The economic Gamble behind hosting the Olympics and the World Cup

ANDREW ZIMBALIST

How did both the Olympics and the World Cup evolve from modest sporting events to exhibits of excess? Andrew Zimbalist traces the path—from the first modern Olympics in 1896 and the first World Cup in 1930—to today's spectacles. Circus Maximus combines historical narrative with a straightforward analysis of the economic tensions behind recent Olympic and World Cup games—from Barcelona to Sochi, Rio de Janeiro to Beijing, and from South Africa to Brazil. With worldwide competition and only one winner, the battle among prospective hosts is fierce. Bids have become more and more extravagant, and the opportunity for corruption is omnipresent. To today, lingering allegations of corruption tarnish the 2018 Russia and 2022 Qatar World Cups. Meanwhile, cities around the globe are vying for the privilege of hosting the 2024 Summer Olympics. Circus Maximus is an eye-opening account for sports fans as well as citizens and leaders. Andrew Zimbalist shows what works for host cities and countries and points the way to reform for the IOC and FIFA bid processes.


ATHLETES COMPETE FOR NATIONAL HONOR IN OLYMPIC AND WORLD CUP GAMES. BUT THE ROAD TO THESE MEGA EVENTS IS PAVED BY BIG BUSINESS. WE ALL KNOW WHO THE WINNERS ON THE FIELD ARE—BUT WHO WINS OFF THE FIELD?

You'll be hearing a lot in the coming years about the problems cities face when they consider hosting the Olympic Games and the World Cup. This international issue is thoroughly explored by Andrew Zimbalist in his important new book, Circus Maximus. Zimbalist is the perfect person to delve into this timely topic, located at the intersection of sports and economics.

—CHRISTINE BRENNAN, USA Today national sports columnist, ABC News and CNN commentator

Andrew Zimbalist is a perpetual source of insight on the economics and administration of modern sports. When weighing the very real risks and rewards of hosting major international events, political leaders and informed citizens should carefully consider the information and arguments presented here before rolling the dice.

—BOB COSTAS, Broadcaster, NBC Sports and Major League Baseball Network

It's time for cities to stop the mega-sports madness. Andrew Zimbalist shows why hosting the Olympics and the World Cup is almost always a boondoggle. Great stuff!

—RICHARD FLORIDA, Director of the University of Toronto's Martin Prosperity Institute and author of The Rise of the Creative Class

Andrew Zimbalist documents how the officials who run the international sports organizations that authorize these events profit handsomely, while host cities and nations experience ever-increasing losses, and why before-the-fact claims that such events will deliver long-term economic benefits typically are wildly inaccurate.

—ROGER NOLL, Professor of Economics, Stanford University

Post: Wanna buy a velodrome cheap? Andrew Zimbalist’s penetrating examination of how the International Olympic Committee and FIFA have sweet-talked cities and nations into hosting their extravaganzas is absolutely devastating in its ugly detail.

—FRANK DEFORD, Author and Commentator

Circus Maximus shines a bright light on the much-needed discussion about the unconscionable expense surrounding both the bidding process and hosting of the Olympics and the World Cup. This perfectly titled book will leave you gasping for reform. Immediately.

—JULIE FOUJY, ESPN analyst, former U.S. national soccer team captain—winner of two World Cups and three Olympic medals

Indispensable for anyone who wants to understand the impact of hosting the Olympics.

—EVAN HORGOWITZ, Boston Globe

Cover by Sese-Paul Design