

FIGURE SKATING

Figure skating drew a sellout crowd. This was impressive, considering the venue—across the city at Coney Island, almost 2 hours away from midtown Manhattan by subway. This was the first time that the sport was included at the Gay Games and perhaps the first time in the history of the sport that same-sex pairs were part of the competition. One hundred skaters from nine countries competed in four disciplines—compulsory ice skating, free dance, pairs and singles—and five ability levels from beginner to world class.

CLOSING CEREMONY

It was a hot summer night June 25, a night that we'll always remember and that the world will never forget. On that night a sellout crowd of 57,000 piled into Yankee Stadium in the Bronx to celebrate the closing of Gay Games IV.

The ceremonies began with Harvey Fierstein exclaiming, "Welcome to Yankee Stadium, these are our athletes." With that, there was a tremendous fanfare and 11,000 athletes marched onto the field. It's hard not to feel a sense of pride when you gaze into the eyes of those who fulfilled their dreams and played in the games.

The hour and 20-minute procession was punctuated by Judy Gold, Julia "It's Pat" Sweeney and Harvey Fierstein, who said, "Look! Lesbians who bowl! It's new! It's exciting! It's got balls!"

The festivities continued for the next three hours, starting with Aprile Millo leading the stadium in the National Anthem, and moving on to Barbara Cook and the Unity Chorus singing "Jack and Jill." This was followed by comedians Suzanne Westenhoefer, Marga Gomez and Kathy Najimy, Cindy Lauper, Cheer Dallas, Crystal Waters with her 20 lesbian motorcycle escorts, Dianne Reeves, Lavender Light, Armistead Maupin, Sir Ian McKellen, Lisa Lisa, Phyllis Hyman and, finally, Patti LaBelle and the fireworks.

The whole thing was summed up when Roberta Achtenberg asked the question "Why do we do this?" She quoted Sappho of Lesbos, "Someone in some future time will think of us." The games and the Stonewall celebration have proven to us that we do have the power to change the world.



Gay Games IV opening ceremonies in New York City

EPILOGUE

The lotions and tapes are now packed, and thousands of athletes are heading home—some with honors, but all with a sense of pride in participating in this ever-growing tournament.

The events brought us a little closer. Maybe we'll get to Amsterdam for Gay Games V. Remember, we have a date in '98.

GAY GAMES EVENTS

Aerobics, aquatics—swimming, diving and water polo—badminton, basketball, billiards, bowling, cycling, figure skating, flag football,

golf, ice hockey, in-line skating, judo, marathon, martial arts, physique, powerlifting, racquetball, soccer, softball—fast pitch and slow pitch—sport climbing, squash, table tennis, tennis, track and field, triathlon, volleyball, wrestling.

GAY GAMES HISTORY

The idea for the games was originally conceived by Dr. Tom Waddell, himself a decathlete participant in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics.

The first Gay Games was held in San Francisco in 1982. There were more than 1,300 athletes from 179 cities and 12 nations participating in 14 sports.

There has been phenomenal growth since then:

Gay Games II in San Francisco in 1986—3,500 athletes from 259 cities and 16 nations for 17 sports.

Gay Games III in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1990—7,300 athletes, 1,500 cultural participants and 31 sporting events.

Gay Games IV in New York City in 1994—11,000 athletes from 2,900 cities and 44 nations competing in 31 sporting events.

Waddell died from complications of AIDS in 1987. His dream, however, lives on: "Doing one's personal best should be the paramount goal in any athletic endeavor."

GAY GAMES FACTS

According to Marlin Collingwood, director of communications for the Gay Games, the entire budget for Gay Games IV was \$6.5 million dollars, "one-eighth of one percent of the budget for the Olympics held in Barcelona."

Collingwood estimates that over 2,000 people received hosted housing in New York City and that over 600 scholarships were distributed in various forms and degrees such as waiver of fees, coverage of transportation and loading costs and food vouchers. Scholarships were based on three criteria—financial need, health status related to financial need, and representation by country, city and discipline to achieve diversity.

Five to 6 percent of the athletes enrolled were self-identified heterosexuals. Many of them participated for reasons of solidarity; for friends, brothers, sisters, children and, in some cases, as a memorial for someone close who had died of AIDS.

