

## Roller skating Canada's latest craze

For many of us, roller skating is a memory of summertime, of hours spent at beach resorts or in echoing 80-degree hockey rinks, writes Ian McLeod in *Canadian Skater*, Spring/Summer issue. For a long time, in many parts of Canada, roller skating meant strapping on some oblong wheels and bumping around a concrete pad under the blare of organ music.

But this winter, thousands of youngsters and young adults moved into roller skating with a new seriousness. It's part of a roller boom that started several years ago in the United States, and is just now making a big impact here. Canada's been slow to catch on, but this summer, when competitive roller skating enters the international stage as never before, we'll be there.

### International competition

For the first time, roller skaters from three disciplines will join other athletes at the Pan American Games, to be held July 1-15 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Canada has no entries in the hockey or speed skating events, but our 12-member artistic skating team could come away with one or even a couple of medals.

Canada's participation at international events goes back to the early Sixties. Montreal hosted the world championships in 1977 and hosted the 1979 event at the end of June. The presence of a strong roller skating team at the Pan Am Games shows that Canadian standards, as well as the state of the sport, are at a record high.

Perhaps more than in most amateur sport organizations, the parents in the Canadian Federation of Amateur Roller Skaters deserve credit for keeping competitive hopes alive. The federation remains a loose organization with almost no outside funding, and is run from the home of President Lloyd Pope of Calgary. He says, "about a half a dozen" parents in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec have been responsible for the group's survival.

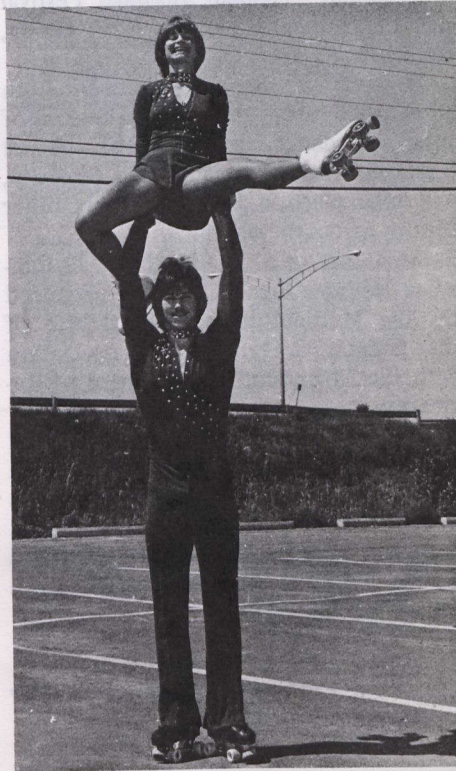
### Family tradition

Many of our top skaters are sons or daughters of skaters. Guy Aubain's mother, for example, put him on wheels as a toddler in Montreal. In 1977, he placed sixth in the freestyle pairs at the Montreal Worlds, and last year he and his new partner Sylvie Gingras placed fifth in the same event at Lisbon, Portugal. Mrs.

Aubain maintains her interest in the sport as an organizer for this year's national championships in Montreal.

Twenty-year-old Guy and 16-year-old Sylvie can be counted on for a bronze or even a silver medal at San Juan, says Toronto-based roller skating judge Maxine McKenzie. Both are highly accomplished technically, she says, and they're still developing as a pair.

There's also a medal hope in the dance pairs event, where David Carley and Sherri McCumber of Hamilton placed ninth in last year's Worlds. David, 18, and Sherri, 15, are a good-looking team with an exceptional gift for interpretation, says McKenzie.



*Guy Aubain and Sylvie Gingras prepare for competition at 1979 Pan Am Games.*

Another probable entry at San Juan is Jeff Brabent of Toronto, already a veteran of two world championships at the age of 15. At Lisbon last year Jeff won the single men's World Cup, awarded to the best skater knocked out in the elimination round.

Many of Canada's young competitors faced a busier springtime than ever before. After provincial championships, the skaters moved to provincial Pan Am trials, then they were at a national Pan Am qualifying tournament in Toronto in May. In June, it was the Nationals in Montreal. The 12-member Pan Am team will leave

right after that for the Caribbean.

"They'll be giving up a lot of time, but it's a sacrifice most of them are dying to make," says John Prosser, president of the Ontario Federation of Amateur Roller Skaters. "For a whole month, skating will be their life."

What's caused the boom? Skates are better than they used to be, it's true, but Ottawa coach Pat Mills says she still skates with comfort in her 20-year-old pair.

Mostly, it seems to be a change in marketing strategy. "Roller rinks used to be dark, dreary, drab old buildings," says Prosser. "But now they keep their standards quite high. When parents come to pick their kids up, they're not ashamed to invite them in and show them around."

## Native Indian language program

Faced with the alarming reality that their language is gradually disappearing, 12 native people of British Columbia have enrolled in a special program at the University of Victoria in British Columbia (UVic).

They hope to acquire skills necessary to pass along to younger generations the rituals, traditions and stories of their culture. The UVic program teaches them to teach their own language to native Indian children and young adults.

Among those who have re-entered the educational system after long absences is Walter George, 73, a resident of the Songhees Indian Reservation and one of only three members on his reservation who speak their language frequently.

Another student, Ahousht Indian Francis Charley, says that in the band of which he is an elder only two of more than 1,000 teenagers speak the language.

Charley and George and the ten other students are enrolled in UVic's native Indian language diploma program, developed through the Faculty of Education and the department of linguistics to help native people preserve their language.

Students collect stories, place names and other cultural information and record them in their language in readers, dictionaries, lessons and maps. The material is then used to teach others to understand better their own language.

The one-year program has no formal education requirements. However, a student must be 21 years old and fluent in his or her language.