

# Northbrook speed skaters dominate North Shore Open

By JOE ORRIS

It is the biggest sports meet of its kind in Illinois, in fact, has been for the past 30 years despite a decline in participation.

It features nearly 150 of the finest athletes in the sport covering a six-state region which includes Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Missouri and even Massachusetts.

Yet, few beyond the north suburban area have heard of it. It is relatively obscure in relation to its scope and history.

**IT IS THE** North Shore Open, a meet which annually attracts many of the finest speed skaters in the United States. The 30th renewal of this meet occurred Saturday and Sunday, the eighth time it has been staged in an Olympic Games' year. The Northbrook Civic Foundation sponsored the meet along with assistance from the Northbrook Park District, which furnished the ice for the 300-meter track at Mea-

dowhill Park.

As usual, the 60-member Northbrook Speed Skating Club was the dominant one among the 13 clubs represented at the North Shore.

The North Speed Skaters, who are going to defend their state outdoor championship Saturday and Sunday in Glen Ellyn and their indoor title March 25 in Park Ridge, crowned four class champions at the North Shore Open.

**A CLASS CHAMPION** is one who wins all eight races in his or her age group.

Northbrook Speed Skaters able to turn the trick were Northfield's Jessica Mills in the Pony Girls Division (ages 8-9 years), Nathaniel Mills of Northfield in the Juvenile Boys Division (12-13), Northbrook's Mike Heldrich in the Intermediate Boys Division (16-17) and Lisa Zordani of Northbrook in Intermediate Girls.

In addition, four class runners-up wearing the colors of the Northbrook Speed Skating Club included Corey Benjamin in the Pony Boys, Debbie Cohen in the Midget Girls, Jenny Kenny in the Juvenile Girls, David Cruikshank in the Junior Boys and Dan Halzonitis in the Senior Men 'B.'

Other Northbrook Speed Skating Club members who placed were Jeff Benjamin, third in Midget Boys; Leslie Arseneau, fourth in Midget Girls; Kathy Clavey, third in Juvenile Girls; and John Singer, third in Junior Boys.

**THE NORTHBROOK SPEED** Skating Club no longer numbers 110 members, nor does the North Shore Open attract the 350 participants it routinely drew in the early 1960s. Competition from youth hockey programs and expanded school curriculums are part of the reason, but Susan Mills, who involves herself with club activities,

thinks speed skating will survive if it moves indoors.

There are currently just two 400-meter Olympic-style refrigerated outdoor ice tracks in the U.S., one in West Allis, a suburb of Milwaukee and the other in Lake Placid, a relatively inaccessible burgh in upstate New York.

**"IF SPEED SKATING** is to spark more interest, it's got to move indoors so there will be more facilities and opportunities available to athletes," Mills said.

"Indoor speed skating is very exciting as well because it's done pack style, with six or more athletes toeing the line at once. It's like roller derby. Outdoor speed skating is not that exciting to watch. The skaters compete against a clock rather than directly against each other."

But Sam Poulos, who has coached members of the club for more than 20 years, would rather see the outdoor sport survive. "It's a truer form of the sport," added Poulos.

**"YOU DON'T HAVE** people bouncing around, slamming into each other and into the walls. Outdoor skating is a much cleaner sport. You can't rely on riding on someone's back. It's a better measure of talent and skill than indoors because it's a better demonstration of what you're able to do on your own."

But one thing is clear, the Northbrook Speed Skating Club still features some of the best American talent in the sport. Three of its members — Mark Huck of Lake Forest, Jan Goldman of Glenview and Lydia Stephans of Northbrook — have qualified for the Olympic Games in Sarajevo next month.

**Wood Oaks cagers set for Northwestern pregame**

Wood Oaks Junior High eighth-grade boys' basketball team plays St. Norbert in Northwestern University's Welsh-Ryan Arena Saturday at 5:15 p.m.

Following the game, the teams will be guests of Northwestern at its home game against Minnesota. Discount tickets are available for parents or staff members wishing to attend the game. For further information, contact Wayne Langhorst, physical education director for District 27, at 272-1900.