



Five Strides on the Banked Track: The Life and Times of the Roller Derby

Frank Deford

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Illustrated with photographs by Walter Iooss Jr.: Iconic sportswriter and commentator Frank Deford's first book brings to life one of America's most thrilling—and misunderstood—sports entertainments, the Roller Derby, from its birth during the Great Depression to its second ascendancy in the late 1960s

In *Five Strides on the Banked Track*, distinguished sports journalist Frank Deford opens a fascinating window on this exhilarating entertainment that operates according to its own set of unique rules—both on and off the track.

The Derby began as an idea on a tablecloth in 1935 by Leo Seltzer. From its Great Depression roots—when young skaters would run away to join the Roller Derby in the same way one might run away to join the circus—through its prewar heyday, postwar decline, and ultimate rise to superstardom in the 1960s, Deford sweeps us along on an unforgettable journey. He brings together the players, the fans, the promoters, and the celebrities. He shares the exploits of Bay Bomber legend Charlie O'Connell, superstar Joanie Weston, and beloved villain Ann Calvello, with her dyed blue hair, who would ultimately go on to compete in Roller Derby in seven separate decades. Deford vividly captures the excitement of a sport *Variety* called “cathartic, dramatic, fast-paced, and classic as a John Wayne movie.” From the idolatry of the fans to the loneliness of the open road to the hard-charging frenzy of the arena, this is a rare glimpse into a uniquely American spectator sport that continues to reinvent and resurrect itself today.

This definitive new edition includes a foreword by Jerry Seltzer and an introduction by Frank Deford.

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