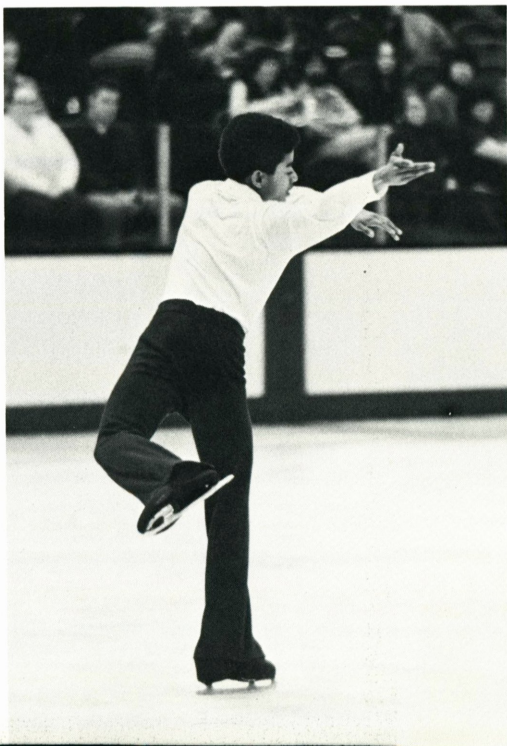


USFSA President Benjamin T. Wright congratulates Gordie McKellen for successfully defending his National Men's Championship. Joining Gordie on the podium are runner-up Terry Kubicka (left) and bronze medalist Charlie Tickner. Below: Novice champs Reggie Stanley and Sandy Lenz.

Nationals '75



Two Views

...And That's the Way It Was

by Sue Schauppner

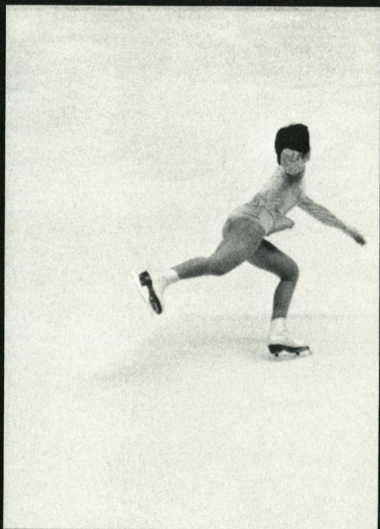
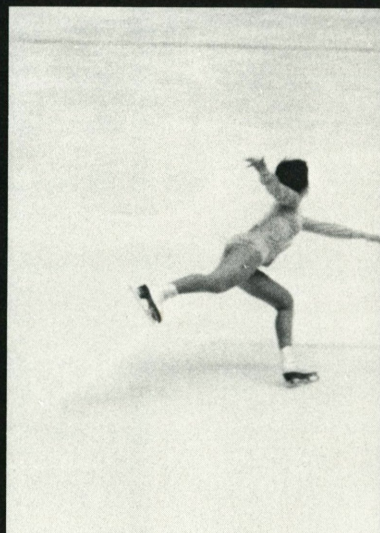
The National Figure Skating Championships, that annual climax to the American competitive season, was hosted this year by the St. Moritz Ice Skating Club at the Oakland, California, Coliseum Arena on January 29 through February 1. It was, as always, a combination of anxiety and expectation, long-term work and last-minute panic, some disappointment but, more often, spectacular achievement.

One skater whose experiences bridged the gap between anxiety and achievement was Sandy Lenz in Novice Ladies. She took the lead in school figures, followed by Kelsy Ufford and Laura McDonald, and maintained it with a free program which included a double Axel and two excellent double Lutzes—and this in spite of considerable trouble she was having with a fogged-up contact lens (no pun intended). The real struggle in this category came with Carrie Rugh's outstanding free skating. She skated a confident, error-free program which included a particularly fine camel/sit/camel spin, layback spin and series of Walleys. This brought her to second place in free skating and overall. Laura McDonald, whose high-content program contained two double Axels, retained third place in the final results.

There was much more shifting of position in Novice Men's. Reggie Stanley easily won figures and maintained that lead in the final standings. The free skating was won, however, by Robert Wagenhoffer, with a performance that moved him from sixth in figures to fourth overall. Mark Cockerell, the youngest of the group, placed third in figures and second overall, after a generally good free performance, despite one fall. Ted Masdea held onto third, in spite of Patrick Hughes' strong free skating; here again, due to Patrick's low placement in figures, he could not make it into the top three. Mark Meier in this category was the unlucky victim of one of the gremlins of competition, a loose blade, which he only discovered when he came off the ice after a disappointing free performance.

The most outstanding example of the dramatic effect of a good free program came in Junior Ladies. Jeanne Chapman took a 16-point lead in figures over her closest rival, Lisa-Marie Allen. But Lisa's program, which included two double Axels in a row and some

