



To the victor go the spoils; or in this case, a big, fat medal and some serious global bragging rights.

That's right, y'all. August 5th, 2016 marks the start of the supersonic, high stakes world event we've all been waiting four long years for; the 2016 Summer Olympics, Rio-style.

Yep, it's finally time to go for that elusive gold, chant till you sound like a 2-pack-a-day smoker, proudly wave your flag and rock your country's cotton, poly blend or wicking tee. What other 2 week long affair allows you to root for the underdog from a country you've never ever heard of while simultaneously and unabashedly cheering on world domination in the name of athletic expertise? Where else can you watch up close and personal life-long dreams be fulfilled among flowers, tears and deep thoughts by **Bob Costas** while witnessing the nasty fall, the dirt stained and bloodied shreds of others ripped to smithereens . . . all in between 3 minutes of million dollar commercial breaks on NBC?

Only, as a self-described underachiever, the whole Olympic game fervor leaves me a wee bit flummoxed. Granted, I wasn't much of an athlete growing up. And let's face it, one of the great things about being raised in the USA is if your parents want to send you off to train for 40 hours a day, live in a dorm with a personal coach whom you call "Papa" and eat protein powder 24/7 in the name of Olympic Gold all you have to do is remind them you have Maury Povich's number on speed dial . . . or Megyn Kelly's or Geraldo's, depending on your preference and the year you were born. Trust me, no one likes to think of their name attached to the headline "Parents fueled by greed rob child of innocence for a guest spot drinking AM wine on Live with Hoda and Kathie Lee."

But even though I lack a sporty determination to win, I'm a rock solid spectator of the summer games. It all began, for me, at age 4, in 1976, while watching Nadia Comaneci pick up the first

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Written by Laura Packard

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perfect ten. I was hooked. I even lived in Atlanta during the 1996 games and braved horrendous traffic, sardine-canned crowds, hour-long bathroom lines and monster truck revivals all in the name of watching the best battle it out on the world's stage. Actually, we never tried to get tickets ahead of time, because, yes, we are lazy, so we watched it from the House of Blues downtown. Sort of the same thing.

Which reminds me; I'd love to see the summer Olympics back here in the South one more time while I can still handle the heat. And yes, the main reason is I would hate the entire globe to think of the South and remember that gosh awful fuzzy mascot with the obnoxious buggy eyes named Whatizit. Whatizit? No one still really knows and it has absolutely nothing to do with the South. Something tells me that if the first Ancient Olympians time traveled from to 776 BC to 1996 Atlanta and saw that thing they would rightfully conclude they'd witnessed the beginning of the second collapse of modern civilization. We don't need that albatross hanging around our necks; that's where we sling our grandmother's pearls.

And while we are at it, sure there are plenty of games at the summer Olympics that represent our southern lifestyle of sports and leisure: golf, equestrian, tennis, kayaking, sailing . . . but that only scratches the tiniest of magnolia lined and hydrangea-colored surfaces of Southern pastimes. It's not too far off base to suggest the inclusion of the following . . .

Corn Hole:

The origins of corn hole still remain a mystery to this day. Some trace its roots back to Germany, others the mid-west and here in the South, to the rolling hills of rich Kentucky farmland. Either way, it's a long held tradition found at every family reunion, tailgate, BBQ – you name it, you'll find two wooden boxes with holes cut out and 6 beanbags along with a heaping healthy dose of serious competition. I know some of you are scoffing at the thought that throwing a beanbag full of dried corn kernels through a small hole would require Olympic-sized skill. To that, I say you've never played in a corn hole tourney before. The skill is totally on par with vaulting over a 20-foot bar. Actually, it takes a lot more finesse when you think about it. Not only do you have to demonstrate superior hand-eye-coordination, you must do so while keeping the playlist spinning, the cocktails flowing, the conversation interesting. And while not over-cooking the baby backs on the Green Egg.

Greased Watermelon Polo:

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When a host city wins its summer Olympic bid, one of the first things they start building is their very own Olympic Aquatics Stadium. This place is usually hopping and a hard ticket find. It would be even hotter if you added this old-fashioned time honored Southern sport. It's cut throat, y'all. Think ice hockey without protective gear and lots of beer. The rules are simple: greased watermelon released, everyman for himself in the name of rescuing said watermelon to dry land. It's the stuff where legends, and nasty scars, are made.

Tubing:

Unlike sailing, the point of this sport is to arrive last, not first. And this is no easy feat for the faint of heart. It requires getting from point A to point B with more weight tied to your team's tubes than you started with. Sure, it's cool to attack a pommel horse in under 16 seconds. But try navigating a back country river with the goal of meeting, greeting and tying up more folks (and their coolers) than you started with. And let's not forget this is the region that brought us Deliverance.

Oh well, a Bob Costas I am not. But here's to hoping for another chance after 2020 Tokyo. In the meantime, let the games begin!