against professional, foreign, and collegiate teams. They had a solid showing, with a 42-win record. The European teams were still the teams to beat, and rather than try to play catch up, Herb had a different plan. He was going to teach his players to play like the Europeans. He taught his boys a new style of play where he combined the best components of both the North American and European styles and called it “the weave.” It was a less rigid way of playing and gave the players more freedom to “think on their feet” on the ice.

If they were going to play against the undefeated Soviets, they would need to get themselves ready. Herb knew his team wasn’t going to be the best team at the Olympics, but they would be the best conditioned team. He continued to push them beyond their limits. The players needed to eat healthily in order to fuel their bodies to prepare them to push even harder during the final minutes of the game, when they would be the most tired. He even had them train on soccer fields to help improve their footwork. Herbie knew what they were up against:

“We were, by far, the youngest, most inexperienced team, when it came to the Olympic Games. We were just college kids, playing flat-out professional, older, stronger, better athletes, so it was a real formidable task.”

HOCKEY TIPS AND TRICKS

Where to Shoot on a Goalie

There are five general areas where a player can shoot on a goalie:

1. High glove side
2. Low glove side
3. High stick side
4. Low stick side
5. Between the goalie’s legs



Typically, no one refers to the corners by their numbers. The only number that is definite is the 5-hole, which is between the goalie’s legs. Players more often refer to the position of the puck in relation to which side of the goalie it’s on, glove or stick side. Two other areas that can be shot on are underneath the goalie’s armpits.

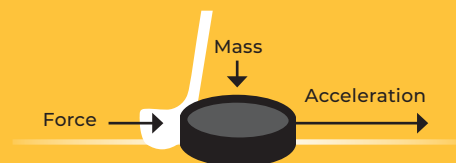
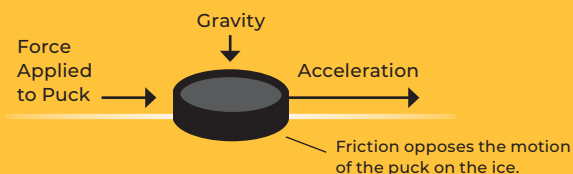
The Last One Cut — Again

Herb finally had a team of 21 players who he felt confident he could take to Lake Placid with him. The only problem was that he still had to cut the roster by one player. Making that decision would be incredibly difficult for him because he had been in that very same position back in 1960, when he was the last player his coach cut the day before the Olympic Games. But it had to be done. As the games approached, Herbie called center, Ralph Cox, down to a small conference room to make the hardest cut of his life. Cox recounted, “As I’m walking down the stairs, I’m realizing that this is probably the moment...I knew Herb...even though no one had said it, I really thought I was going to be on the team [...] I sensed he was calling me there to tell me otherwise [...] When I walked in, Herb was pacing back and forth in the room. When he saw me come in, he

just looked at me and he welled up, which I had never seen that happen [...] it took him a few minutes to be able to catch his breath or get his composure [...] and he said, ‘I really enjoyed having you on the team [...] Your enthusiasm, your passion for the game — I think you’re one of the best goal scorers I’ve ever seen or coached [...] I have to make one of the toughest if not the toughest coaching decisions I’ve ever had to make, Ralph, and I’m not going to be able to take you.’”

Herbie was crushed and could put himself in Ralph’s shoes, since he had experienced that exact same thing 20 years earlier. He respected Ralph but needed to take the absolute best players with him to Lake Placid, if they stood a chance at taking on the best team in the world.