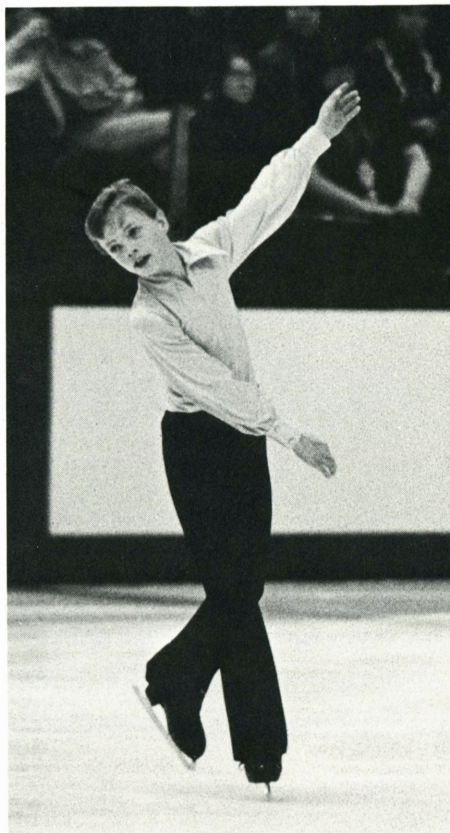
We take pleasure in publishing below and on subsequent pages a Cap-Tac-Tion[®] depiction of Dorothy Hamill executing a double flip jump at the National Championships. This photo series represents approximately two seconds of elapsed time. The Cap-Tac-Tion[®] technique, which uses a 35mm movie camera adapted to take 16 frames per second, was developed by William Udell and Howard Craker, under the name of Cradell Productions.



of the softest landings in the entire competition, earned a first place in free skating and overall. Leslie Glenn maintained her third place with a high-content program, while Kathy Gelecinskyj made a spectacular improvement over her dismal ninth in figures by placing third in free and fourth overall. In spite of this shifting, Junior Ladies had a certain consistency; the technical merit was very high, and the very feminine and graceful style of Peggy Fleming predominated.

But if Fleming influenced Junior Ladies, then Toller Cranston must be cited as the spirit that haunted Junior Men, as his style was especially evident in the skating of Bill Woehrle, Perry Jewell and Tim Zink. This was a very tight competition. For instance, Perry Jewell, who was third in figures, only moved up to second after winning the free skating by a large margin. His flashy style and obvious command of his repertoire made him the crowd's and judges' favorite. He could not budge Tim

RUNNERS-UP—Novice Man Mark Cockerell, right; Junior Pair Lori Mills & David Kirby, below; Senior Lady (and free skating champion) Wendy Burge, opposite.



Photos: Photocraft by Alberto

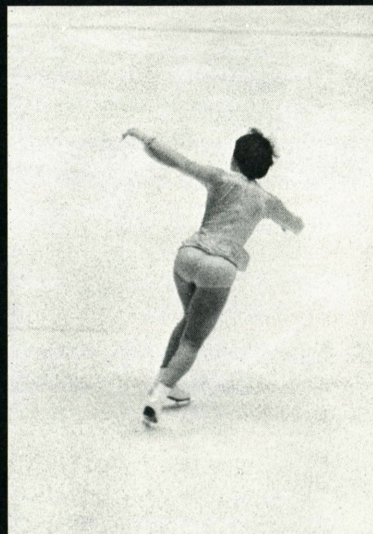
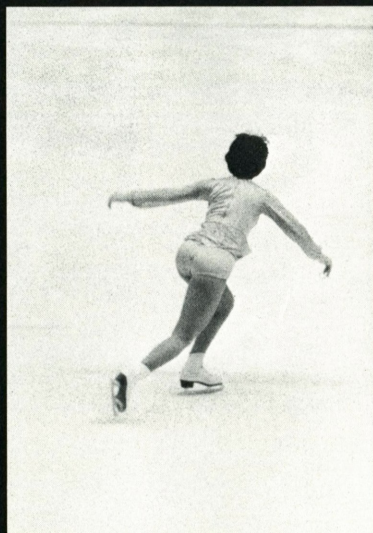


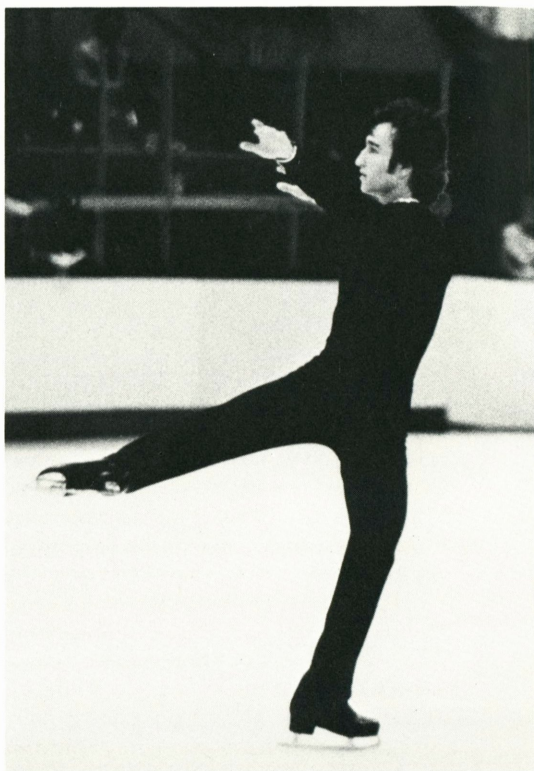
NATIONALS

Zink, however, who had a healthy lead in figures and is an incredibly good jumper. Scott Sherman moved from second to third, largely unassisted by a dull program with music which seemed to overpower rather than highlight his skating. This class, in particular, seemed to illustrate both the good and bad aspects of Cranston's influence: it has brought a much-needed sense of style, in contrast to sheer athleticism, to men's skating, but may encourage mere copying rather than the development of an individual style by each skater.

The single-event Junior Pairs' competition was won by Lorene and Donald Mitchell, a brother-and-sister team. It should be noted that one of the busiest people at Nationals was Hal Marron, who competed in this event with his sister Lyndy, in Silver Dance with his sister Cathy, and by himself in Junior Men.

