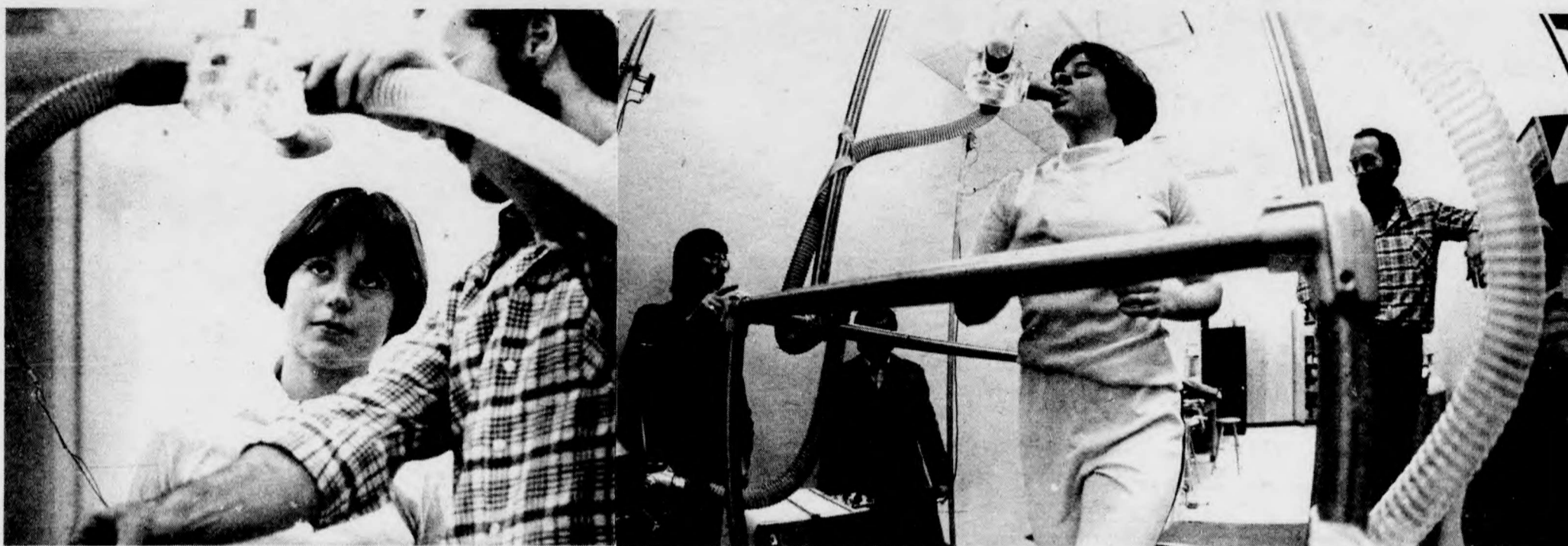


Dorothy Hamill says she wouldn't do it again for a million dollars, not that anyone is paying. For 49 weeks of the year she trains from morning till night, hunting that elusive gold that dreams are made of

At nineteen, the twice U.S. figure skating champion Dorothy Hamill is ready to hang up her skates



York lab technician shows Dorothy Hamill mouthpiece of respirator at the fitness lab in Tait. Then the figure skating champion gets on the treadmill, while two technicians monitor her oxygen intake and heart rate, and trainer Marvin Clein (far right) looks on. Hamill was at York for one week during the Christmas break, trying to gauge her physical endurance.

By JULIAN BELTRAME

The treadmill turns at six miles per hour. Matching speed is a nineteen-year-old girl-athlete; her legs pumping like two strong pistons and her heart keeping exact time, as if it had been made in Switzerland. Taped to her chest, two wires monitor every contraction of her heart and a two-inch hose, leading from her mouth to what looks like an oversized pump, records her exact oxygen intake.

The athlete is on the treadmill for 10 minutes — the speed is constant but every few minutes the slope of the treadmill is increased by a few degrees, so that she will feel like she is running continually uphill.

"The point of this exercise is to bring her to the point of complete exhaustion," explains an attendant to her trainer and to observers, keeping one eye on the runner and the other on the polygraph. After 10 minutes the runner's muscle-swollen legs noticeably tire, and her heart begins to thump loudly.

"Another 15 seconds," the attendant promises her, urging her on with "you can do it, com'on, get those knees up . . . just 10 seconds, that's it, you can do it . . . get those knees up! that's it. Very good, that was quite an effort."

After 10 minutes, the runner is all done in. She needs the strong arm of the attendant to get off the treadmill, looking to her trainer for assurance. He laughs, sympathetically.

"Wouldn't you like an experimental rat?" asks Dorothy Hamill, the human guinea pig in the test of endurance carried on at York University's fitness lab during the Christmas break. Hamill, however, is used to the grind.

She is the twice U.S. national figure skating champion and twice silver medalist of the world, and she's been in training for more than half of her life. Hamill came to Toronto, December, to put the finishing touches to her short free-style programme with her choreographer, Toronto's Brian Foley, who has recently begun working with Toller Cranston, Canada skater supreme.

Foley has completely re-done her short routine and has added a few touches to her long routine, on which the free-style skating queen of the world will rest her chances for an Olympic gold this winter. Foley is setting her ice-movements to music and showing the skater how to use her arms, to emphasize moods.

"He's really great," says Hamill. "He's so good to work with when you're having one of those 'I don't want to skate today' moods."

LAST HURRAH

Those moods settle on the teenage-skater more frequently this year than in past years. After 11 years of competition, Hamill admits she's had just about all she can stand. The Olympics and subsequent world championships, win or lose, will be Hamill's last hurrah.

