

Figure Skating in Japan

Translated from Der Eissport by Miss ELSBETH MULLER

In April, 1926, the International Skating Union published a list of its members in which, for the first time, The Japanese Skating Association appeared. From this it is very apparent that skating has obtained a firm foothold in Japan and that a national skating association is taking good care of the sport. In 1925 a representative of their Association was present at the Viennese Skating Club's competitions. Viscount M. Katano, of Tokio, is the president of The Japanese Skating Association and apparently has been since its inception. However it is to Mr. S. Kawakubo, its secretary, also of Tokio, that we are indebted for the following report.

As far as can be ascertained, skating was first demonstrated in Japan by a foreign missionary, in 1889. In 1896 many Japanese children were enjoying skating in Sendai. Gradually ladies and gentlemen began, but not until 1902 did they really give much thought to figure skating; at this time many had mastered the forward outside edges. In 1907 Japanese factories first manufactured skates. These went mainly to those living in the vicinity of Suwa Lake.

In 1912 Mr. Kawakubo really introduced figure skating according to the International rules. His knowledge was acquired from various well-known skating books, such as "Figure Skating" by Mr. Yglesias and "The Handbook of Figure Skating" by Mr. George H. Browne. The same year Mr. Kawakubo published the first book on ice skating in the Japanese language, and in 1915 he published the first book on figure skating. From this time skating acquired many followers and in 1918 The Japanese Skating Association was formed.

The first Figure Skating Championship was held in 1920 on the Suwa Skating Rink and was won by Mr. M. Godai. The compulsory

figures were outside forward eight, forward change of edge, and forward threes. Free skating *of no limited time!* The judges were Mr. Kawakubo, Mr. Katano, and Mr. Tashiro. Since then skating championships have been held annually by the Association. The following year (1921) the first speed skating race (over 500 meters) took place, and in 1923 the first ice rink was built in Osaka (60 by 48 feet). The first hockey game was played in Suwa about this time.

The Japanese Skating Association became a member of the I. E. V. in 1924. Figure skating was becoming more and more popular over the country and a new ice rink was built in Tsurumi, near Tokio, (60 by 90 feet). The next year Mr. Kawakubo published a new book on figure and speed skating. A double race track was now used and the races were run according to the rules of the I. E. V.

In the winter of 1928 the Japanese Figure Skating Championships were held at Sendai. The figures were inside back eight, outside forward brackets, outside rockers, inside counters, one foot eight backward; free skating five minutes. Places were won as follows: Mr. Y. Kaneko, Mr. S. Kubo, Mr. K. Watanabe. The judges were Messrs. Katano, Kawakubo, Tashiro, Yamaguchi, and Godai.

At present figure skating is a recognized sport throughout the country. The calibre is remarkably good considering they never have had a capable foreign instructor. There are four or five Japanese skaters who can execute all of the I. E. V. compulsory figures fairly well and whose free skating programs contain many difficult figures; for example, the Jackson Haines spin, the spread eagle, and the loop jump.

Following are the best known skating centers of Japan: Sapporo, Hakodate, Hachinohe, Morioka, Akita, Sendai, Dairen (ponds); Suwa, Yamanaka, Keijo, Antoken, (lakes); Nikko (ice rink); Tokio (artificial ice rink, 60 by 90); Osaka (artificial ice rink 60 by 48).