Sir Isaac Newton’s Laws of Hockey



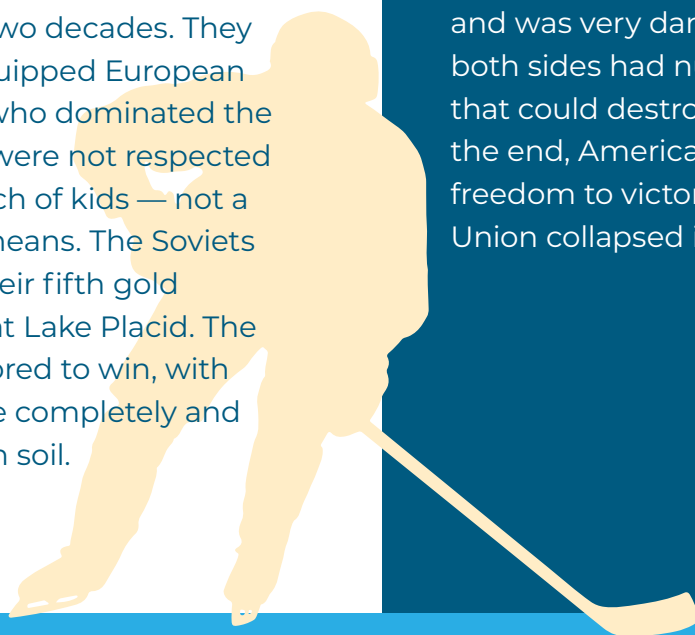
1 Newton’s **First Law of Motion** states that an object in motion stays in motion at the same speed and in the same direction unless acted on by an external force. In terms of hockey, a puck would glide over the ice forever if there weren’t forces like gravity and friction causing it to slow to a stop. Friction is a force that resists the sliding of one solid object over another. It is one of the forces that causes the puck to slow down on the ice if there is no one to keep it going. Hockey pucks are made out of vulcanized rubber, a material that is less likely to stick to the ice. To make them travel even faster, pucks can be frozen before games as well. Frozen pucks decrease the amount of friction, so less force is needed to keep a puck moving along the ice.

2 Newton’s **Second Law of Motion** states that the acceleration of an object depends on the mass of the object and the amount of force applied to that object. In hockey, how fast the puck travels down the ice depends on how hard the players hit the puck with their stick and how much mass the puck has. If a player lightly taps the puck, it will travel much slower than if a player hits the puck with more force.

3 Newton’s **Third Law of Motion** states that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. This comes into play when players body check one another to stop their opponent or to try to gain control of the puck. When players collide, neither player can move forward, since they are being stopped by an equal force coming at them from the opposite direction.

A Country in Need of a Miracle

While Herbie and his team were coming together, things in the United States were falling apart. There were gasoline shortages, with people waiting in long lines for hours just to fill up their gas tanks. The economy was at its lowest point since the Great Depression, with interest rates and unemployment skyrocketing. There was a hostage crisis in Iran, where Americans were taken captive. The Watergate scandal and the end of the Vietnam War several years earlier left Americans with a bad taste in their mouth. And the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified with Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas Eve of 1979. There was a cloud of pessimism that engulfed the nation — one that seemed almost impossible to get out of. Everyone needed something to believe in and to make them proud to be American once again. No one could have ever imagined that an ice hockey game would reinvigorate the defeated American spirit. And how could they? The United States had not won a gold medal in two decades. They were no match for the well-equipped European teams, especially the Soviets, who dominated the hockey world. The Americans were not respected either and were seen as a bunch of kids — not a formidable opponent by any means. The Soviets were looking to bring home their fifth gold medal in the Olympic Games at Lake Placid. The Americans were in no way favored to win, with their main goal being to not be completely and utterly humiliated on American soil.



The Cold War (A Brief History Lesson)

The Cold War was a competition between the forces of democracy and freedom, led by the United States, and the forces of communist dictatorship, led by the Soviet Union. The competition lasted from 1945 to the late 1980s and was very dangerous because both sides had nuclear weapons that could destroy the world. In the end, America led the forces of freedom to victory and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

A Sneak Preview

On February 9, 1980, three days before the start of the Olympic Games, the American team played a final exhibition game at Madison Square Garden against none other than the team they had been preparing to go into battle against — the Soviets. Stories of how the Soviets played hockey were almost mythical, and now Herbie's boys were going to come face to face with their biggest threat. It was their chance to put their months of training and conditioning to the test and get a taste of what they would be up against during the Olympic Games. The Soviets were an intimidating force, standing larger than life in their bright red jerseys with the letters **СССР** boldly displayed on their chests, menacingly challenging their opponents. After a long and tiring game, the Soviets would end up crushing the American team, outscoring them 10-3. While this defeat was humiliating for the boys, they couldn't help but be blown away by the Soviets. "They just kicked us around that rink. The goals they scored — you could have filmed them, they were so beautiful," described Jack O'Callahan. "There couldn't have been a greater low point given the preparation and the work that we had put in. It was very demoralizing."

