

# C Coaches Training

by Susan Davies



## COMMITTEE

**CFSA -  
Choreography -**

**Dance -  
ISIA -  
New Era Figures -**

**Power Skating -  
Precision -  
Special Olympics -  
USFSA Judges -**

Donald Jackson  
Moir North &  
Paula Wagener  
Debbie Lane  
Robert Unger  
Debi Leeming &  
Bob Ogilvie  
Sally-Anne Reid  
Jenise Jensen  
Jim Sladky  
Gale Tanger

## COACHES WHO EXCEL

Cecily A. Morrow has produced an outstanding educational tape on the Gustave Lussi technique of the sit spin, back spin and fast scratch. This tape is what I have personally longed to see from all the masters of the world. This is a step by step teaching tool on the very solid technique of Gustave Lussi.

### GUSTAVE LUSSI VIDEO by Cecily A. Morrow

#### An Eight Year Quest

Today we are surrounded by a multitude of video images and the wonders of electronics are utilized in many educational settings. In our own marvelous, visually thrilling sport, however, there is a paucity of video instructional material.

Over the last eight years, I have been discovering why this is so - talk about technical difficulties! Finally, our project is culminating in the issuance of Volume I of a four part video: "Systematic Figure Skating: The Spin and Jump Techniques of Gustave Lussi." On the positive side, encouragement from individuals active in the skating industry and the assistance of other coaches and former and current champions has been invaluable.

We have attempted to recreate the "feel" of the teaching situation with a skating coach who, over a period of seventy years, expanded figure skating taking it from "what it was before the war (WWII)" into this new brand of American free skating. In our production phase effort to present that "in lesson" ambience that is essential to Mr. Lussi's (and other great coaches) methodology we filmed Mr. Lussi teaching Paul Wylie and other skaters. Thus the viewer receives step by step instruction from Mr. Lussi himself.

Gustave Lussi, who has been called "the father of modern freeskating," not only invented many techniques and skating moves employed today but also devised a teaching style which inspired students

to execute faster, more dramatic spins and spectacular jumps. A Swiss emigre, Mr. Lussi came to the U.S. in 1919, began a skating career, started teaching and within a few years, coached champion Constance Wilson to victory. His coaching success with such champions as Dick Button and Dorothy Hamill is history known to most PSGA members.

Gustave Lussi's verbal imagery, often humorous, "developed over years into phrases to remind students of his requirements."

For example, in the flip jump, as in other jumps (single, double, triple), Mr. Lussi asks the student to count out loud the stages of the jump entry and execution, to keep the rhythm flowing. If you forget to count, he'll ask you, "Are you a countess?" And "Bonaparte" - Lussi students remember, refers to his style of sit spin, in which the knees are somewhat parted (so that the "bones" are "apart"). To a student whose arms were flapping out of control: "Leave the hands quiet going in - you should have been here on the fourth of July to wave the flag around!" "Praise the Lord and pass the foot..." referring to a WWII son, is a mnemonic device to assist in the student's delaying of an axel jump.

These informational reminders, Mr. Lussi's commanding presence and his technical superiority were..."What lifted us, his students, not only off the ice but away from petty notions and fuzzy, uncontrolled thoughts...into performances of a higher order." "The precision of his technique was so clear that his students formed an image, both technical and in terms of standards of work and behavior...which imprinted that special Gustave Lussi notion of what skating is all about."

"What's your name?" Mr. Lussi would ask. "Eileen" was the expected answer ("I lean"). Regarding the exit from jumps, "What nationality are you?" - "Czech!" (check rotation). And so on.

Innovations. Don Jackson says that he always thinks of "Gus Lussi as the

pioneer of the double jumps...and the triple jumps because he had Dick Button doing the double Axel and triple loop...the first time they were being done." Carlo Fassi remembers "...he had a new idea about spinning; ...he had mainly the idea, for example, to rotate with the legs crossed. He was the first one I found that told me that." Ron Ludington recalls that Mr. Lussi devised "a more efficient way of jumping..." And...the flying sit spin, the flying camel, the Hamill camel.

This has been an arduous but exciting endeavor; we who've worked on it hope the results will be helpful to the skating community. In addition, we look forward to documentation, made visually available to the public, of specific instructional details derived from the successful experience of our many other great coaches each of whom has special techniques, unique ways of evoking outstanding results.

For information on how to obtain Volume I of the Lussi technical video please write to Cecily A. Morrow, 207 Earle Avenue, Easton, MD 21601 or call 410/820-6125. Please call her to purchase the wonderful Gustav Lussi tape.

*\*This and other quotes are from the Lussi video or the upcoming book Diamonds In The Snow, co-authored by Cecily A. Morrow and Cecily H. Morrow.*

PS Magazine January/February '93