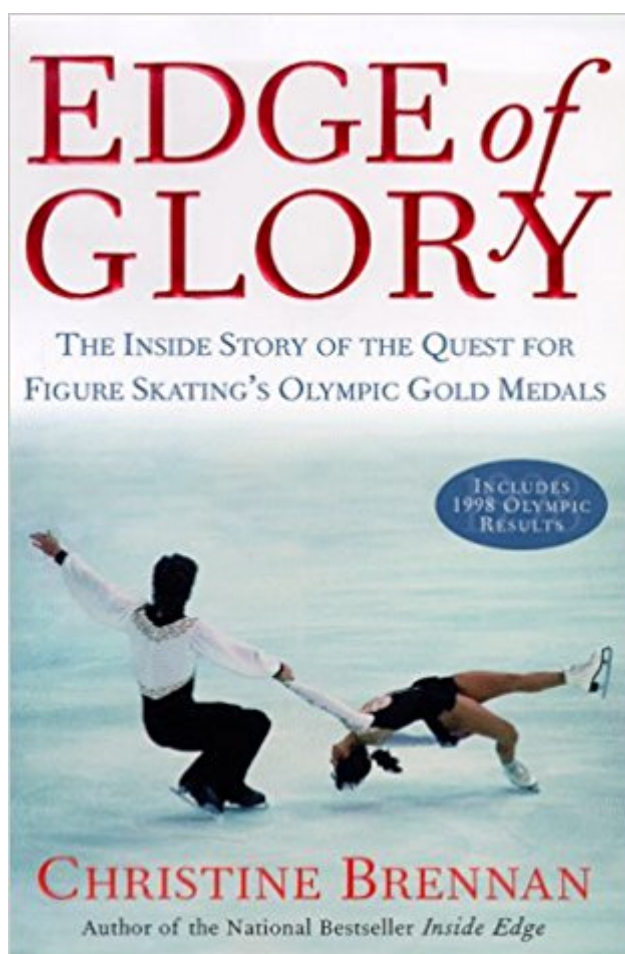


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Edge Of Glory: The Inside Story Of The Quest For Figure Skating's Olympic Gold Medals



Synopsis

They practice for years in cold, dark rinks with a single dream; they train for decades for one moment: to skate onto the ice with the whole world watching to try to win the Olympic gold medal. If they stumble, the gold is gone. If they succeed, their lives can be changed forever. In *Edge of Glory* Christine Brennan tells the riveting stories of the world's best figure skaters as they travel through the most intense year of their young lives. As she did in the bestselling *Inside Edge*, Brennan goes backstage at major competitions and behind the scenes at the practice rinks to chronicle the figure skaters' quest for victory at the 1998 Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan. The year opens with the 1997 U.S. national championships in Nashville, where the teenage Michelle Kwan, a favorite for the Olympic gold medal, dissolves on the ice during a wrenching four-minute performance. As Kwan bursts into tears leaving the rink, tiny Tara Lipinski arrives on the ice and steals the show. The crowd roars, and a new ice queen -- all seventy-five pounds of her -- is crowned. Tara shrieks in delight as she begins a run of historic victories, but she knows that she is paying a high price for winning. Living apart from her father, Tara can find her practice sessions overwhelming, and sometimes leaves the ice in a frenzy as her mother watches in horror. In the 368 days from Nashville to Nagano, other women will vie for the gold, including the unpredictable Nicole Bobek, the lyrical Lu Chen, and even a college graduate, Tonia Kwiatkowski, who would love simply to make the U.S. team. The men's competition has turned into an unprecedented jumping contest, led by Canada's controversial Elvis Stojko. But the men's field is deep, and nothing is certain when a skater flies into the air for a four-revolution jump. Todd Eldredge of the United States and Russia's Alexei Urmanov and Ilia Kulik are chasing Stojko, as are some youngsters, including America's top jumper, Michael Weiss. On the way to the Olympics, Brennan catches up with the famous and infamous, including Tonya Harding, Nancy Kerrigan, Oksana Baiul, Brian Boitano, Scott Hamilton, Rudy Galindo, and the exquisite Russian pairs. She introduces us to the people behind the scenes: the edgy agents who are never far from their cellular phones; the attentive coaches and choreographers who have devised the intricate moves that will determine who wins the gold and who does not; and the stern judges, who control the sport from their rinkside seats. But *Edge of Glory* is, ultimately, the story of the athletes who compete in the most popular and beloved of all winter sports. What drives these skaters through the year? What do they fear? What are their dreams? More importantly, who will win? And who will lose?

Book Information

Hardcover: 416 pages

Publisher: Scribner (April 6, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0684841282

ISBN-13: 978-0684841281

Product Dimensions: 9.6 x 6.5 x 1.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 42 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,777,468 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #94 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Winter Sports > Ice Skating & Figure Skating](#) #408 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > Olympic Games](#)

Customer Reviews

The author of *Inside Edge* updates the behind-the-scenes saga of professional figure skating to include the results of the 1998 Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Beginning with the 1997 U.S. championships in Nashville, Brennan chronicles the ambitions, achievements, frustrations, and personal hurdles for the American skaters in a pivotal year that culminated with the Olympics. The year's drama is palpable, including highlights such as the competition between the two top-rated women, Michelle Kwan and Tara Lipinski, along with the ever-increasing athleticism of the men. Along the way Brennan makes detours to check up on recent favorites from the past such as Tonya Harding, Nancy Kerrigan, Oksana Baiul, Brian Boitano, and Scott Hamilton. And always rinkside are the stories of coaches, choreographers, parents, and fans who have transformed figure skating into one of the world's fastest-growing professional sports.

