



The Miracle in Lake Placid

**Excerpt from “The Courage to Succeed”
by Four time Olympian Ruben Gonzalez**



An unforgettable moment from the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics. Team USA beat the Soviets and went on to win the Gold Medal.

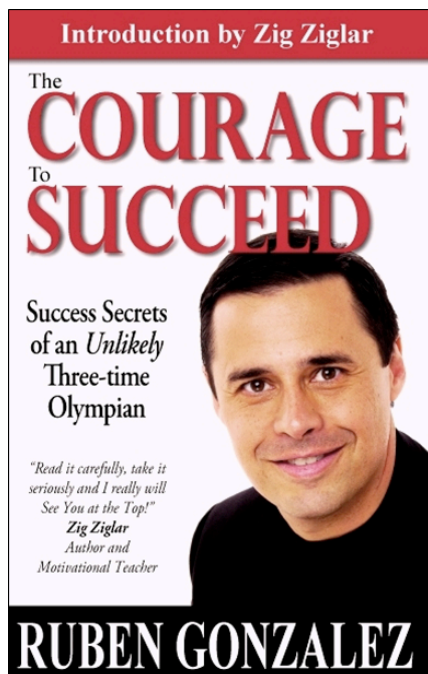
They call it “The Miracle in Lake Placid.” The date was February 22, 1980 – George Washington’s Birthday. The story of David and Goliath was about to repeat itself.

The young, scrawny, inexperienced United States Hockey team was about to face the mighty Soviet Team at the Lake Placid Olympic Games. No one thought the Americans had a chance to win. They were just a hodgepodge squad made up of the top U.S. college players. The Americans had been playing together for only six months, so they had not even had a chance to ‘gel’ - to get to know each other and become a real team.

The Soviet team was the best in the world. They were like a fine tuned machine. Some of the Soviet players had been playing together for 15 years! On any given play, they could confidently pass the puck to the open space, knowing that their teammate would be there to receive it. Six months earlier the Soviets had beaten the National Hockey League All Star team - arguably the strongest pro team in the U.S.! Therefore, everyone expected the Soviets to steamroll the young American team.

“Every success you’ve ever had or will ever have is the product of your courage to act and the courage to endure.”

- Ruben Gonzalez



The international bestselling book “The Courage to Succeed” is a manual on how to become a high achiever.

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Everyone, that is, except Herb Brooks, the U.S. Coach. Brooks believed in Team U.S.A. when no one else did. He told his players, “Realistically, we can beat the Russians about one out of ten times. We just have to make sure that this is the time. Our only chance is to attack the Russians, and play to win. Everyone else plays, not to lose. Our only chance is to attack, attack, attack!”

Brooks instilled his belief into his players. The young Americans attacked like they never had before. They played with confidence and boldness; with optimism and determination; they played to win. The young college kids trusted Brooks and kept shooting the puck; shot after shot after shot. The Soviets, not used to being attacked, were caught off guard. Somehow, the Americans pulled off one of the biggest upsets in Olympic history.

They beat the Russians 4-3. It really was a “Miracle in Lake Placid.”

The crowd knew they had just experienced a once in a lifetime event, and they didn’t want to leave the arena. After the game, the U.S. fans walked up and down Main Street Lake Placid. Almost on cue, snowflakes began to fall and for hours everyone walked and sang “The Star Spangled Banner,” “America the Beautiful” and “God Bless America.”

I was 17 years old when I witnessed the Miracle in Lake Placid. The hockey game reminded me of a dream I’d had ever since the third grade - a dream I’d buried because I didn’t believe in myself. It was

an improbable dream, an impossible dream, the dream of becoming an Olympian. At the end of the famous hockey game, when sports announcer Al Michaels exclaimed, “Do you believe in miracles?,” I silently nodded my head and with fire in my eyes, said “Yes, I believe!”

Flash forward four years: it’s 1984. Now I was walking down Main Street Lake Placid looking for the U.S.Olympic Training Center, where I was about to change my life forever by taking up the sport of luge with hopes of competing in the Calgary Winter Olympics four years later.

In 1984, I was a 21-year-old soccer player - a bench warmer in my college team. Common logic would have dictated that I was much too old to start a new sport, but I was filled with a fire that had been rekindled by witnessing The Miracle four years earlier in Lake Placid.

Four years, a few broken bones later, and against all odds, I was marching in the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics, where I would be competing against the best in the world in the men’s singles luge. I went on to compete in the 1992 Albertville Olympics, the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics and in 2010, when I competed in the Vancouver Olympics at the age of 47, I became the first person to ever compete in four Winter Olympics each in a different decade.

For the last 10 years, in my keynote presentations, I’ve shared the story about how the 1980 Miracle in Lake Placid inspired me to pursue my Olympic dream. Hopefully, through my story I can inspire others just like the Miracle Hockey Team inspired me.

There is greatness within you. You can accomplish much more than you could ever imagine. If you make a decision to pursue your dreams and aspirations you can create miracles too.

**To watch a video filled with highlights of Ruben’s
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