"I've put too much of my life into this thing," is the reason Hamill gives for her decision, which she insists is irrevocable. "I've gotten a lot of travelling and I've met a lot of nice people because of skating, but I've sacrificed a lot of my life, and my parents have sacrificed a lot for me."

"I wouldn't do it again for a million dollars."

As she is lamenting, she is peddling on an exercise bicycle mounted to the floor of the fitness lab. A photographer is circling around her, flashing his camera and his eyes at every fleeting expression of her face.

It is late afternoon and Hamill has just come up to York to train after a full-morning's skating at the Toronto Cricket, Skating and Curling Club.

It is just a routine day's work for Hamill. In Denver, where she resides, she skates from 7 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and from half past noon till nearly 2 p.m., then she works out "even harder than I have been at York" for another two hours and returns to the ice at 5:15 p.m. to nearly 8 o'clock. She religiously maintains these hours for 49 weeks of the year; a training and practice schedule designed to have her "peak" for three major championships — the nationals, the Olympics and the worlds.

"Peaking at the right time is very important," says her trainer of two months, Marvin Clein, who, when he isn't travelling with Hamill, is the University of Denver's physical education department chairman. "Most athletes tend to train the same way their coach was taught to train when he was young."

Training properly, however, still will not insure the athlete against peaking too early, Clein concedes. When an athlete peaks too early, he is in the best physical and mental frame for competing prior to the competition, but on his way downhill at competition time.

Clein is satisfied with his protege's results, but insists she is behind schedule for this winter's Olympics. The York technician finds Hamill has an exceptional endurance quotient "for a woman her size".

Hamill has been on the exercise bike for 15 minutes before a trace of perspiration forms on her brow. A few minutes later, beads of sweat are forming streams down the length of her face; she twitches her nose unsuccessfully, then wipes her face with the end of the towel wrapped around her neck. She admits to being "bugged" by those who scoff at skating's athletic side.

"Skating is really an endurance sport," she announces. "There's so much skill involved in the way a great skater like Toller (Cranston) makes everything he does seem so easy and effortless, when you know he's putting in a lot of work."

"The only thing that really bugs me is that if they continue to call it an art, they'll take skating out of the Olympics."

An excellent skater is all fluid motion,

leaping triple axles as effortlessly and gracefully a ballet dancer. The skaters face, if it were to betray anything, it would be a perfunctory smile rather than strain.

"We don't really practice smiling, but a coach will tell the skater to 'smile and look like you're having a good time out there,'" she concedes.

Excluding Peggy Fleming, Hamill is the most successful American female skater in the past decade, yet few Americans know her by name, and fewer still would recognize the petite red-head without her skating gear. In a country which venerates accomplished athletes, Hamill's non-celebrity status is a bitter pill to swallow even for the vivacious teenager. She has spent her youth in the pursuit of athletic excellence, receiving no monetary return. A little appreciation is the least a country could return.

LYNN AND HAMILL

"The States is not very enthusiastic about figure skating," she laments. "Nobody in Denver knows that I even skate there, although I've been training in Denver for four years. They made a bid deal over Peggy (Fleming) after she won the gold medal and they made a big deal over Janet Lynn, because she was 'the darling of the public', but that's about it."

Hamill has not won the gold — she fell in the free-style portion of her routine in last year's worlds, spoiling her comeback bid from a disappointing figures performance — but her two silver medals are both better than Lynn's best performance, a bronze in the '72 Olympics. Lynn, however, has become the most famous and the most financially secure of recent American skaters, landing a \$3 million-plus contract from the Ice Capades.

Perhaps ironically, Hamill's career

follows a similar pattern to that of Lynn. Weak in the figures portion of competitions, Hamill has always had to excel in the free-style to place high in the standings. In 1973, Lynn fell twice in her free-style programme trying to overcome a large point deficit. Last year, Hamill fell once, attempting to do the same thing.

"I don't think Janet (Lynn) was really that good," Hamill says of her predecessor. "She didn't skate well when she was feeling down, and that was most of the time." Lynn, explained Hamill, didn't want to continue competing after '72, and in '73 when she was to pose a real threat to the world champion, she was mentally not ready. As for herself, her fall was more from lack of concentration than from depression.

"I didn't get a chance to practice the move in the warm up and when I was into it, I just let it all go into the air and the next thing I knew I was on the ice . . . it was so stupid. I didn't think 'there goes the championship', I was more startled than anything at having done such a stupid move."

The 'stupid' move is more commonly known as the 'flying sit-spin' and, according to Hamill, it is one of the easier moves figure skaters are asked to execute. But if Hamill and Lynn both distinguished themselves in free-style and lost world championships in the compulsory figures, so has every other prominent North American figure skater. Canada's Cranston is usually so far behind after the figures, he practically must hope for a perfect performance to have a chance at the gold medal. Hamill has a theory about the European skater's ascendancy to world supremacy, through the figures.

"There's so few top calibre skaters in Europe compared to North American, that when they practice, there's usually only two people on the entire ice surface. You need a large sheet of ice to properly practice the figures and we (North Americans) never get the chance to practice with that much ice surface."

But here's where the parallels between Lynn and Hamill end. While Lynn wanted no more of competition, Hamill wants the gold medal badly enough to devote another year to its acquisition. Hamill's professional career will differ drastically from Lynn's also.

"I don't think you'll see that kind of contract (Lynn's multi-million dollar contract) happen again; it was just a one-time thing," she says.

Although, as she puts, she would not do it again for a million dollars, Dorothy Hamill has managed to come through a non-existent childhood, remarkably, with a sense of humour. Having received little government assistance her costly training lay largely on her parents' shoulders. Which prompts the question of the Hamill's largess of wealth.

"They're not wealthy any more," she answers, with a smile.



A pensive Hamill talks about skating.