From an ABC/ESPN sports reporter, this expose will include 1998 Olympic results. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

If you've always wondered what really goes on behind the scenes at international skating competitions, you won't be able to put this book down. Especially fascinating is the material about Tara Lipinski and family, but many, many other personalities are covered. *EDGE OF GLORY* is a page turner without being cheap or tawdry. It's suprisingly well-written and thorough. I recommend it!

While the author does an excellent job of portraying the sport of amateur figure skating's "darker"

side, it comes across as a bit too gratuitously scandalous in many parts. The few key things I did take away from this book were that: 1. Tara Lipinski and her clan were clearly not liked by the author, as almost the whole book focused on her and her mother's tantrums, plots to dethrone Michelle Kwan, and to win a gold medal at the '98 Olympics (and the associated ca\$h compensation) 2. There is so much more to figure skating than most of the world sees, as most of the world doesn't track the comings and goings of figure skating's biggest competitors in non-Olympic years. 3. Tara [messed] up bigtime by going Pro - when was the last time you saw/heard from her? 4. I prefer gold medalists who are humbled by their achievements and who continue to grow and develop, both as athletes and ambassadors of the sport.. not people who use their medals as coupons to redeem for a life of quick cash and an even quicker disappearance. That Michelle Kwan is the most enduring ladies' competitor in decades goes without saying - though the author seemed to feel she had to prove it - but Michelle has done that herself. If this tale of the road to the '98 Olympics shows anything, is that while drama and rivalry (and questionable judging) dominate the sport, it's the same drama and rivalry that makes figure skating so compelling to watch from a fan's perspective.

I have always loved figure skating and am old enough to remember Janet Lynn and Peggy Fleming's skating days. I read Christine Brennan's previous book, "Inside Edge", years ago and liked it. I didn't know about this book until I found it at a book sale. Everything happened in this book in 1996 - 1998, but I remembered most of it, and was reminded of other things I had forgotten, like Carlo Fassi's inopportune death. I love getting the behind the scenes look at what happened in figure skating: coaches, judges, parents, skaters, choreographers, etc. This book has wonderful pictures and went into great detail, especially about Tara Lipinski and Michelle Kwan. Apparently Lipinski's mother was a giant pain-in-the-a--. In the acknowledgments, Ms. Brennan gives her gratitude to all the different skaters and families. She doesn't mention the Lipinski's. That should tell you something. I have only one criticism for the book. After Lipinski won the Olympic Gold Medal, I wanted the inside scoop on why she retired at the age of 15. I didn't get that and was very disappointed by that. That's the only reason I didn't give it a 5.

Some of the reviews note the bias toward Michelle Kwan, and against Tara Lipinski, but it's understandable. The author didn't talk to Lipinski or her family, while Michelle Kwan and her inner circle opened up for the author. Brennan had an outsider's eye looking in; and the exterior actions of the 1998 female gold medalist were not very flattering. More importantly, Brennan caught a glimpse of figure skating for a public that has, honestly, not much real idea what's going on. The majority of

fans don't know a lutz from a flip or the difference between a triple axel and a triple salchow. We like the pretty packages, all shiny and glittery, performing to music, and smiling.. smiling. And our ignorance has hardly been helped by the newspaper and magazine reporters who write about the sport; sometimes I wonder if they actually know less than the audience. This is a book for people who want to know the reality rather than the sequined front on a sport that is much more fascinating for its flaws than its designer costumes. In what other sport is the highest prize dependent on not your own efforts, but the judgement of others? Where little girls (age 15 and 17, and in truth, hardly teenagers at all) bear the literal weight of mountains? Where you are disadvantaged in the "ladies" competition if you don't have the figure of a twelve year old? Even Michelle Kwan noted the disadvantage of growing old: the jumps get harder, and one's body gets wear and tear. I don't watch skating for its prettiness; I don't pro "competitions." But rather, it's one of the most brutal sports out there. With women's gymnastics the lone exception. Fifteen year olds balancing on a knife edge, and a seven-and-a-half minute performance is literally everything. But Tara Lipinski fans would do best to stay away. The unpleasant truths are not to your taste.

This disjointed narrative covers the 1997-98 skating season ending with the Nagano Olympics, with some description of 1996 as well. Ms. Brennan covers her time frame chronologically, but jumps from describing one skater to the next with little or no transition. Despite using numerous quotations and paraphrasing, she apparently sees no need for footnotes, which seriously damages her credibility. The reader gets the distinct impression that much of the book is based on rumor, rather than the careful research required from a journalist. In addition to the credibility problems, her style is disturbing. She seems to go out of her way to focus on the negative characteristics of just about every skater discussed. Tara Lipinsky gets the lion's share of criticism, but Michelle Kwan and her father are victims as well. The only skater who comes off sympathetically is 1994 Olympic Gold Medalist Alexei Urmanov. Each of the 10 or more skaters described gets dinged for something! However, human nature being what it is, there is an attraction in reading rumor and innuendo. This is a book that should be taken with a large grain of salt, maybe a whole salt shaker, in fact, but it is engrossing. Skating fans should skip the parts about their favorite skaters and read the parts about the ones they don't like!

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