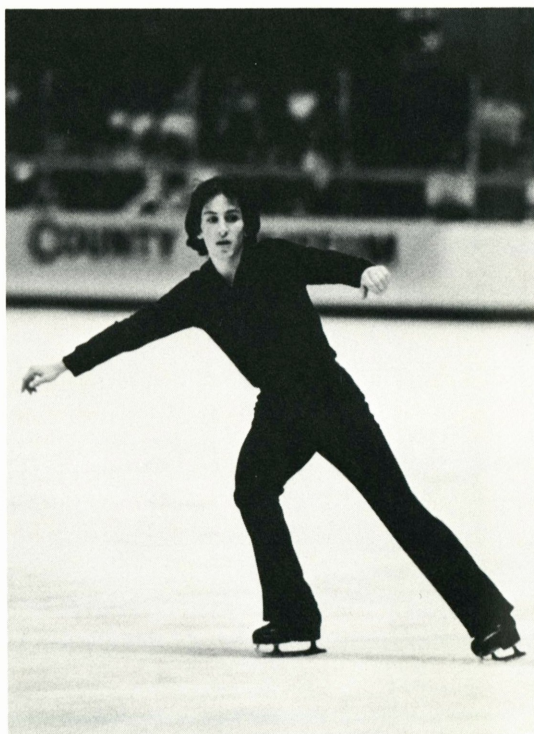
A real surprise came in Championship Pairs, in which Tai Babilonia and Randy Gardner won the short program, edging out the defending champions, Melissa Militano and Johnny Johns (Johnny missed the double flip). But Militano and Johns pulled ahead with their free skating program. While not entirely





JUNIOR MEN—Champion Tim Zink, above; runner-up and free skating winner Perry Jewell, top right; and bronze medalist Scott Sherman, right.

flawless—the “around the world” death spiral came close to expiring—their spectacular split triple twist more than made up for that. Tai and Randy had some problems as well in their program, but their seemingly effortless lifts and perfectly matched camel spins helped them stay just behind Melissa and Johnny. Some of the most interesting presentations in the category were, oddly enough, by couples who placed relatively low. Emily Benenson and Jack Courtney, who pulled up to third, had the most original program of the group, skated very much “to the music,” and had an excellent one-hand overhead Axel lift and kick-back lift a la Rodnina and Zaitsev. The Fuhrmans (Gale and Joel) placed a disappointing sixth; they had good lifts and a particularly inventive “cartwheel” move, but weak jumps.

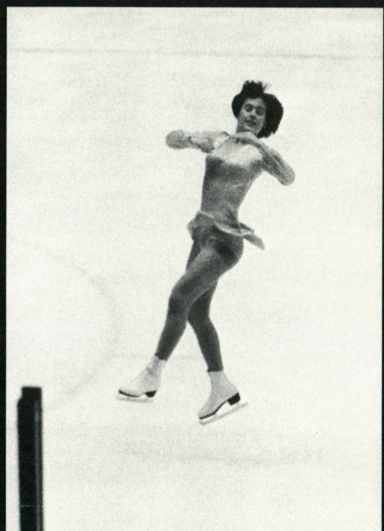
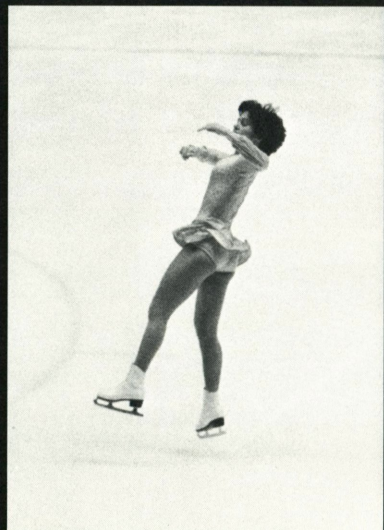
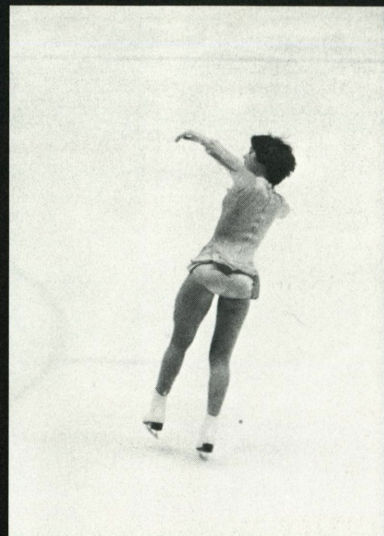


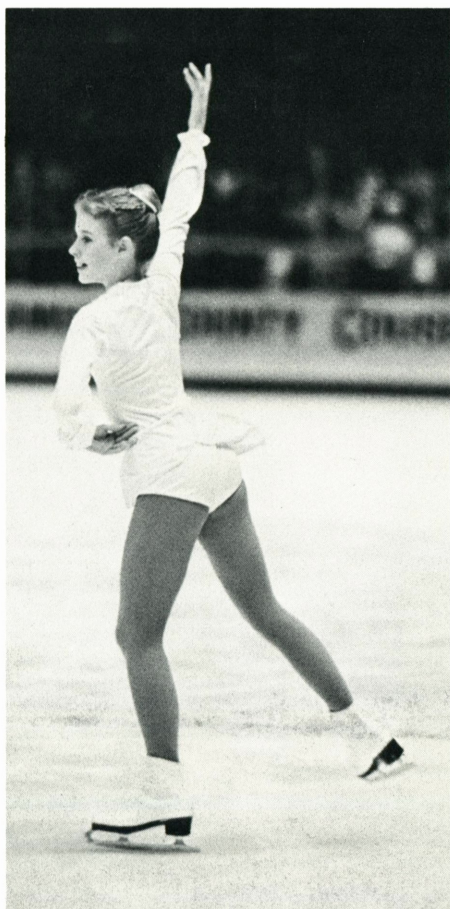
NATIONALS

Although interest in dance events is usually directed at the Championship level, Silver Dance had some obviously talented entrants. Deborah Mansfield and Fred Maynard garnered first place in both the compulsory and original set-pattern rounds. The designated rhythm for the OSP was the waltz, a fact which was apparently not perceived by all the couples. One of the best waltzes was created by Carol Fox and Richard Dalley; their choreography and execution seemed, although it surely wasn't, completely enjoyable and easy. They were third overall, with JoAnn Schneider and Richard Griffin, who had good compulsory dance marks, holding onto second.

