

# FIGURE SKATING BECOMING POPULAR

## Champion Irving Brokaw Tells of Graceful and Skillful Move- ments on Blades.

During the past few seasons figure skating has received more attention than ever before from the participants in this popular and healthful form of Winter sport. At the rinks in American cities during the past season there has been a noticeable improvement in the styles and performances of the number who have taken up figure skating. Irving Brokaw, the American champion of 1906, predicts that skating in this country will in a short time be almost as popular as it is in Europe, and that the Continental style of figure skating, with its long, swinging, curved figures, executed while the body assumes a graceful, natural poise, is increasing in popularity here, and will be generally adopted by fancy skaters on this side of the Atlantic.

Two years ago Mr. Brokaw made a study of skating in Europe, and in speaking of the differences in American and European styles says: "The difference between the Continental and the American skating is not so much a matter of schedule as it is of performance. Both schools have similar sets of moves and figures, the former making them larger and always in the form of eights, while the latter makes them smaller and more infield, each, however, demanding correct tracings on the ice and proper executions at all turns. The Continental style also

demands ability to harmonize and combine all possible combinations of figures into a complete performance set to music. Here, originality and skill have an opportunity, for the skater may invent and combine any and all moves which he thinks will have the most telling effect.

"At one time the American schedule had a final section which corresponded somewhat to this, which was called specialties, but in recent years it has been dropped, as the programme was already too long. Foreign and American skaters have seldom met in figure skating, probably because of the difference in the two styles, but when they have met the Americans have given the better account of themselves."

In speaking further of figure skating Mr. Brokaw emphasized the importance of the proper kind of skates.

"The runner must not be too flat or too sharp rocked for a comfortable balance on long curves."

Nowadays, with the round toe, the stanchion skate which Mr. Brokaw was instrumental in bringing back to this country, whence it originated almost fifty years ago, and which was designed and used by Jackson Haines, a famous skater of the "sixties," the standard of skating is beginning to improve under the instruction of competent teachers, so that the recent carnival at Boston brought together skaters from the United States and Canada, and all skating in the same style and using the same style of skate. The question of skating shoes is of the utmost importance, for unless the ankles are properly supported and at the same time flexible the skater will be hampered by not being able to stand up, or if the leather is too stiff and tight ankle straps are used the ankle action will be impeded.

"America," says Mr. Brokaw, "which once led the world in the art of figure skating, beginning with the Philadelphia Skating Club in 1849, and followed by the New York and Boston skating clubs in 1863, and brought forth such famous old-timers as Col. Page, Peter Wever, and the Van Hook brothers from Philadelphia; E. H. Barney, John Berry, and the Fullers from Boston, and later E. B. Cook, Jackson Haines, Callie Curtis, and E. T. Goodrich from New York, is now given over to the game of hockey.

"Now, under the influence of some of the European countries who learned their skating from our early American skaters, the various branches of the art have been systematized and arranged so that we

now have what are called the school figures, what might be called the grammar of skating; the free skating is like the 'rhetorical or literary expression of the performers' character and power in true artistic form.' The importance of the school or prescribed figures is therefore at once apparent: as rhetorical excellence is impossible without grammatical accuracy, so good skating begins with the mastery of the school figures. This is, of course, the international style of skating, meaning that style which obtains in all the European countries. America being the only country not in the International Skating Union, it is time for us to train skaters in the form where they may meet foreigners on their own ground and in their own style. The Canadians have adopted the international style and the skating of the Minto Four at the recent carnival in Boston was an interesting event."

The international style of free skating as performed by Mr. Brokaw includes spread eagles, pirouettes, spectacles, jumps, spins, dance steps, grapevines, original moves, waltz, and many other figures. Mr. Brokaw believes that in a few seasons the Continental style will be in vogue generally in this country. He is one of the leading exponents of this style in this country and a great skating enthusiast. Mr. Brokaw's extensive work on the sport, "The Art of Skating," (Scribner's,) traces the history and development of the sport from its beginning to the present day.

### Final Skating Races at Rink.

The last in skating races of the season will be held on Monday, March 27, at the St. Nicholas Rink, and will consist of a three-quarter-mile handicap, a quarter-mile handicap, and a half-mile novice race. All the best skaters in this vicinity will participate, including Phil Kearney, the champion. Entries will close with Chares Bowe, Secretary, 69 West Sixty-sixth Street, on Wednesday next.