

DOROTHY HAMILL Biography

Every four years the Olympic Games produce a new group of champions, but only rarely does one of these champions transcend their sport to completely capture our imaginations.

Such was the case when nineteen year old figure skater Dorothy Hamill won her Gold Medal at the 1976 Winter Games in Innsbruck, Austria. Her interpretation of music, fluid skating and infectious charm led all nine judges to unanimously vote her the winner.

More than any other figure skater, and indeed, as much as any American athlete, Dorothy Hamill has influenced our culture. Her world famous “wedge” hairstyle started a fashion craze that Life magazine called “one of the most important fashion statements of the last 50 years.”

Beyond fashion, her unaffected personality and simple grace led Hamill to be voted “the most trusted woman in America” by the Ladies Home Journal.

Most people are surprised to learn that Dorothy didn’t start skating until age eight. Stuffing some socks in the front of her brother’s over-sized skates, she took to the ice on Binny Pond near her childhood home of Riverside, Connecticut. At first, it was the simple desire to skate backwards that challenged her, but soon after, she was completely captivated.

For the intensely shy young Dorothy, skating was an escape. Alone with the music she loved and the feeling of the air flying past her face, Dorothy felt “I could just be myself.” Her parents encouraged her skating, and soon one competition followed another.

Driving to a rink at four in the morning and seven-hour practice sessions became her normal regimen. There was no time for the social activities that other teens enjoyed, but Dorothy never felt, as others assumed, that these were personal sacrifices. Skating was her passion and its world complete. To this day, Dorothy says she skates because, “I just love it.”

Surprisingly, of all her amateur and professional titles, Dorothy is most proud of the World Champion’s medal she won in Gothenberg, Sweden, after the win at the Olympic Games. Everyone had advised her to retire from amateur competition, saying that even a second place, although not likely, would tarnish the luster of her Olympic gold. Characteristically, once she set her mind to it, she would not be dissuaded, and won.

As a professional, Dorothy has skated with many productions, including eight years with the company she helped bring to preeminence among touring ice shows, the Ice Capades. She had an unprecedented four ABC television prime time specials produced in her honor, and won an Emmy for her starring role in “Romeo and Juliet.”

After winning five consecutive World Professional titles, Dorothy turned her energies to her company, Hamill-Camel productions (named for the skating maneuver she made famous). More recently, Dorothy produced and starred in the critically acclaimed “Nutcracker On Ice” for NBC TV in 1989 and for Canadian television in 1990.

In a telling moment, Dorothy says she wants to produce ice entertainment and to continue to skate “as long as I’m still learning.”

Dorothy’s charity work includes the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, the International Special Olympics, Big Brothers and Sisters, the American Cancer Society, and teaching blind children to skate through the March of Dimes.

Recently, with the loss of so many dear friends to the scourge of AIDS, Dorothy has donated her time to helping raise money for a variety of AIDS foundations. When asked about special memories, she often

cites the simple joy expressed by a blind child as she flew around a rink on Dorothy's back: "Oh! I can feel the wind on my face!"