All uniforms for the dancers in the opening ceremonies were donated by Levi Strauss and Company. Some teams were able to get local Gap sponsorship for items such as shorts and shirts.

New sports at Gay Games IV included figure skating (with same-sex pairs competition), in-line skating and sports climbing. Flag football replaced touch football, and women's divisions have been added in wrestling. Discontinued sports include croquet, darts and equestrian.

Wearin' o' the green

Team Portland makes a proud mark in the Gay Games

by Martha Allen

Portland area residents who competed in Gay Games IV said the events in New York City were fabulous, fantastic, incredible experiences that left them, as one athlete said, with a "feeling of overwhelming joy."

Team Portland sent 65 members to the Gay Games. Team members participated in track, tennis, swimming, physique, triathlon, wrestling and other sports, along with some 11,000 gay and lesbian athletes from around the world.

Tyler Cole, founder and member of Team Portland, and a tennis player, said that the games, the ceremonies, the cultural events and the Stonewall 25 celebration all led to wonderful community spirit.

"New York City was so full of queers that it was nearly impossible not to see other participants while on the subway, walking around Manhattan, or sitting in a restaurant. Walking into Yankee Stadium for the closing ceremonies and seeing more than 50,000 people cheering was a feeling of overwhelming joy. Thousands of gay and lesbian athletes were being applauded openly and proudly. Twenty-five years after Stonewall, we really have come some distance."

Cole said that, of the 31 sports in the games, Team Portland members participated in about 12.

"We didn't tally a medal count," Cole said. "The emphasis was on participation and not the number and type of medal won by each team. We did have many members do their personal best and others proud of their performance under difficult

circumstances. Many did bring home medals, but we congratulate all those who competed."

Among Portlanders bringing home medals was



Team Portland tennis group

Ed McMahon, a tennis player and spokesman for Team Portland's tennis group. McMahon won two gold medals, one in singles competition and another in doubles.

"I was fortunate to win two gold medals," McMahon said. "But the whole experience was fabulous. Having the opportunity to play at the U.S. Open facility was great, and experiencing both the ceremonies was a highlight."

McMahon said that hot, humid weather made the competitions difficult for Oregonians, but added that going up against more than 800 other gay and lesbian tennis players made the heat worthwhile. Other Portlanders who did well in tennis competition include Carolyn Lumber and Jane Paulson, who won a gold medal in the open women's

Other local medalists include Dawn Collins, who won a bronze medal in track; Ellen Carder, who won a gold medal in martial arts; Jennie Eisenbraun, who medaled in physique; and Bill Crew, who won two medals in rowing competitions even though he entered at the last minute. Crew also participated in golf and tennis competitions.

"The rowing wasn't affiliated with the games," Crew explained. "It was a separate event because we got organized a little too late. But it was great, it was the first-ever sanctioned gay regatta."

Organized by a Washington, D.C., rowing club, the Stonewall Regatta drew a number of entries, and spectators. Crew said he rowed with an international team that included members from Detroit, Sacramento, New York and Canada. The team won a gold medal, he said. Crew also rowed, as a substitute, with the Washington, D.C., team, and won a silver medal.

"The whole experience was very empowering, very affirming," Crew said. "There was a spirit there I've never felt before—it was incredible."

Another Portland resident who had a great time in New York was Tom Barreto, a tennis player who says he is already looking forward to Amsterdam in 1998.

"It was fantastic," Barreto said. "The energy of New York, plus the energy of the games, was incredible. And the people were wonderful. I'd heard New Yorkers were rude, but people were very friendly and polite to all of us. Even the taxi drivers would say, 'You here for the games?'"

Team Portland's green outfits, combined with the presence of World Cup soccer fans in New York, led to some confusion.

"Everyone thought we were Irish soccer players," Barreto said. "They would stop us on the street and ask where to find the Irish bars. I didn't know that, but I could tell them where the good bars were."

doubles competition, the highest competition level possible. Deanne Larsell won a bronze medal, and Stephen Yew and tennis partner Bill Lynch also took home a bronze for their doubles competition.