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LEWIS, DAVID H. *Roller Skating for Gold*. American Sports History Series, No. 5. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997. Pp. xii, 195. Abbreviations, selected notes, bibliography, index, \$42.50 cb.

According to David H. Lewis, the “question of questions” is “Why has the sport of roller skating always been excluded from the Olympic games?” His book, *Roller Skating for Gold* attempts to answer that question. Lewis fell in love with skating at the age of five, and has been involved with the sport in many capacities, including as a competitive dance coach and figure skating coach. He is a frequent contributor to *Skate* and *American Skating World*.

Lewis begins by explaining that, “Being away from any serious involvement in roller skating for many years now has given me, I propose, the objectivity and distance needed to take more of an outsider’s look at things. So, while my heart is still very much in it, my mind feels clear of constricting associations...In seeking information and answers, I have spared no candor” (p. vii). However, *Roller Skating for Gold* is not the result of true historical research. Lewis does not present the historical record from a neutral position, offering “equal time” as it were, by providing both “arguments for” and “arguments against” when answering his research question. Therefore, the very premise of his work is biased. Rather than ask why roller skating has been excluded from the Olympic arena, a more neutral and research-oriented approach would have been to embrace the possibility that roller skating is not appropriate as an Olympic sport, and simply to ask, “Should roller skating be an Olympic sport?”

Apart from Lewis’ initial bias, this book is an adequate piece of research, and *Roller Skating for Gold* is a very interesting, enlightening, and well-written text. During his quest to discover why the sport of roller skating has been locked out of the Olympics, the author traveled through time, from the early days of roller skating, past the roller derby era, and into the contemporary era of in-line skaters. He even takes a peek into the future. The scope of this book goes well beyond just a historical sketch of roller skating; it covers a wide spectrum of skating

activities from speed skating, roller hockey, artistic roller skating, rexxing, roller blading, and free-style skating.

Lewis' research led him on an intriguing journey backwards in time through some rare historical documents, including more than 100 papers from the roller skating portion of the Avery Brundage Collection at the University of Illinois. With tape recorder in hand, he also talked to a number of individuals, each contributing to a "widening understanding of both the complexities of the sport and the dreams and frustrations of its most avid followers" (p. viii).

Lewis interviewed the likes of American dance skaters Jodee Viola and Greg Goody; foreign skaters, such as Gioia Cellai, from Italy; Michael Leong and Choi Kuai Tang, from Hong Kong; Marcus Vinicus and Juliana Vicalho, from Brazil, Andreas Brinkmans, from Germany, and Melanie Cole, from Great Britain. He also spoke with New Zealand judge Brian Sheppard; New York coach Donald Meyer; Gloria Nord, star of "Skating Vanities"; George Pickard, executive director of the U.S. Amateur Confederation of Roller Skating, speed skating champion Dante Muse; outdoor recreational slalom and free-style skaters Paul Piancone and Keith McCallin; skate shop owner Dave Hobie; Beth Davis of the U.S. Figure Skating Association; Matthew Gould and Bob Condron of the U.S. Olympic Committee; sportswriter John Donovan; TV network representatives from CBS, ABC, and ESPN; head coach of the Anaheim Bullfrogs; Oakland Skates' manager John Dandin; Anne Diffendal, former curator of the National Museum of Roller Skating, Dominic Cangelosi, rink operator and famed dance organist; Isidro Oliveras, president of the International Roller Skating Federation, and the list goes on.

Overall, Lewis "did his homework," but one cannot help noticing that the number of references cited really varies by chapter. A more thorough listing would have lent even more credibility to this work. Of thirteen chapters, six had no references cited at all; three chapters had only four citations; the greatest number of references cited in one chapter was six.

Throughout thirteen chapters, *Roller Skating for Gold* chronicles the sport's history from both a recreational and competitive perspective, covering the invention of the roller skate and the rise of roller skating as a tremendously popular sport and pastime in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to the inclusion of roller hockey as a demonstration sport in Barcelona. As noted earlier, the author mainly focuses on the many reasons why roller skating has been unsuccessful in its efforts to be recognized and included as an Olympic sport. Highlights include the prestige and popularity of ice skating, the bad reputation of roller derby, political infighting within the roller skating community, and even the emergence of in-line skates, all of which have actually contributed to the decision not to make roller hockey a regular Olympic event.

In the end, Lewis accomplishes his goal. He presents a fascinating story about the development of roller skating as a sport and the many obstacles that have prevented roller hockey from being included in the Olympic arena. The Olympic Games have always served as an invaluable showcase for emerging sports, lending credibility and visibility to many athletic events. Lewis makes it very

clear that roller hockey enthusiasts, in-line skaters, speed skaters, and others, have their eyes firmly fixed on a future that will someday include the olive wreath and Olympic recognition.

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