

THE OMAHA SUNDAY BEE MAGAZINE PAGE

The Eight Fundamental Strokes of Figure Skating, Showing How the Four Edges of the Skates Are Employed



How to Do The New Dances on Ice Skates

An Instructive Series of Lessons by
**Mr. Irving Brokaw, the Foremost
 Figure Skater of America**



Mr. Irving Brokaw Approaching a Turn on the Right Outside Edge Forward.

No. 1 The Proper Equipment, the Rules of Form and the Fundamental Principles of Figure Skating.

By **Mr. Irving Brokaw**

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THE present craze of ice-dancing will be a great thing for the art of skating if it increases the number of those who skate correctly. It will be a very bad thing if it produces an army of awkward, ungainly skaters. There is no more graceful or healthful sport than figure-skating, but there is no more awkward sight than an ungainly man or woman on skates. Ice-skating is such a beautiful and beneficial sport that it has always been a surprise to me that so few have taken it up. It is the king of winter sports, available alike for men, women and children, and yet a single rink in New York City has for years been sufficient to accommodate all those interested in it in the metropolis! Why is it? The fact that the New York climate is so moderate that there is seldom more than a couple of weeks a year of "open" skating does not answer the question. Indoor skating is practically as good and does not depend upon the climate at all. Indoor rinks are available from the beginning of November until the end of April and afford a full season of splendid physical exercise and recreation. Why has the sport been so long neglected? Whatever the reason, the fact remains that a big change is now taking place. The ice dancing fad which is now assuming such extensive proportions, promises to bring ice skating into its own. Indoor rinks are going to take the place of ballrooms and dancehalls, and dancehalls a place will supplant the ballrooms. Everyone who takes up ice skating is bound to be clumsy and awkward at first. No one who is familiar with the amount of patience, persistence and native grace required to make an expert skater will expect a novice to put on skates and become a Charlotte in a day. But leaving beginners out of the question altogether for the moment, there

are thousands of people who regard themselves as pretty good skaters, who have been skating all their lives, who don't even know that each skate has two edges! They don't seem to realize the full possibilities of the sport, or, at any rate, they make no effort to attain them. That is unfortunate. It is my intention in these articles to explain the fundamental principles of figure skating and to demonstrate how anybody may, by following the correct methods patiently and persistently, become a proficient ice dancer. Every woman cannot expect to become a Charlotte, but there is no reason why every woman who skates may not be able to execute all the regular ice dances gracefully and becomingly. If these articles help to make the path a little easier, they will have served their purpose. It is necessary before taking up figure skating and dancing to consider some of the fundamental principles of skating. Correct skating is out of the question without the proper equipment. Expert skaters have their individual preferences regarding the style of skates and shoes which is best adapted to their work. With regard to the best skating boot for the average individual who intends to take up figure skating, I should say that well-fitting laced walking boots might even be better than the skating boot which laces right down to the tip and which is the style heretofore widely sold, but a new model that I know of is about perfect. Such shoes are well adapted to speed skating, but they are not the most desirable for figure skating. A boot which cannot possibly cramp the toes is necessary. The foot should rest naturally and comfortably in the boot, which should fit snugly around the heel, because it is the Achilles tendon in the heel which is called upon to give considerable support to the whole body in skating. In choosing a pair of skates, these points should be remembered. A perfectly flat blade such as is used in a hockey skate



Charlotte, the Famous Woman Skater, Executing a Right Outside Edge Forward.

makes artistic curves impossible and is not suitable for figure skating. Figure skating and speed skating are two entirely different things and require different equipment. It is desirable to have a groove running along the flat edge of the blade, but that is not absolutely essential for the beginner. Without going into the ideal dimensions of a skate, it may suffice to give the general principle that the nearer the skate brings the sole of the foot to the surface of the ice the better it is. The skate should be just high enough to allow the skater to execute curves and to make turns without scraping the side of the sole against the ice. Then again, the tip of the skate should not be attached to the sole plate as in

the usual style of hockey skates. Having acquired a suitable pair of boots and skates, the next thing is to learn plain skating in correct form. What correct form is, is no longer a matter of individual taste. It has been definitely settled by the officials who make the rules for the contests conducted by followers of the International School of Skating—the kind which the American, Jackson Haines, introduced into Europe fifty years ago and which, after being developed by Conti-



Mr. and Mrs. Irving Brokaw Executing a Very Effective Pivot Figure, the Gentleman's Right Foot Acting as the Pivot Upon Which His Partner Swings Around Him.

mental skaters, is now generally followed in this country.