Was this a preview of what was to come? If so, Herbie and his boys didn't stand a chance. Or, was it just what the young American team needed to shatter the image they had always had of the undefeatable Soviets, to shake off the jitters before they would face them at the Olympics?

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The Road to the Medal Rounds

The day of the Olympics finally came on February 12, 1980, and Herb's team was able to put the Soviets out of their mind for the time being. Because the two teams were in separate **brackets**, they would only play each other if they reached the medal round. The Soviets were the favorite to take home the gold, while it would be a longshot for the Americans to bring home a medal at all. But no matter what, Herbie was going to push his boys to give it their all, not just for themselves, but for their country.

The first team they faced was Sweden, who was expected to breeze through their match for the win. Behind 2-1 in the third period, and with only 0:41 seconds left in the game, Herb put the game on the line and pulled goalie, Jim Craig, off the net. With an additional skater on the ice, there was an extra set of hands to potentially help score a goal. But this left the Americans very vulnerable, with a wide open net for the Swedes to easily be able to score on if they gained control of the puck. With 0:28 seconds left in the game, the puck came to Bill Baker. He quickly fired a shot toward the goal and SCORED!

The crowd went wild! The boys went wild! Everyone was celebrating because they knew the significance of this goal. If Baker hadn't scored, it would have been nearly impossible for the U.S. to make it to the medal round. But tying the game 2-2 meant that Herb and his boys were still in the running.

The U.S. faced Czechoslovakia next, who were considered the second best team after the Soviets. Herbie's boys crushed the Czechs, outscoring them 7-3. Excitement and momentum were starting to build around this young American team made up of complete underdogs. It was at this game

that Herb's fighting spirit made its debut on national television. There he was, behind the bench, shouting and defending his players. Goalie, Jim Craig, knew that, "Herb was our confidence."

The U.S. would go on to defeat Norway 5-1, Romania 7-2, and West Germany 4-2, clearing the path to the much awaited semi-final match against the Soviets, who had made mince-meat of their previous opponents. The most anticipated showdown of the 20th century was about to take center ice. This was world political events playing out on the rink. The Cold War was suddenly becoming hot.

Do You Believe in Miracles?...Yes!

Herbie knew that the Soviets were better than every other team, outshooting and outscoring everyone they faced. But the one thing his boys had that the Soviets did not, was their unshakeable will and a spirit that could never be broken. Herbie had spent the months leading up to the games building his team into a family whose bond and whose pride in representing their country would be impenetrable.

The worst thing the Soviets could have done was to go into their match against the Americans underestimating them. But that's precisely what they did. Soviet goalie, Vlaslav Tretiak, known as the best goalie in the entire world, stated, "We were way stronger. Nobody ever doubted that. We were professionals, and they were just students. Simply put, we did not respect their team, and you cannot do that in hockey."

Herb also wanted to break his boys' habit of revering the Soviets and putting them on a

pedestal. His young team was intimidated, which Herb knew would be their downfall. Using his knowledge of psychology once again, Herb started building up the confidence of his players by making fun of the Soviet team. He hoped this would bring the Soviets down to a more human level. Jack O'Callahan remembered Herb mocking the Soviet team captain, "Boris Mikhailov was as close to the hockey chief of the world, [...] and Herbie starts teasing the guy. 'Look at that guy's nose. Look at the guy's face. He looks like [comedian] Stan Laurel.'"



Boris Mikhailov

Stan Laurel



And he's insulting the guy. 'Look at [their coach, Viktor Tikhonov]. Look at his head. He looks like a chicken...Who do these Russians think they are?'" Herbie's reason for doing that? "To relax them, keep them focused, and also plant [the idea] and say, 'Hey, someone's gonna beat those guys.'" He wanted to remind his players to not be intimidated and that the Soviets were regular people, just like them. He knew the Russians were overconfident and was hoping his team would use that to their advantage.

