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SIMONS II, MINOT. *Women's Gymnastics: A History, Volume I- 1966 to 1974*. Carmel, CA: Welwyn Publishing Company, 1995. Pp. xxvii, 403. Photographs, figures, notes, glossary. \$35 cb.

For the die-hard gymnastics fan and the baby-boomer gymnast (those who participated in the sport in the 1960s and 1970s), Minot Simons II has authored a book that is a necessity for the home library. Focusing on the international scene, Simons details the top female gymnasts and their routines, beginning with the 1966 World Championships at Dortmund, Germany, and concluding with the 1974 World Championships in Varna, Bulgaria. He pays particular attention to gymnasts from the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia who dominated during the time period, but also gives print to gymnasts from the United States, Bulgaria, and Japan. *Women's Gymnastics: A History* is the first of four volumes to be published (Volume II 1975-1980, Volume III 1981-1988, and Volume IV 1989-1996 are future publications).

Simons combines text, figures, excerpts from newspapers and articles, and personal interviews to reveal the history and describe the development of women's gymnastics at the international level. In addition to the detailed history of each World Championship and Olympic Games, the author includes biographies about several gymnasts and their lives following their gymnastics careers. For some, success in the sports world continued, while others had difficulties moving on. Vera Caslavskaja, for example, fell out of favor with the Czech government for a number of years, but returned to coach at Sparta Club in Prague and became President of the Czech National Olympic Committee. Ludmilla Turischeva of the U.S.S.R. married Olympic track champion Valery Borzov and entered into international gymnastics coaching and officiating. Cathy Rigby of the United States overcame anorexia and became a stage actress and sports commentator. Tamara Lazakovich of the U.S.S.R. went to prison for larceny and died of

alcoholism before the age of 40. Along with the large number of photographs and figures from the gymnastics Code of Points (list of skills and their level of difficulty), this is by far the greatest strength and most interesting section of the book

The photography of Albrecht Gaebele, Don Wilkinson, Rupert Leser, Tony Duffy, Glenn Sundby, and others and the use of several figures from the Code of Points draws readers into the text of the book. Photographs ranging from Vera Caslavka on floor exercise and Zinaida Voronina in a vault pre-flight to Joan Moore Rice posing on the balance beam and Olga Korbut's famous back flip on the uneven bars allow former gymnasts and older readers to reminisce about the days of wooden balance beams, inch-thick floor mats, and bruised hips from beating/wrapping around the low bar. Younger readers and fans of the sport get a visual representation of the past from the photographs, while the Code of Points figures help to define the skill level of gymnastics in the late 1960s and early 1970s and provide a basis for comparison to current day gymnastics.

The basic text is enhanced by the description of numerous gymnastics routines. For those wanting to compare the changes in difficulty of skill over the last couple of decades, this is extremely helpful. Yet the lengthy, descriptive nature detracts from the flow of the text and turns the avid reader off at times. Placed in an appendix or a separate section, these routine descriptions could be more easily accessed and compared. In addition, the author provides detailed information about each score in each rotation of the competition. Much of this can be skipped over, as the results are also listed in table format. These two weaknesses of the book can easily be remedied in future volumes as can the occasional use of broken/awkward English and unfamiliar terminology.

Simons' liberal use of both primary and secondary sources is impressive. These sources include national newspapers, magazines, journals, and books from the United States, the Soviet Union, and East Germany; international gymnastics and Olympic magazines and journals; and videotapes supplied by former gymnasts and broadcasting companies.

All in all, it is evident that *Women's Gymnastics: A History* is a labor of love for Simons. With a no-holds-barred approach, this author of several articles on gymnastics throughout the years captures the essence of international competition and the politics involved in women's gymnastics between 1966 and 1974. He gives credit where it is due, yet also questions the validity of some of the officiating at these major competitions. Former and current gymnasts, fans of gymnastics, and gymnastics historians will all enjoy this book.

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