
Recapping Nationals

By Gloria Williams and Peggy Stark

In contrast to the blizzards that slowed many easterners getting to Portland, the Rose City's legendary soggy weather was admirable for the 1978 Nationals. For three of the four competition days there was little or no rain and even occasional patches of blue sky.

THE LADIES: The Novice Ladies free skating decided the meet's first title. Tiny 12-year-old Elaine Zayak wowed the judges with an energetic, packed program that included a triple Salchow, toe loop and toe wally. She won the free skating and pulled from sixth in figures to the bronze medal.

Figures leader Kimberly Hasler was unable to present her best performance on this afternoon and dropped to second overall with sixth place marks for her free program.

Michelle Schelske combined a second in figures with a fourth in freestyle for the 1978 National Novice title.

Competition in Junior Ladies was characterized by considerable shifting of standings from one phase to another. The eventual champion, Jill Sawyer, was fourth in figures but moved up with a first place short program that included a triple toe loop/double toe loop combination. The "Pride of Tacoma" then nailed down the title with a strong and secure long program that included a triple Salchow and toe loop and four double Axels.

Jill, last year's U.S. Novice Ladies Champion, became only the eighth American woman to win these two titles back-to-back joining Carol Heiss and Tenley Albright. This is a stunning "come-to-pass" for a youngster who started skating as therapy suggested by a doctor for leg problems!

Figures winner Alicia Risberg bounced back to the silver medal after slipping to third with a fifth place short program. Her third place long program included a triple toe loop. Cindy Moyers performed consistently well in all phases of the event—third in figures, second in the short and fourth in the long program—to win the bronze medal. Of special interest in Junior Ladies was Sandy Hurtubise who "stood in" at the last minute for the injured Tracy Doyle.

The Senior Ladies competition produced some delights for audience, competitors and coaches with two World Team berths available adding interest to the event.

Defending champion, Linda Fratianne, widened her early figures lead with a nearly flawless short program. Her long was newly choreographed to *Sheherazade*. And, she performed in yet another marvellous dress—mauve and purple designs accented by gold nailheads on a turquoise background.

With "peaking" for Worlds obviously in mind, Linda skated conservatively, including just one triple—the toe loop—in her program, but she earned sufficiently high second place marks to retain her title.

Following Linda, California golden girl Lisa-Marie Allen went all out to pull up from fourth place after the short program. With perfect timing she skated the performance of her career and of the 1978 Nationals! Opening with a tremendously high and secure triple Salchow, this statuesque beauty covered the ice with near-perfect execution of a difficult and well-choreographed program that brought the audience to its feet in a thunderous standing ovation. The performance hop-scotched Lisa-Marie into second place and to a U.S. World Team berth.

Priscilla Hill, the unequalled "veteran" in Senior Ladies, made her dream of a World Team spot come true, combining a second in figures, a sixth in the short with a third in the long program for the bronze medal. Priscilla's long program was less balletic than in former years and in it she included a triple Salchow.

THE MEN: As in the Novice ladies free skating, the first Novice man to perform, Brian Wright, was the freestyle winner, with an extremely strong performance that included four double Axels, triple toe loop/double toe loop combination and triple Salchow, Brian pulled from seventh in figures to the silver medal.

Karl Kurtz, the champion, pulled up from third in figures with a well-skated program sprinkled with triples—two toe loops and a Salchow. Scott Cudmore combined a second in figures with a third in the free for the bronze.

The Junior Men were the first to perform before a nearly full arena. A large, mostly uninitiated audience applauded every move of the skaters, even getting up from a fall. They booed scores they felt were too low and they cheered for their favorite score as it was announced—Portland Trailblazers 112, Indiana Pacers 108.



J.K. Williams

Back Row (L to R) - Team leader, George Yonekura; Richard Dalley, Michael Botticelli, Frank Sweiding, Randy Gardner, Charlie Tickner, David Santee, John Summers; Front Row (L to R) - Carol Fox, Sheryl Franks, Gail Hamula, Tai Babilonia, Linda Fratianne, Priscilla Hill, Stacey Smith, Scott Hamilton and Assistant Team leader, Howard Taylor. (Absent: Lisa-Marie Allen).

Brian Boitano, second in figures and first in the short program, won both the long and the title with fine style and a strong display of triples—Lutz, Salchow and toe loop.

Up from fourth in figures to third after his short program, Patrick Hughes secured the silver medal with a second in the long that included three double Axels and a triple Salchow.

Last year's Novice Champion, James Santee, came back for the bronze with a well-skated long program. He earlier was fourth after placing third in figures and the short program.

In the competition's finale, the Senior Men treated everyone to a wonderful display of skating excellence. Defending champion Charles Tickner was first throughout the event. His long program featured several double Axels and a triple toe loop, Salchow and loop all with "soft" landings and woven into excellent spanish-flavored choreography.