These rules of form and the series of figures prescribed by the International School of Skating are the very best, in my opinion, for beginners in figure skating to follow. They comprise a progressive course which is best adapted to develop a figure skater.

The rules of form are as follows:

1.—Head erect, with eyes upon the ice no more than is absolutely necessary.

2.—Body upright, not bent forward or sideways from the hips, shoulders thrown back and chest expanded.

3.—Arms, whether active or passive, should have free play from the shoulders, elbows slightly bent, hands with the palms downward or inward.

4.—Skating leg always bent at the knee to insure a springy rise and dip of the body.

5.—Free leg poised or swung entirely from the hip, in the socket of which it should be turned outward and backward as much as possible; always separated from the skating leg, knees slightly bent, toe pointing down and out.

From these rules it will be seen at once that figure skating is not a matter of the feet alone, but of the whole body. That is why it provides such a splendid form of general exercise.

Having mastered the art of ordinary skating, which it is unnecessary to take up at length here, the skater will be ready to commence on what are known as school figures. These school figures, of which there are eight elementary and nine advanced, comprise practically every stroke necessary for the dances.

Once these fundamental school figures have been mastered, it will not be a very difficult matter to acquire the waltz, the ten-step, the fourteen-step, the Jackson Haines, the Rocker Valse, the Mohawk and the various other ice dances which will soon be familiar in name to the general public, perhaps, as the turkey-trot, the fox-trot, the tango and the one-step have become.

Before describing the various figures, it is necessary to explain what is meant by the four edges—the right inside, the right outside, the left inside and the left outside. As all curves must be made on either one of those four edges, it is essential to master them.

Consider first the right foot. The outside edge, known as the "right outside," is, naturally enough, the edge to the right, the inside edge, known as the "right inside" being the edge to the left. In the case of the left foot, the outside edge, known as the "left outside" is the edge to the left, and the inside edge, known as the "left inside" is the edge to the right.

Here then we have the four edges. Upon these edges it is possible to skate either forward or backward, thus making eight different possible strokes, as follows: Right outside forward, right outside backward, right inside forward, right inside backward, left outside forward, left outside backward, left inside forward and left inside backward.

Each one of these edges will take the skater in a different direction. The right outside forward, for instance, will take him on a forward curve to the right; the right inside forward will take him on a forward curve to the left, and so on.

Each one of these edges must be practiced until it has been mastered and can be skated with perfect control. The beginner will almost invariably find that one foot is weaker than the other. In that event, the weaker foot must be practiced on all the more. Do not favor the leg which you can control best. Work the less apt leg the most.

In practicing the various edges, it is just as well for a beginner not to have the blade of the skate too sharp. A sharp skate is less easy for a beginner to control than one in which the keen edge is off. If a new pair of skates is to be used, therefore, it is wise to do some straight ahead skating on them first so as to become accustomed to them.

Having attained the various edges, both forward and backward, so that a fairly long curve may be executed on the inclining momentum, the skater will be in a position to attempt the elementary or fundamental school figures. These are as follows:

1.—The Circle Eight.
 2.—The Change of Edge.
 3.—The Three.
 4.—The Double Three.
 5.—The Loop.
 6.—The Bracket.
 7.—The Rocker.
 8.—The Counter.

In the articles which are to follow we will take up each one of these figures and those which comprise the group of advanced school figures, and then we shall be in a position to take up the various dances which are going to attract so much attention this season.

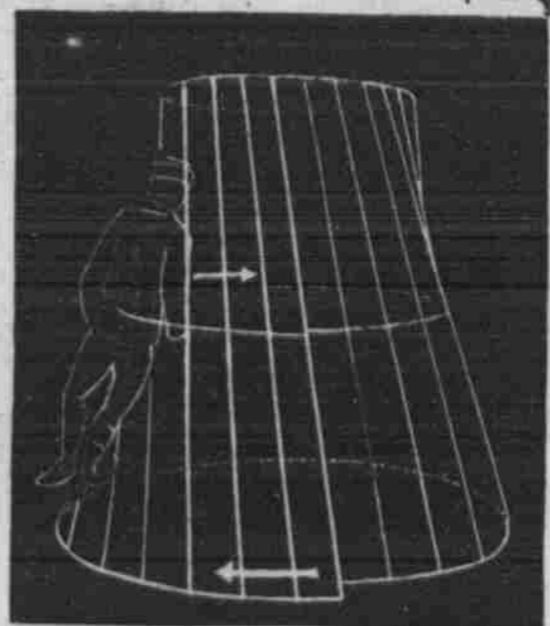


Diagram Showing the Correct Slope of Body While Making the Right Outside Forward Curve.

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