The competition in Championship Dance was dominated again this year, as last, by Colleen O'Connor and Jim Millns. This not unexpected result was spiced, however, by the champions' greatly improved style of presentation. They emerged here as distinct personalities on the ice. Equally surprising was the rise of Judi Genovesi and Kent Weigle from fifth last year to second this year. They had an especially stylish free dance to some traditional jazz and, since Schwomeyer and Sladky used it, the equally traditional "Thoroughly Modern Millie." O'Connor and Millns skated effectively to what sounded in part like Guy Lombardo on the Moog Synthesizer, and they had one particularly interesting move which resembled a mini-death spiral. Third-placed Michelle Ford and Glenn Patterson skated their usual sexy-funny routine, which included Glenn's "Mr. Frick cantilever," to music ranging from Typical Twenties to Fifties rock 'n roll. You may well ask, is this dancing? Well, honey, a lot of things can be considered dancing. Amidst all this excitement were Ann and Skip Millier, last year's runners-up, who seemed to have a few problems this time and placed fourth.

Senior Ladies was, more than any other category, an anomaly. Dorothy Hamill won largely due to a strong lead in figures. Recovering from a recently sprained ankle, she obviously did not skate to full capability, especially in the final free segment. Although she did all the double jumps, including a good double Axel, the total impression she gave was of a safe, restrained program. And right behind Dorothy were some of the strongest women free skaters to appear in a long time. Linda Fratianne's free program contained a triple toe-loop, triple Salchow and high double Axels, one beginning and ending in spread eagles. Wendy Burge's style has matured considerably, while her free skating remains technically excellent. Kath Malmberg skated a consistently strong program, with a very high double Axel. The real threat in this category, though, was Barbie Smith.





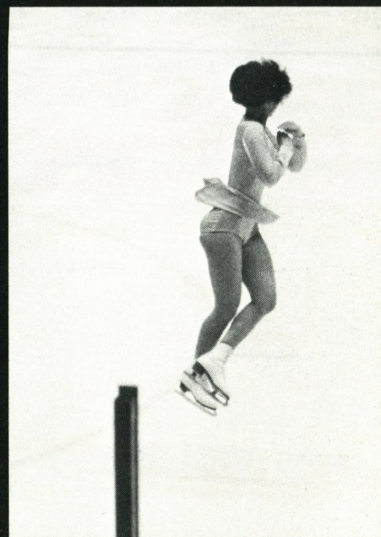
Photos: Photocraft by Alberto

NATIONALS

She completed a triple Salchow/double loop *combination* both in her short program and at the very beginning of her long program, in addition to a triple toe-loop. Having placed sixth in figures, however, she was unable to move up beyond fourth in the final results. Mention should be made, too, of Priscilla Hill, who placed fifth (someone had to), but who stood out, both in style and technical achievement, as vaguely reminiscent of, of all people, gymnast Olga Korbut.

As in the women's division, the defending Men's champion retained his title, to absolutely no one's surprise. Gordon McKellen failed to complete the elusive triple Axel (although it came off without a hitch in the exhibitions), but that was the only jump he missed; his triple loop, toe-loop and Salchow were all in great shape. And, as always, his spins were first-rate. It was Terry Kubicka, however, who captured the crowd's enthusiasm—not that this was undeserved after his triple Lutz, flip and loop and his five butter-

