

# PRO'S CORNER

Robert Brown is "Pro in Residence" at Sterling's Dominion Skating Center, owned and operated by Jim Boyd. Brown has taught there for four years, and among his students are Noreen Nutter, 1977 Esquire Ladies Champion and 1978 runner-up; and Sandi Layland, Canadian Dance Champion.

Skaters representing Dominion in the 1978 Nationals included Suzanne Nantier, Mike Knicely, Tina Ireland, Lisa Clinton, Kevin Moore, Ricky Bell, Noreen Nutter, Chucky Moore, Pam Shoemaker, and Tim Shoemaker. The 25-year-old pro attributes much of his coaching success to the understanding of his students. "This is integral," he said. "A teacher must inspire his students, and to do it he must know how to reach them. This give and take approach is a very reciprocal affair. If I inspire my students, they, in turn, inspire me."

Brown himself competed in roller dancing for over ten years, until 1974, when he decided to satisfy his greatest desire—to coach other competitors in the sport he loved.

"I loved the technicality of the figure skating," explained Brown, "and I used to spend hour upon hour going around in circles perfecting this precise art. But, on the other hand, the expression and creativeness afforded through dancing and free skating had its own special attractiveness, too. I guess that's why I enjoyed it all. After practicing such precision for hours, I could skate to my heart's content with a sense of almost wild abandon. The sport just has that much to offer.

"In my last amateur performance I felt I had skated to my capabilities. In fact, it was probably the best performance I had ever given. And that's the way to leave the competitive world. With a good feeling of having given it your best, whether you came out on top or not.

"Coaching an athletic, artistic sport is a multi-faceted profession," he reflected. "It can be challenging, frustrating, rewarding and upsetting—and all in one day. I've seen myself come into the rink in the morning in a great mood, and be down in the dumps by noon because one of my freeskaters couldn't land a toewally we needed so badly to finish a program. But later in the afternoon, when the same skater runs through his free program, effortlessly landing the same jump like nobody's business, then I'm back up. One thing I can say for sure," he laughed, "it's never boring."

## Bob Brown Dominion Skating Center Sterling, Virginia

Story by Betty Ann Bagley

Brown continued, "I love the kids and derive a great deal of self-satisfaction from seeing them develop, both emotionally and athletically, through the sport."

Thirteen of Brown's skaters qualified in 1977 for the national meet in Ft. Worth, and eleven took the trip this year to Lincoln. Although Brown admits to creating somewhat of a competitive desire in his pupils, his philosophy is still old school: "Be the best you can be. Skate the best performance you've ever skated. If it happens to be better than anyone else's, that's ecstasy. And if it's not better, there's still the feeling of having done your personal best."

Brown asks his students to give him 100 per cent of what they as individuals are capable of giving. "I don't care if they become champions," he explained. "It's their willingness and effort to try that count with me."

Because emotion is so intricately linked to movement, Brown first and foremost employs artistic awareness, projection and emotional output in his pairs programs. In so doing, he becomes aware of the individual differences of his skaters and tries to stylize a "look" individually their own. Specific difficulties in a program or body line present no problems. He simply choreographs around them, camouflaging any short-comings with unique arm positions, various steps in unusual positions, or creative body line.

Brown feels that programming—good stylizations and choreography—in roller skating is an underdeveloped facet of the sport. "Programming is the creative endeavor that raises a technically good performance to a memorable, emotional experience," he said. "Together, coach and student must work together to create that special emotional impact and electricity that's a necessity in any winning program."

Brown thinks that both roller skaters and their professionals can learn and adopt into their own sport many of the ideas and innovations found in similar art forms. "We should be looking elsewhere for new ideas and new images all the time," he said. "I tell all my students to experience a variety of the arts—ballet, modern dance, ballroom dancing, figure skating—and ask them to develop a feeling for something else that could be personally adapted into their own program and style. We've come a long way since the liberalization of dance and singles, but we can go a lot further." *Skate*