
MILTON, STEVEN. *Skate: 100 Years of Figure Skating*. North Pomfret, VT: Trafalgar Square Publishing, 1996. Pp. 200. Appendices (10), skating chronology, glossary, index. \$29.95 cb.

Steve Milton's *Skate* is a colorful depiction of one of the most popular sports in North America. This extravagant, glitzy volume is printed on high-quality, glossy paper and includes more than 130 exhilarating full-color photos. An additional 16 black-and-white pictures, many previously unpublished, are from historical archives.

Interestingly enough, Milton begins not with the past, but with the 1990s. In chapter one, "The Rock 'n' Roll Tradition," he showcases the likes of such figure skating "stars" as Scott Hamilton, Elvis Stojko, Kurt Browning, Nicole Bobeck, Peggy Fleming, and Janet Lynn. The focus is on the impact of the "skating-as-rock" phenomenon. Milton explains that "figure skating has become 'the' sport of the 1990s...Skating is a people sport, full of emotion, intrigue, and the vitality of youth. Fox is the network of the young, and rock is the music of the young at heart" (p. 4).

The opening chapter thus sets the stage for *Skate*. Of eleven chapters, only two provide any real discussion of figure skating's past. Chapter two, "Skating History," does not provide a chronological presentation of important dates and events, but a potpourri, beginning with 1896 and then bouncing back in time to mention: the appearance of iron skates during the Middle Ages in Iceland; the Dutch perfection of iron *schaats* during the late 1500s; and the formation of the first known skating club in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1742. Only three black and white photos highlighted this portion of the text.

The remaining nine chapters are terribly disappointing if one is to expecting to learn more about the history of figure skating. The title of Milton's book is very misleading, at best. While *Skate* purports to provide an historical portrayal of the last 100 years of figure skating, it actually focuses on the last 20 to 30 years.

Chapter three, "Judging," explains how marks are awarded. Problems and concerns are highlighted by noting: the injustice suffered by Elvis Stojko during the 1992 Olympics, the blatant bias of a Soviet judge during the 1986 World Championships, and the controversial score awarded by a British judge in the 1995 World women's competition to Canadian Jennifer Robinson.

Chapter four focuses on the athleticism required of figure skaters. Some events from the 1960s and 1970s are underscored. Milton mentions Petra Burka's first landing of a triple Salchow for women, in 1965, and Donald Jackson's triple Lutz at the 1962 World Championships. Vern Taylor landed the world's first triple Axel at the 1978 World Championships, and Denise Biellman landed the first triple Lutz for women in 1978. Again, "Athleticism and Figure Skating" focuses on the 1980s and 1990s.

The next three chapters, "Artistry and Figure Skating," "Skating as One: Pairs and Ice Dancing," and "The Great Skates of All Time" follow the same format. By far, the majority of dates and events noted fall within a recent time period, notably the 1980s and 1990s, with some references to the 1970s, and an occasional reference to pre-1970. Chapter eight, "The Money Era: Professionals on the Rise," does provide a chronology, beginning with the skating carnivals that date back to the 1700s. This kind of historical information is what the reader is hungry for. Milton highlights the first full-scale professional show in North Carolina in New York's Hippodrome in 1915; this show was imported from the Admiral Palast in Berlin, where it originated in 1908. In 1936, Shipstad and Johnson's Ice Follies were born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Four years later, in 1940, the Ice Capades were formed in California, and by 1944, the Holiday on Ice was created.

While "The Emergence of Precision Skating" took place in the early 1960s in Ann Arbor, Michigan, chapter nine makes it clear that the development of precision skating is a long, slow process. A World Challenge Cup was planned for Finland in 1997. The goal is to have precision skating included in the 2002 or 2006 Olympics. The main focus of this chapter is on the future.

"Silver Blades, Silver Screen: Skating Movies" is one of the more interesting chapters in *Skate*, with a fair amount of historical information. Milton chronicles the movie industry and skating through such titles as *The Frozen Warning*, made in 1915; *One in a Million*, in 1936; *Hit the Ice*, in 1943; *Slap Shot*, with Robbie Benson, in 1978; and *The Cutting Edge*, in 1991.

In the closing chapter, "The Future: Where Is Skating Headed?," Milton voices concerns and worries about the proliferation of figure skating events and tours and the impact on training regimens. He predicts that skaters will form their own organizations, just as golfers and tennis players did in past decades.

While not a true historical work, *Skate* is an exciting and inspiring beginning. Through eleven chapters and 200 pages, Milton glides through memorable dates,

events, and eras that have made figure skating the popular sport that it is today. As noted, a majority of the text focuses on very recent events within the last 20 to 30 years. It is clear that Milton is an avid fan of the sport of figure skating. He is an accomplished sports journalist who specializes in international figure skating, and has covered many of the world's major figure skating competitions. One strength of Milton's book can be found in the 10 appendices provided, a lot of information is presented in a concise, well-organized manner. However, as an historical manuscript, *Skate* has some shortcomings. A major weakness of the text is evident in the fact that the author does not cite any references, and does not include a bibliography of sources. *Skate* is more of a photo-essay on figure skating, replete with glossy pictures that tell much of the story.

—ROBIN D. MITTELSTAEDT
Ohio University