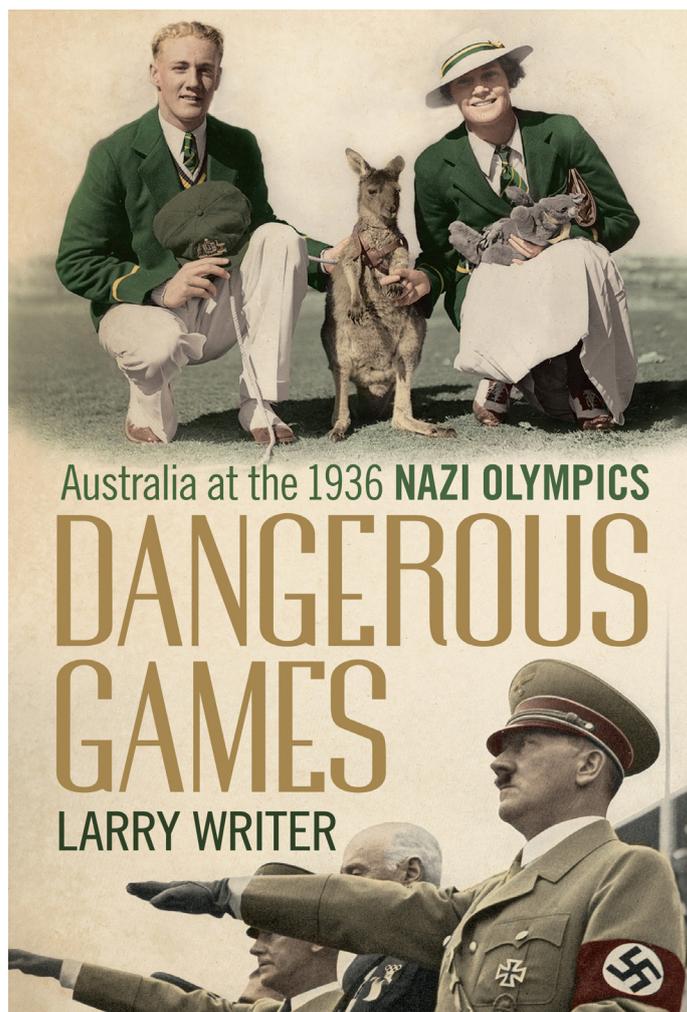


ALLEN & UNWIN



 READING  
GROUP NOTES

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## About the book

*Dangerous Games: Australia at the 1936 Nazi Olympics* is the never-before-told story of the 33 Australian athletes, true innocents abroad, who, believing that sport was the best antidote to tyranny, ventured by cramped steamer and rattletrap train to Adolf Hitler's Berlin in 1936 to compete in the Nazi Olympic Games.

What those young Australians experienced in Berlin that steamy summer would destroy their belief that sport was separate from politics and that, win, lose or draw, all that mattered was competing fairly and making their nation and loved ones proud.

The 1936 Olympics were the most spectacular staged to date with performances, such as those of black American Jesse Owens, that endure in sporting legend, but for all the thrilling pageantry and record-breaking, Hitler's Games were at their dark heart a cynical sham designed to trick the world into believing that his Third Reich was a peaceful, compassionate society while he brutally persecuted Jews and political opponents and plotted the conquests that would send the world to war just three years later.

Based on official records, film and sound archives, the athletes' diaries and letters and the author's exclusive interviews with Basil Dickinson, the last-surviving 1936 Olympian, *Dangerous Games* takes readers into Hitler's Berlin and a front row seat at the 100,000 capacity Olympic Stadium.

## About the author

Larry Writer is an award-winning author with an interest in sport, history and crime. His book *Razor*, the saga of Kate Leigh and Tilly Devine and the razor gangs of Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s, was a national bestseller, won the Ned Kelly Award for best Australian True Crime book of 2002 and was the basis of the 2011 Underbelly series *Underbelly Razor*. His other books include *Bumper*, the biography of the legendary Sydney policeman Frank "Bumper" Farrell; *Pleasure and Pain*, the biography of rock star Chrissy Amphlett; the biography of tennis great Rod Laver; and *Never Before, Never Again* about growing up a child in a rugby league world.

## Reviews

'Larry Writer has delivered a gem in *Dangerous Games*.' - Roland Perry, author of *Bill the Bastard*

'Writer has faithfully recreated the 1936 Olympics - the most controversial in history.' - Harry Gordon, author of *Australia and the Olympic Games*

## For discussion

- ☞ How does Larry Writer recreate the excitement and tension of the Berlin Olympics for today's readers, who know the outcome?
- ☞ Do you think the experience of the Australians at the 1936 Olympic village is very different from that of contemporary Olympic athletes?
- ☞ In 1936, the Australians took with them a live grey kangaroo they called 'Aussie' as a team mascot. At the opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, members of the Australian Olympic Team carried a Boxing Kangaroo plush toy. Why do we identify so strongly with kangaroos as a national sporting symbol?
- ☞ In 1936, Hitler notoriously used the Berlin Olympics to promote a positive image of Germany to the world. Is that so very different from the way contemporary governments promote their countries at the Olympics?
- ☞ Australian Olympian Basil Dickinson said about his team, 'Where we were lacking was in our preparation and our attitude'. What does *Dangerous Games* reveal about the Australian attitude to sport in 1936?
- ☞ Is there much difference between the way the US treated their star athlete Jesse Owens and the response from the authorities in Germany?
- ☞ To what extent has our attitude to women in elite sport improved since 1936?
- ☞ Do you agree with 1936 Australian Olympian Basil Dickinson that the Olympic spirit should be, 'if we did our best whether we won or lost, competed fairly and didn't disgrace Australia'?

## Suggested further reading

*The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics* - Daniel James Brown

*Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* - Laura Hillenbrand

*Triumph: The Untold Story of Jesse Owens and Hitler's Olympics* - Jeremy Schaap