



Operation Yao Ming: The Chinese Sports Empire, American Big Business, and the Making of an NBA Superstar

Brook Larmer

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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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