The day of the much-awaited semi-final game arrived at last on February 22, 1980 — a day that would go down in American ice hockey history. Before the boys left the locker room to play the game of their lives, Herb knew just what he wanted to say to the team he had spent months pushing to be their very best. Players remembered his motivational words and took them to heart. He told them that this was their time. All their hard work had earned them their spot on the ice that night. The Soviets had been the best team for so long, but that would end on this very night. Every single one of them was meant to be a hockey player. This moment was theirs

for the taking and tonight, they would be the greatest hockey team in the world. They were ready — ready for the battle of a lifetime.

Upon entering the arena, there was not an empty seat in sight. People were proudly waving American flags in the stands. The crowd was buzzing with so many different emotions: excitement, nerves, fear. These college kids had reinvigorated the nation's depleted spirit and reminded everyone what it felt like to be proud to be an American. To many, this game wasn't just a hockey game. It was their chance to battle the Soviets on American soil — a Cold War battle that would be fought on ice.

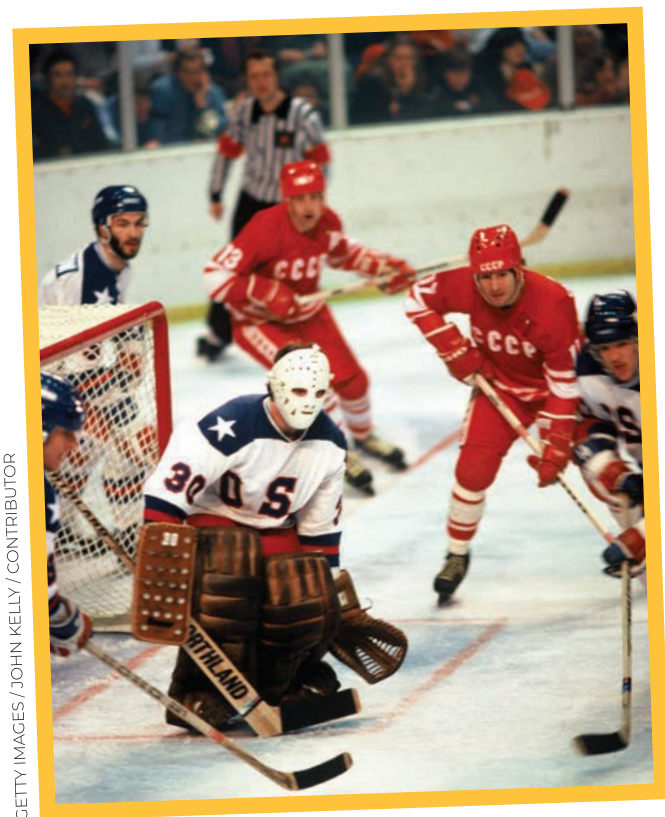
The players skated onto the rink and took their positions. Here they were once again, face to face with the big, bad, Red Army. The referee dropped the puck on the ice, and they were off! Dave Silk recalled, "For the first five or six minutes, feeling as though I couldn't feel my feet on the ice." The young Americans, with an average age of 22 years old, started the game in a frenzy, skating faster and harder than they ever had before. They remembered what it was like playing

the Soviets before the Olympics, but they were ready this time. They weren't going to let history repeat itself. Then reality came crashing down on the Americans when the Soviets ended up scoring first, worrying people that this was just the beginning of their inevitable domination of the game. But Team U.S.A. pushed forward, not losing focus. Jim Craig was on fire, protecting the American goal with everything he had. Then around the 14-minute mark of the game, forward, Buzz Schneider, with a slap shot that slipped right past the Soviet goalie, got the United States on the scoreboard with their first goal of the game. The arena went wild! The boys celebrated as if they had just won the game, huddling together on the ice, congratulating one another. They were now tied 1-1, but not for long. The Soviets retaliated shortly after with another goal before the end of the first period. As the clock was counting down, both teams started to skate off the ice

for their intermission, but not forward, Mark Johnson. He saw an opportunity and took it. With the Soviets already checked out, Mark skated toward their net, swiftly past two of their defenders, took his shot, and SCORED — with one second remaining in the period! Herbie's team had tied the game back up 2-2! Roaring cheers permeated the arena.