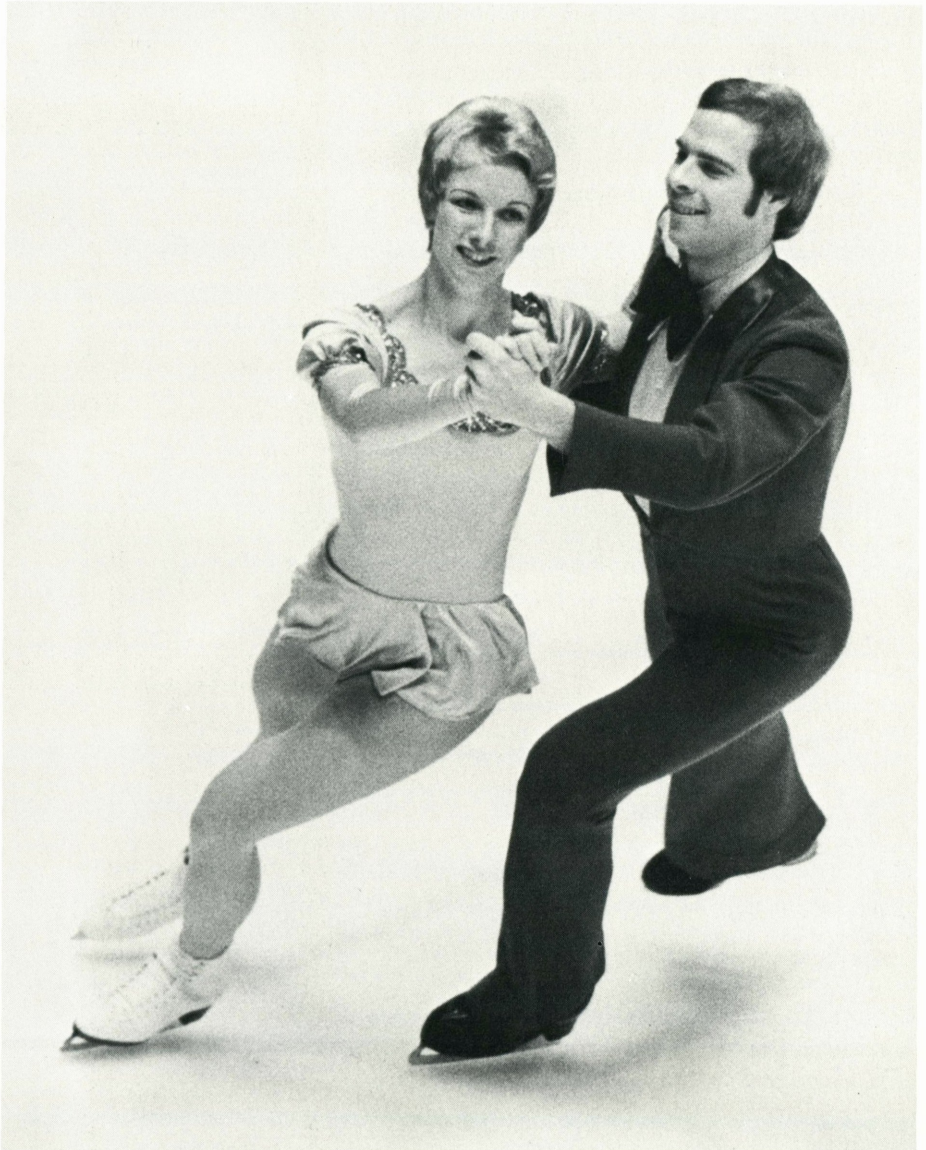
Clockwise from below: Junior Ladies Lisa-Marie Allen, first; Jeanne Chapman, second; Leslie Glenn, third. Left, Junior Pair champions Lorene & Don Mitchell.



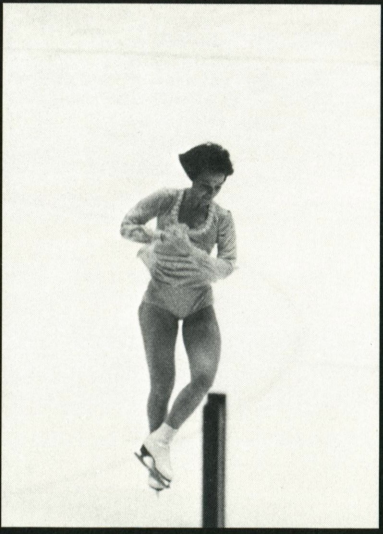
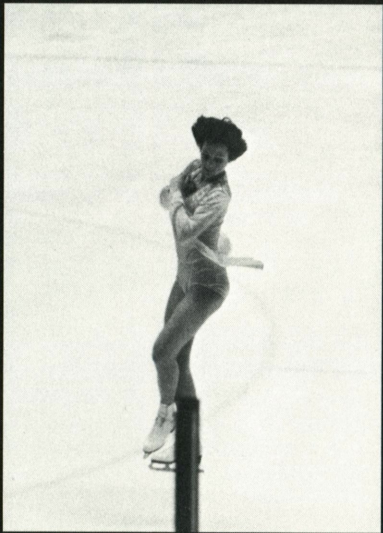
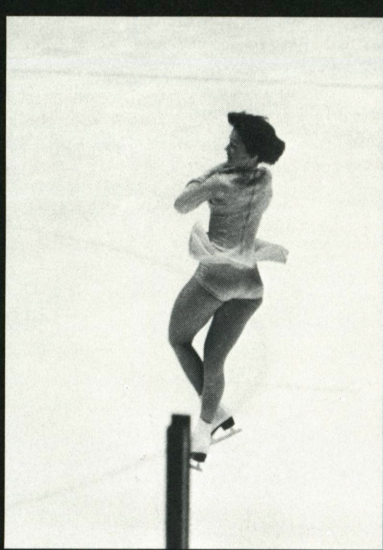
flies in a row. In addition, Terry's style earned two 6.0's. For the hometown crowd, one of the most satisfying performances of the evening was Charles Tickner's. After a disappointing showing in the final free last year, Charlie proved, this year, what a masterful jumper he is. Pulling up from sixth after figures to third, he had a triple toe-loop in combination in his compulsory program and, in the free, three double Axels in a row, a triple Lutz, Salchow and loop and two

triple toe-loops.

In a number of ways this Nationals may have seemed repetitive. The winners in the four championship categories were last year's winners. And it was certainly a good year for Leonard Bernstein; his overtures to *Candide* and *West Side Story* were used and re-used ad nauseam. But emerging from the shadows of the champions were some very exciting and promising skaters, who will certainly be objects of deserved attention next year.



Photos: Photocraft by Alberto



Colleen O'Connor & Jim Millns (above and opposite page) swept first place honors in the compulsory and free segments of the National Dance Championship to retain the title for a second year. They brought down the house with their OSP blues set to "That's Life" and topped even that performance with a superb free dance. Throughout the event, Colleen and Jim demonstrated the sureness and style that a few weeks later would bring them the silver medal in the World Championships.

A Reporter Looks at Nationals and Talks to Competitors

by Sal Zanca

While reporting the National Championships, I found, not surprisingly, that competitors' comments formed an integral part of my story.

