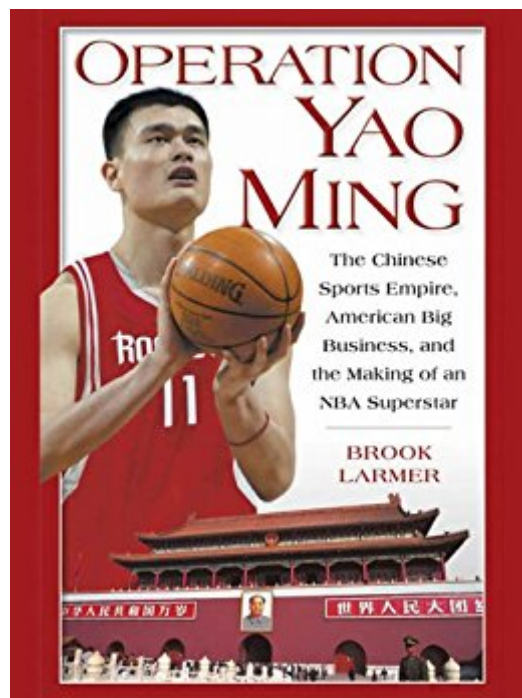


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Operation Yao Ming: The Chinese Sports Empire, American Big Business, And The Making Of An NBA Super Star



Synopsis

The riveting story behind NBA giant Yao Ming, the ruthless Chinese sports machine that created him, and the East-West struggle over China's most famous son. The NBA's 7'6" All-Star Yao Ming has changed the face of basketball, revitalizing a league desperate for a new hero while becoming a multimillionaire pitchman for Reebok and McDonald's. But his journey to America—like that of his forgotten foil, 7'1" Wang Zhizhi—began long before he set foot on the world's brightest athletic stage. Operation Yao Ming opens with the story of the two boys' parents, basketball players brought together by Chinese officials intent on creating a generation of athletes who could bring glory to their resurgent motherland. Their children would have no more freedom to choose their fates. By age thirteen, Yao was pulled out of sports school to join the Shanghai Sharks pro team, following in the footsteps of Wang, then the star of the People's Liberation Army team. Rumors of the pair of Chinese giants soon attracted the NBA and American sports companies, all eager to tap a market of 1.3 billion consumers. In suspenseful scenes, journalist Brook Larmer details the backroom maneuverings that brought China's first players to the NBA. Drawing on years of firsthand reporting, Larmer uncovers the disturbing truth behind China's drive to produce Olympic champions, while also taking readers behind the scenes of America's multibillion-dollar sports empire. Caught in the middle are two young men—one will become a mega-rich superstar and hero to millions, the other a struggling athlete rejected by his homeland yet lost in America.

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Customer Reviews

The story of Yao Ming--the NBA's tallest-ever player who stands 7'6"--is necessarily the tale of the "sports machine," of politics, and of international business deals. Caught up in the forces of history, Shanghai's own homeboy has emerged as a symbol of the love-hate, push-pull relationship between China and the West. In Operation Yao Ming, award-winning journalist Brook Larmer has penned an enlightening and somewhat controversial account of the factors that shaped Yao's life, paved his way to the NBA, and rendered him a bridge to and eventually a symbol of East-West relations. Tension is the key operative word in this story. There is tension between Yao's life as a basketball player and what it might be otherwise, between Yao's life as the star on a Chinese basketball team and as 2002's number one draft for the American NBA, between American basketball training methods and the Chinese sports training system, between communism and capitalism, between the concept of sports as a way to glorify a nation and sports for their own sake. As a pawn in the center of all of this, Yao served as the key to unlock the treasure chest in many high stakes games--sports and otherwise. While the book is intriguing for its presentation of research on the Chinese basketball system and how its star player winds up in the NBA, a few faults must be mentioned. Operation Yao Ming was derived from a series of articles written for Newsweek between 2000 and 2003. While that means that the book displays the merit of much research, it also unfortunately succumbs to the hazards of allowing all that information to be hastily thrown together.

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