

Book Club Notes

Title: Turning the Tide

Author: Michelle Ford with Craig Lord

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Subject: Memoir, Sport, Olympics, Swimming, Olympian, Gold Medalist

Book description

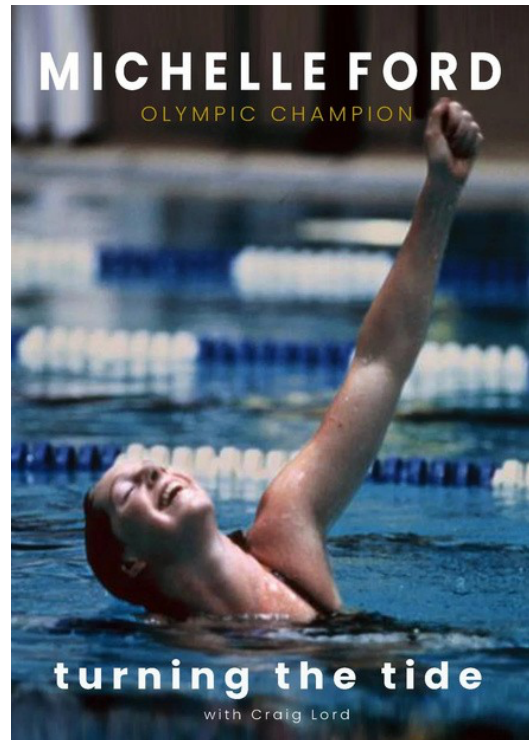
Against the backdrop of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, the 1980 Moscow Olympics was always going to be political.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser wanted Australia's Olympic athletes to boycott the Games, in line with the USA, but many of the athletes had a different view.

In *Turning the Tide*, 800 metres Swimming Gold Medal winner, Michelle Ford, charts the highs and lows from the beaches of Sydney as a young girl with a dream, to the dizzy heights of Olympic swimming gold against the odds of Cold-War politics spilling into sport like poison.

Olympic boycotts, death threats, wilful blindness and misogyny coincided with the first and most ferocious, systematic, state-sponsored doping the world has ever witnessed.

In this roller-coaster account of courage and resilience in the Olympic realm, *Turning the Tide* is a manifesto for change.



About the authors

Michelle Ford-Eriksson MBE was an Olympic gold and bronze medallist in swimming in 1980, and dual world record holder. She is a University of Southern California graduate with a master's degree in Sports Psychology and a bachelor's degree in business communication. She has held directorships of the Australian Sports Commission, Australian Sports Foundation, and Swimming Australia.

Craig Lord is a journalist with The Times and Sunday Times in the UK with three decades of experience as a swimming journalist.

Discussion Points

What do you think of the opening chapter? Does the description of hitting the water evoke anything for you?

Were you aware that the then Australian Government wanted the Olympians to boycott the Olympic Games in 1980? Does the book give you an understanding of the two 'sides' of this argument?

Does the book give you a good idea of what it was like to be a young teenager (13yo in 1976) competing at the Olympic Games?

Do you find Michelle's descriptions of the Moscow Olympics to be broadly critical or complimentary of the organisers?

Were you aware that the East Germans were into doping in such a systematic way?

What does it say about the issues around unification (of Germany) that the files of the Stasi became public and these facts became known? (Chapter 23)

Thomas Bach, current IOC President, and Sebastian Coe, current IAAF President, are prominent in the book because of Michelle's work with them as part of the first Athletes' Commission. Do you think these two men – arguably two of the top three most powerful men in world sport along with Gianni Infantino – have lived up to their stated objectives set in the early 1980s?

What is the central message of the book for you?

Do you believe there should be restorative justice for the athletes who missed out on medals, or rightful medals, during the East German doping regime?

Is there an aspect of Australian life, or Australian history, that you didn't know before you read the book?