Dorothy Hamill, whose successful defense of the Ladies' crown lacked the fire of her '74 Worlds performance, talked about the injury that had disrupted her training. "I injured my ankle last November trying a double Axel," she said. "I had some damage and I should have been in a cast earlier. I was off in December and just got back on the ice in January.

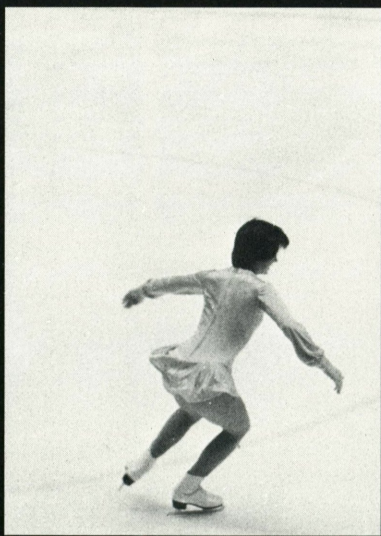
"My coach, Carlo Fassi, suggested I could miss these championships and go directly to the Worlds, where I am automatically eligible since I placed in the top five last year. But we decided to go





Photos: Photocraft by Alberto

Kath Malmberg, above, earned the Ladies' bronze medal and a place on the World Team for the second consecutive year. Opposite page: Emily Benenson & Jack Courtney, above, earned praise for their lyric choreography as they took the Pairs' bronze medal. Jack's many achievements in skating—on rollers as well as ice—include winning the World Roller Men's and Pairs' titles in 1968. Below, Melissa Militano & Johnny Johns claimed their second Pair Championship.



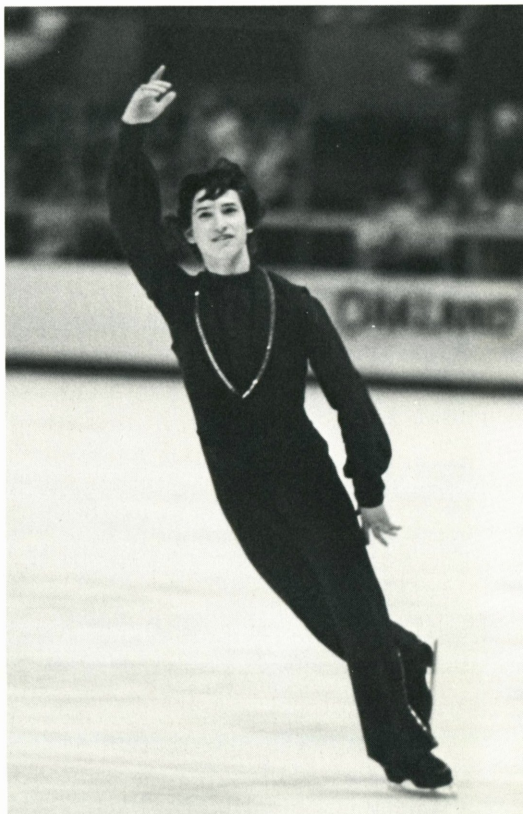


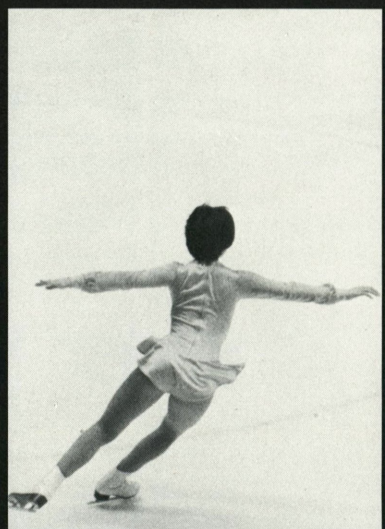
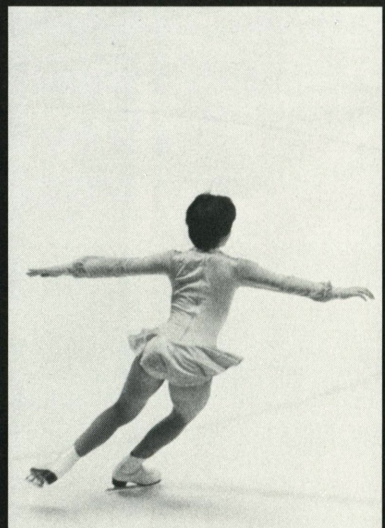
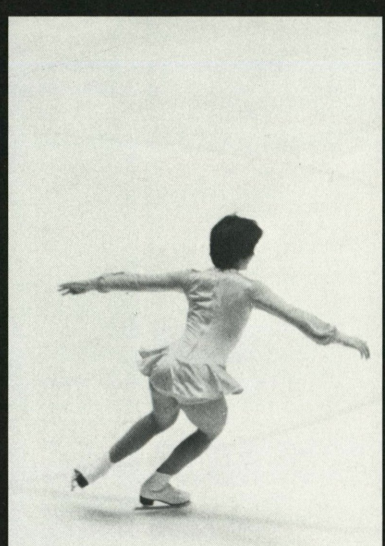
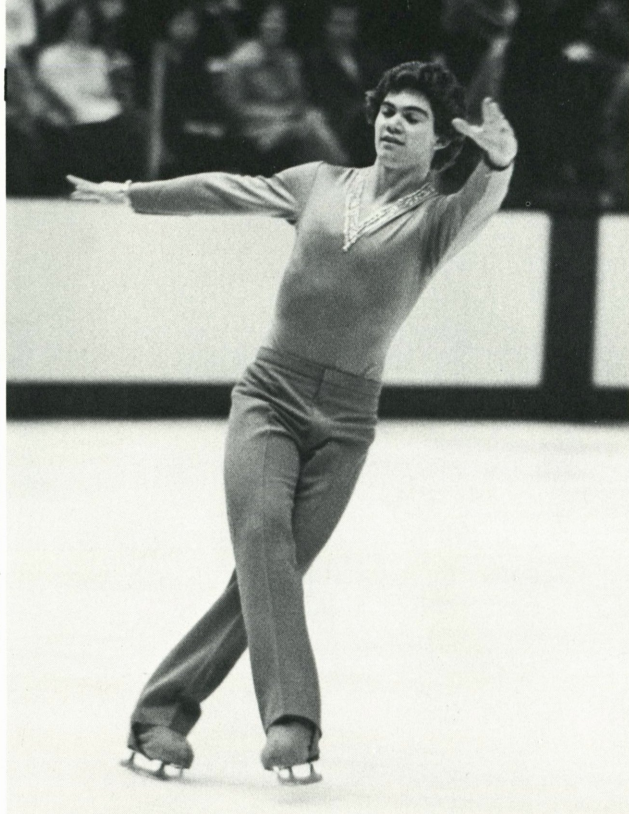
ahead to Nationals. I guess being defending champion had a lot to do with it."