When the players came back from intermission, everyone was shocked to see that the Soviet coach had replaced their goalie, who was arguably the best in the entire world. They were starting the second period with their second string goalie! Could it be? Were the Soviets nervous about what Herbie's team would be able to do? The match continued with the Soviets stepping up their game from the first period. They were too relaxed before and weren't taking the Americans seriously, which, as it turns out, was a mistake. The Soviets would end up taking the lead in the second period, and as both teams left the ice for their last intermission, the Soviets were up 3-2.

Herbie and his boys were anything but defeated. They had come from behind several times in the Olympic Games and were ready to put everything on the line to beat their biggest enemy. The last period started with a fervor. Both teams knew it was do or die. Then at 8:39, Mark Johnson came through with his second goal of the night, tying up the score at 3-3. The boys were still in the game! The celebration barely had a chance to wind down before team captain, Mike Eruzione, got the puck, skated quickly to the center, took his shot, and SCORED, just 81 seconds after the tying goal! The Americans were in the lead at 4-3! The crowd went wild! The normally stoic Herb could be seen in the stands cheering



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and pumping his fists in the air along with the entire arena. He proudly looked up at the scoreboard. His boys were doing the unthinkable.

The last 10 minutes of the game were now upon them. The U.S. had a huge task in front of them: for the final leg of the match, they would have to do everything in their power to not let the Soviets score a single goal. This was a daunting task since in the first two periods, the Soviets had outshot the Americans 30-10. Goalie, Jim Craig recounted, "They could score in ten minutes what would take us 60 minutes to score. And I knew that." The Soviets were also known to completely obliterate their competition during the last period of every game. But this very moment is exactly what Herbie had been preparing his boys for — all the drills, the conditioning — it had all been getting them ready for the final minutes of the game, when they would be the most tired and the most emotional. Herb knew his boys were ready. It would turn out to be the longest ten minutes of their lives. Skating, defending, blocking, shooting — they were using everything Herb had taught them and executing with such precision. Herb could be heard chanting in his boys ears, "Play your game. Play your game," over and over again. He was indeed their confidence, reminding his boys to do what

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they were meant to do, which was not only to play hockey, but to represent their country in the greatest event U.S. Olympic hockey had ever seen.

The clock slowly began counting down. The fans kept getting louder and louder — the taste of victory just seconds away. The final countdown was on — 3, 2, 1, with famed sports announcer, Al Michaels, asking the infamous question that summed up this almost impossible feat: “Do you believe in miracles? Yes!” The boys had done it! Not only had they defeated the best team in the world, but they had defeated them on American soil at the Olympics. The boys rushed off the benches and tackled each other on the ice in pure celebration. But where was Herb? Was he jumping up and down celebrating too? No, he wasn’t. When the television camera panned back over to the benches, Herb was seen leaving the arena. Was he displeased? Was he unhappy? No. Quite the opposite. The reason he left almost immediately was because he wanted his players to have their moment and to get the attention they rightfully deserved. Herbie’s son, Dan, remembered that infamous day, and said, “My dad was so stoic. I remember when the countdown took place, the play was in the other end, I go, ‘I want to see what he does.’ So 4-3-2-1: I’m looking at him. I remember he jumped in the air...and boom he went down and boom he just hightailed it off the bench and into the bowels of the building...He just went crazy for that one split second moment.” It was never about him. It was always about his team.

When everyone returned to the locker room, Herb was quick to remind his boys that they weren’t done. Many often forget that their



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victory over the Soviets was not the final game. They still had one more match to play against Finland in order to take home the gold medal. Herb told his team if they didn’t win that game, they would carry that defeat with them for the rest of their lives, and Herb wasn’t going to let that happen on his watch. The day after they defeated the Soviets, Herb led his team through a draining practice, once again. All their hard work would finally pay off, when on February 24, 1980, the United States defeated Finland 4-2, to take home the gold medal. The impossible dream had indeed come true. Under the leadership of Herb Brooks, the United States had done it.

Many people viewed their victory as more than just a hockey game. It reinvigorated the nation, got them off their knees, and made Americans stand up with pride.

