Incident 2: Zola Budd and Mary Decker (Los Angeles, 1984)

Because of its political policy on apartheid, South Africa had been banned from all international sporting events. Zola Budd, one of South Africa's top women athletes, decided that in order to beat the ban and compete at the Olympic Games in 1984, she would have to become a British citizen. Because her grandfather was British, Zola had little trouble in being awarded British citizenship. Zola was duly selected by Great Britain to compete at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984. She came up against the hometown favourite, Mary Decker, in the Olympic 3000-metre final. Both athletes were picked as favourites to win the gold medal.

Both athletes seemed to be running well until midway through the race, when they contacted each other in mid-stride, causing both to slow momentarily. They soon clashed again, and this time Mary Decker lost her balance, fell, and was assisted from the track in tears. This incensed the crowd, many of whom thought that Zola Budd should not have been allowed to compete.

Despite being booed and jeered, Zola Budd completed the race in seventh position. She was initially disqualified but was later reinstated.

Zola returned to South Africa and went on to break several world records in running.