Nationals found Dorothy favoring the troublesome ankle a little and leaving out of her free program some difficult content that she planned to include for Worlds.

Wendy Burge, who won both the short and long free programs, has demonstrated consistently strong free skating ever since her debut in seniors in 1973. But in Oakland, Wendy's improved standing in the compulsory figures (third place), coupled with that dynamic free skating, brought the silver medal within her reach. "Last year I was ninth in school figures," Wendy said, "so this year I decided I had to work on them. I guess I worked on them an hour more a day this past year."

Wendy shared the limelight in Oakland with another Southern Californian, Barbie Smith. Barbie is the first girl since Carol Heiss to win the National Novice and Junior Ladies' titles in consecutive years (1973 & '74 respectively). This

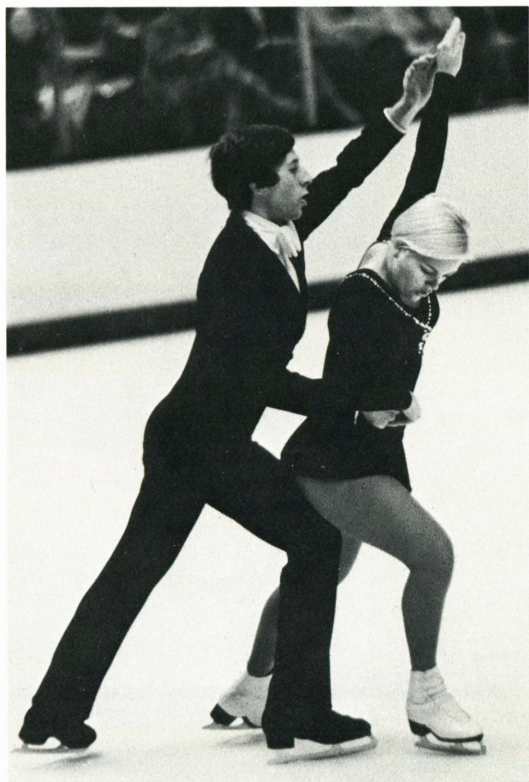




In the Men's Championship, Gordie McKellen, above, utilized superb choreography and a lead in figures to win for the third time, but his two chief opponents, Charlie Tickner, left, and Terry Kubicka, below, gave brilliant free skating performances, with each receiving two marks of 6.0. Far left: Silver Dance Champions Debbie Mansfield & Fred Maynard.

year, her first as a senior competitor, she evoked many favorable comments after her stunning free performance and fourth-place finish in the Ladies' Championship. Interestingly, Barbie's first/first/fourth place rise from National Novice to Senior competition exactly duplicates Terry Kubicka's achievements in men's singles. Will Barbie earn a place on the World Team in her second year as a senior competitor, as Terry did?

For his part, Terry Kubicka all but repeated his great 1974 free program to a medley of pop music and scored a pair of 6.0's for composition and style, his first ever. Gordie McKellen once again tried and missed the triple Axel in an otherwise solid free program. Gordie is convinced he can still do the jump in a championship. "I found out that I can continue through the rest of the program now without difficulty. So why should I leave it out? If I land it, it's something you don't really expect."

