



# Torvill and Dean

by Geoffrey Miller

Dedication and supreme effort, the Olympic qualities that lead to perfection in any sport, were never better illustrated than by Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean when they won their gold medals in ice dancing at the XIVth Winter Games at Sarajevo. When they finished their dance of death to Ravel's Bolero and slumped prone on the ice at the Zetra arena, three years of incredibly intense training and hard work reached a climax.

To the spectators who sat spellbound by the flowing grace and beauty of the performance, two people moving as one on their skates, it may have looked easy. Only the friends and families of this quiet and retiring English couple understood fully, perhaps, the depth of work and sacrifice that lay behind it.

Torvill and Dean finished fourth at Lake Placid in 1980. They gave up their jobs - she was an office clerk and he was a policeman - to give their whole time to training in pursuit of their ultimate aim, an Olympic gold medal. In doing this they were taking advantage of the revised version of Rule 26 in the Olympic Charter, which permits athletes to spend as much time as they like preparing for the Games and to be sponsored and receive broken time payments for loss of earnings.

But while many of today's athletes are commercially sponsored, Torvill and Dean were financially backed by their home city, Nottingham. The City Council voted them a grant to last for three years, during which they have lived in Germany, training, practising, and working out their dance routines for seven days a week, separating only at Christmas to join their families.

Nottingham's interest in this gifted pair has a faint ring of ancient Greece, where the cities honoured their Olympic heroes. Certainly it is the kind of sponsorship which the modern Olympic movement needs. What a fine thing it would be if more cities helped their potential Olympic champions to such a degree !

T and D. as they are affectionately known in Britain, not only attained perfection in their sport but stretched the horizons of ice dancing, sometimes to the concern of their admirers at home who thought they might be going too far.

They first won the World Championships in 1981 at Hartford, Conn., and since then have defended it with ever-expanding enterprise and vision. At Copenhagen in 1982 their dance was based on the story of Mack and Mabel, and millions of television viewers discovered that ice dancing could be emotionally moving. At Helsinki in 1983 they were inspired by the stage musical "Barnum" and evoked the atmosphere of the circus : they were clowns, they juggled, walked tightropes, banged imaginary drums and turned somersaults.

Their Olympic gold medals were won by their greatest and boldest dance of all. They tore up the old recipe of changing tempi and varying technical display and moved in one unchanging rhythm throughout, to the slow beat of the Bolero. All nine judges gave them the maximum score of 6.0 for artistic expression - an unprecedented triumph. Once again, the Olympic Games brought dedicated sportsmen to their all-time peak.

G. M.