Life After Lake Placid

Coming off his Olympic victory, Herb continued his career in hockey in several different organizations. First, he moved to Switzerland to coach the national team. Shortly after, he came back to the states to work for the NHL, coaching the New York Rangers from 1981-1985. He would end up taking his team to the playoffs every year, while also making history by winning 100 games faster than any of the coaches in that franchise before him. He was also named Coach of the Year in 1982. But disillusioned with the egos he had to coach in the professional league, which were very different from the personalities he was used to coaching in amateur hockey, he briefly returned to the college arena and coached for St. Cloud State University in 1986. In his short year there, he managed to revolutionize the program and led his team to a third place finish in a national tournament for smaller colleges. Then the NHL came calling again, where he would end up coaching the Minnesota North Stars, the New Jersey Devils, and the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Aside from coaching professional teams, Herb would also coach the Olympics twice more in his lifetime. He coached the French Olympic team in the 1998 Games in Nagano, Japan as well as the United States Olympic team in the 2002 Salt Lake City Games, where he would lead his team to a silver medal, the first medal won by the United States since his win in 1980.

By 2003, Herbie had hung up his coaching hat and become the director of player development for the Pittsburgh Penguins.



But sadly, on August 11, Herb Brooks died in a car accident in his home state of Minnesota, at the age of 66 years old, coming home from a U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame fundraiser. Although his life was cut short, he will always be known as one of the greatest hockey coaches of all time. Defenseman, Ken Morrow, stated, "I don't think we would have won [gold] with anyone else. To me he goes down with Vince Lombardi and John Wooden and all the great coaches from other sports. He was innovative, 20-30 years ahead of his time. Everything he did could have backfired but he knew it was the way you had to play to beat those teams."

All 20 players from his 1980 Olympic hockey team were present at Herb's funeral, in addition to several thousand others who wanted to pay their respects to the man who helped put American hockey on the map. Forward, Rob McClanahan said, "When he passed away there were hundreds of players at his funeral and every one of them would tell you they'd play for him tomorrow."

Herb Brooks will always be remembered for his "Miracle on Ice" and has gone down in U.S. hockey history for bringing out the absolute best in his players.

Fun Facts

- ★ While playing on a semi-pro team, Herb suffered a hand injury. In the emergency room, he met a nurse named Patricia Lane, who would eventually become his wife. They got married in 1965 and had two children, Dan and Kelly.
- ★ *Sports Illustrated* named the “Miracle on Ice” the top sports moment of the 20th century.
- ★ In 2004, a statue of Herb was dedicated in St. Paul, Minnesota, showing him cheering during the 1980 Winter Games.
- ★ 2,000 people were in attendance at Herb’s funeral, which was held at St. Paul’s Cathedral in St. Paul, Minnesota. Many held up hockey sticks to pay their respects.
- ★ In 2004, Disney released the movie *Miracle*, which introduced Herb’s amazing story to a new generation, with actor, Kurt Russell, playing Herb Brooks. Herbie died shortly before the movie came out.
- ★ In 2005, the Olympic ice arena in Lake Placid, New York, where the United States won the gold medal, was renamed Herb Brooks Arena in his honor, on the 25th anniversary of the “Miracle on Ice.”
- ★ After his death, Brooks was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2006, in the builder’s category, which is reserved for people who have made significant contributions to the game.





Vocabulary

Amateur: An athlete who plays a sport without getting paid.

Recruiters: People who try to get others to work or play for their organization.

Psychology: The study of the human mind and what affects human behavior.

Alma mater: A school that someone once attended.

NCAA: The National Collegiate Athletic Association is the main organization in the United States that manages college sports.

NHL: National Hockey League. A professional ice hockey league in North America that, as of 2022, is made up of 32 teams from the United States and Canada.

Rivalry: An antagonistic competitive relationship between two teams who have played each other several times in the past.

Exhibition: An unofficial game played between two teams, usually as a part of preseason training, that doesn't count towards their record.

Qualifications: In sports, matches that teams must win to advance to championship rounds.

Gelling: Working well together.

CCCP: The Russian abbreviation for the Soviet Union, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Brackets: In sports, a diagram that shows who plays who in a single-elimination sports tournament.



OLYMPIANS

KERRI
STRUG

ERIC
LIDDELL

LINOY
ASHRAM

HERB
BROOKS



**COLLECT ALL
THE OLYMPIAN
TOKENS!**

Cut out and paste tokens for each of the the 4 featured Olympians onto the spaces above.



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