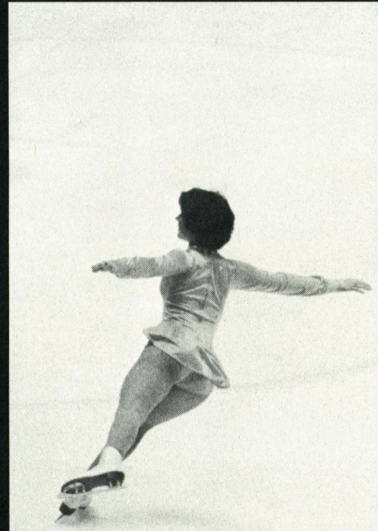
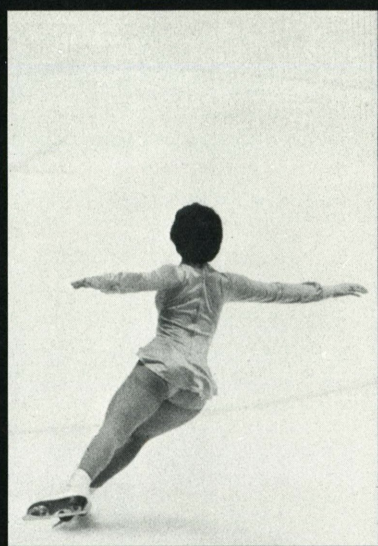
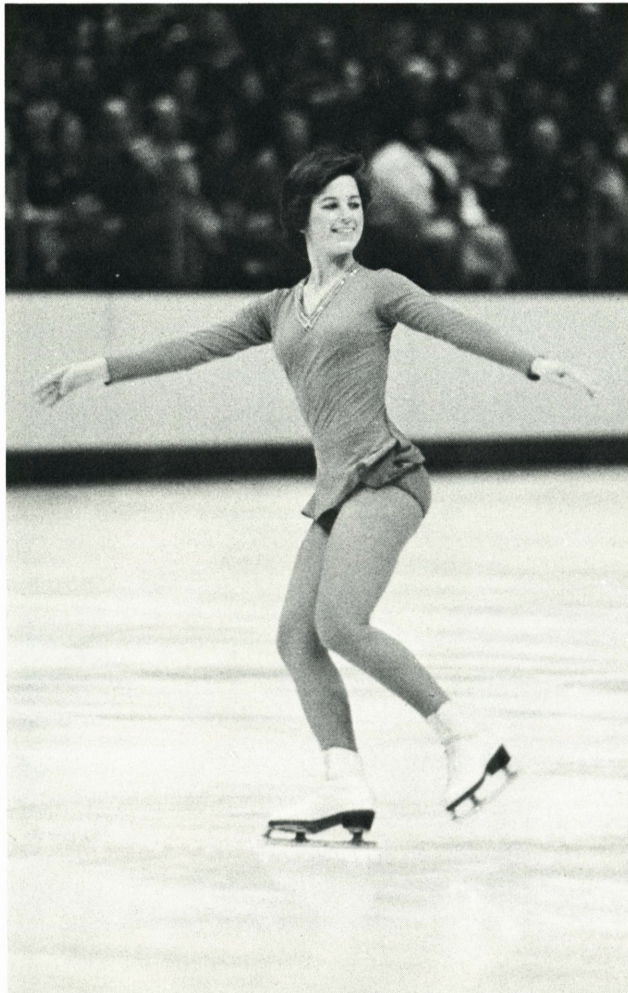


NATIONALS

Highlighting the pairs' free skating was Melissa Militano & Johnny Johns's split triple twist, the first performed by an American pair in competition. "She turns so easily in the air, I think a quadruple is possible for her," said Johnny. "A lot of times she over-rotates and it's scary."

Runners-up Tai Babilonia & Randy Gardner have learned from their international exposure. Randy commented, "I found out through the World Championships that each country has a different specialty. Some countries are better in lifts and athletic moves. Russian pairs, for example, have a lot of speed, which makes everything look better. The Americans have

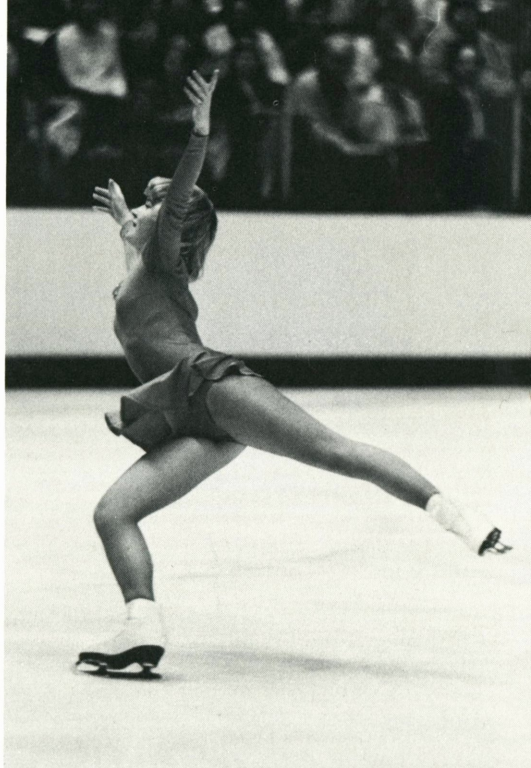
Clockwise from below: Ladies' champion Dorothy Hamill; Gold Dancers Judi Genovesi & Kent Weigle and Michelle Ford & Glenn Patterson; and Pair runners-up Tai Babilonia & Randy Gardner.



originality. Different outfits. Different ways of doing the lifts."

For some hopefuls in the Dance Championship, 1975 brought a dramatic change in fortunes. Colleen O'Connor & Jim Millns took a commanding lead from the start to defend their title handily, but who would finish second? It seemed hard to believe, but Judi Genovesi & Kent Weigle, fifth last year, placed second this time, and Ann & Skip Millier, who had placed second for the past five years, dropped to fourth. Now that Judi & Kent have gained admittance to World ranks, surely they must feel the pressure to continue improving their dance skills, lest they, too, be overtaken by an up-and-coming team.

Past champions attended in numbers. Peggy Fleming dropped in for the practices and competition. Mary Karen Campbell made her first of what should be many appearances as a coach to National competitors. Ron Kauffman and Gary Visconti also coached skaters there. Even Janet Lynn was there, albeit by way of a telegram on the bulletin board. "To all National competitors: Winners are those who give it all they got. I'm with you. All in spirit for the love of skating.—Janet Lynn" ○



Above: Barbie Smith's performance in the final free skating was second only to that of another Southern Californian, Wendy Burge. Below: Lyndy & Hal Marron received more first place ordinals than any other Junior Pair team, but still finished third in a close race.

