



No gloating, just Olympic relief

'No Games' honcho blasts Daley lies, insists our loss is our gain

October 7, 2009 - BY [RICK TELANDER](#) Sun-Times Columnist

It doesn't feel good to lose, does it, Chicago? And Tom Tresser isn't gloating.

"No," he says, as we sit in a Starbucks on the Near North Side. "There's no gloating. But there's a big sigh of relief."

And then he gives the analysis that all Chicagoans should hear, especially in the wake of their initial sadness and depression at losing the 2016 Olympic Games.

"We should be very happy," he says. "Dodged a bullet? Honestly, we dodged a cannon ball."

How can *not* winning the Olympics be good?

Tresser, 57, an unimposing-looking professor of civics and public policy at a local university (he asks that school not be named because there has been enough turbulence for him already), was the head man for No Games Chicago, the tiny, grassroots, volunteer, un-funded group that vigorously and relentlessly -- and, it must be noted, successfully -- opposed Mayor Daley's and Pat Ryan's campaign for the 2016 Summer Games.

Tresser knows it is difficult to make his pitch.

He knows that nobody goes into competition to finish second, let alone fourth, as Chicago did -- behind Tokyo, Madrid and ultimate winner Rio de Janeiro.

But he knows that the research, logic and passion of his group -- a handful of idealistic workers with a budget of not quite \$10,000 in donations -- helped, however slightly (we'll never know, will we?) to turn the tide against the massive United States Olympic Committee/ Chicago/machine organization that spent millions on p.r. and marketing.

"We were successful, just getting facts out there," says Tresser. "We did our research. They sent 300 people to Copenhagen, and we sent three -- I mean, we don't even have an office! And we sure didn't have private jets or Air Force One. This was a crazy scheme from the start. The mayor's plan was so riddled with holes it was ridiculous, but if you repeat lies over and over again people will believe them."

'A personal, political move'

The lies started at the beginning, says Tresser. Daley, who had once scorned the bid, suddenly changed his tune and became an obsessed advocate of the Olympics coming to Chicago. That Daley's conversion occurred exactly when the Hired Tucks scandal was threatening to destroy his legacy in 2005 was no accident. That so much was done in private, without consulting the public, was also typical of the Daley regime, says Tresser.

"I believe this was a personal, political move," he says. "When I was in Copenhagen, handing out materials, an insider, a highly-placed member of the IOC told me, 'When public support goes below 50 percent, you're cooked.'"

There were polls that showed skeptical Chicagoans doubted Daley's and Ryan's claims of riches to come and were fearful of being on the hook for Games losses and overruns. Late polls showed fewer than half of Chicago's citizens were supporters of the 2016 plan.



No Games Chicago honcho Tom Tresser said Mayor Daley's Olympic bid...

Tresser and his volunteers found out that the Olympics don't usually make money for their cities, that the Chicago 2016 money claims were wildly overinflated.

"London 2012 is about \$9 billion over budget," says Tresser. "Vancouver [the 2010 Winter Games] recently had its mayor say the Olympics were a 'billion-dollar boondoggle.' Sydney [2000 Summer Games] had to go into the taxpayers' pockets for \$1.4 billion. Athens [2004] needed about \$5 billion in taxpayers' money. Beijing [2008], that's a special case, a Communist country spending billions and billions -- they went totally crazy, as they tried to enter the mainstream.

"But this is not a Hallmark card. This is our future. Chicago's. Our research shows so many more negatives than positives. Do you trust these people in charge? No graft, no collusion, no corruption? Everything finished on time? It's the *same people* who have always been involved. The city has been used as an ATM -- giving away priceless public assets like the Skyway, like the parking meters, that are supposed to be our future.

"So many of the numbers they gave out about the Olympics were phony. Proven wrong. Just lies!"

Standing up to the bullies

But the worst part for Tresser and his group was the ridicule they received, the nastiness that questioners always get from the herd, the un-thinking. "It was like being unpatriotic. We got, 'You don't love the city!' 'You don't love kids!' 'You don't love sports!'"

Tresser actually loves volleyball, and is mostly recovered from the Achilles tendon surgery he needed after hurting himself in a pickup game.

"Someone needs to stand up to these bullies," he says of the ruling regime. "Educated children are our future. Libraries. Safety. People say, 'What's your plan?' Well, jeez, I don't have 10,000 people working for me. I have unpaid volunteers. But there are good ideas out there. Lots. We need to hear them."

He finishes his coffee and quietly watches the slanting rain streaking the shop's windows.

"The hope is we can run our city well," says the teacher/advocate/ citizen, and yes, patriot. "This is not the end of something. I think -- I really believe -- this is the beginning of a brighter future."