David Santee regained the silver medal he had in 1976 with consistent performances in each phase of the event. Included in his long program were several triple toe loops, a triple flip and three consecutive double Axels.

New to the Men's medals is Scott Hamilton whose long program featured a triple Lutz.

Last year's U.S. Junior Men's Champion, Robert Wagenhoffer, turned "on" the crowd by attempting the elusive triple Axel in the long program. He landed it in the warm-up, but not in the performance. However, three double Axels at the end of his routine pleased the crowd, and judges. He placed fourth in the long and was sixth overall.

THE PAIRS: Maria DiDomenico and Larry Schrier swept first place from all seven judges

to add the 1978 U.S. Jr. Pairs title to their Southwest and Pacific Coast titles. Skating to selections from *Rocky* and *Nadia's Theme*, this good looking match exhibited strong lifts, good death spirals and secure jump combinations throughout their programs.

The Portland fans cheered for their own as the city's only entry, Beth and Ken Flora, skated a superb long program to pull from fourth to the silver medal. They showed excellent flow in a different routine that finished with a change-direction variation on the jump-in spirals.

Leanne and Jeffrey LaBrake took the bronze medal, also pulling up on their long program from fifth after the short program. Their long program was great fun to watch, done to melodies from *Oklahoma*, in red outfits with western motif. They showed great height on a twist and got "ohs" with an unusual sit/spiral spin combination.

The Senior Pair long performances could only be described as disappointing to both the skaters and the crowd. The medal winners, while outstanding pair skaters, had trouble and skated below top form.

Showing some flashes of their customary excellence, Tai Babilonia and Randy Gardner took the title for the third year, followed by Gail Hamula and Frank Sweiding in second place and in third were Sheryl Franks and Michael Botticelli; the same order as in 1977.

At a press conference after the event all agreed that the 185' ice surface at the Memorial Coliseum, 15 feet shorter than what they train on, had been a problem which only one advance practice session could not overcome.



Junior Ladies

Wm. Udell

Tai and Randy's "walkover" move pleased the crowd and Gail and Frank's program, if skated well, should improve their World's standing.

The pair events had the competitions only two double qualifiers Dana Graham competed in both Junior Ladies and Junior Pairs and Robert Wagenhoffer skated in Senior Men and Pairs.

THE DANCERS: The new free dance requirement in Silver Dance added special interest to the event and many felt it has already raised the quality of skating. Fox Trot original set patterns in this event showed variety and imagination from the coaches and skaters and were well received by the audience and judges.

Eastern Champions Judy Ferris and Scott Gregory took the gold, Midwestern Champions Becky Lee Baker and Rick Berg were second, and Pacific Coast Champions Judy Blumberg and Bob Engler were the bronze medalists.

With a vacated title at stake, interest in Gold Dance ran high. The competition quickly developed between Stacey Smith and John Summers, and Carol Fox and Richard Dalley. Third from the beginning were last year's silver medalists Susan Kelley and Andrew Stroukoff.

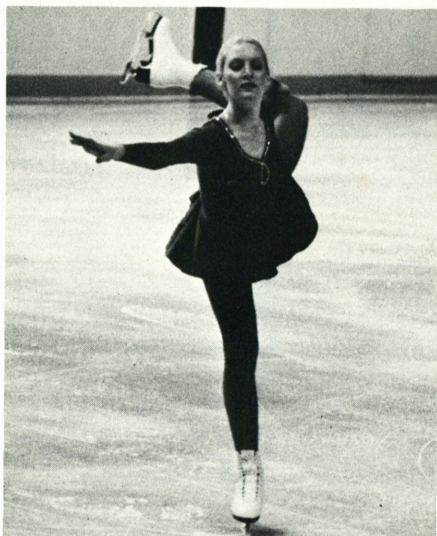
Smith and Summers led after the initial round, getting all seven first place votes. Fox and Dalley were second.

Then, skating ahead of Fox and Dalley in the free dance, Summers took a spill because of

Junior Men



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Lisa-Marie Allen

Deborah Richardson

a loose boot lace. The referee ruled that the couple could reskate at the end of the round and competition resumed. Fox and Dalley burned up the ice with a difficult program featuring many twizzles and skated with fine unison and vitality. The crowd and judges recognized its quality and cheered and marked accordingly.

Smith and Summers performed well in their reskate, but had clearly been topped in the free dance. The results show a split decision—Smith and Summers became the new champions with four ones and three twos. Fox and Dalley were second with four twos and three ones.

With the events over-all are looking ahead already to the 1979 qualifying events and Nationals in Cincinnati.

Kimberly Hasler



Leonardi