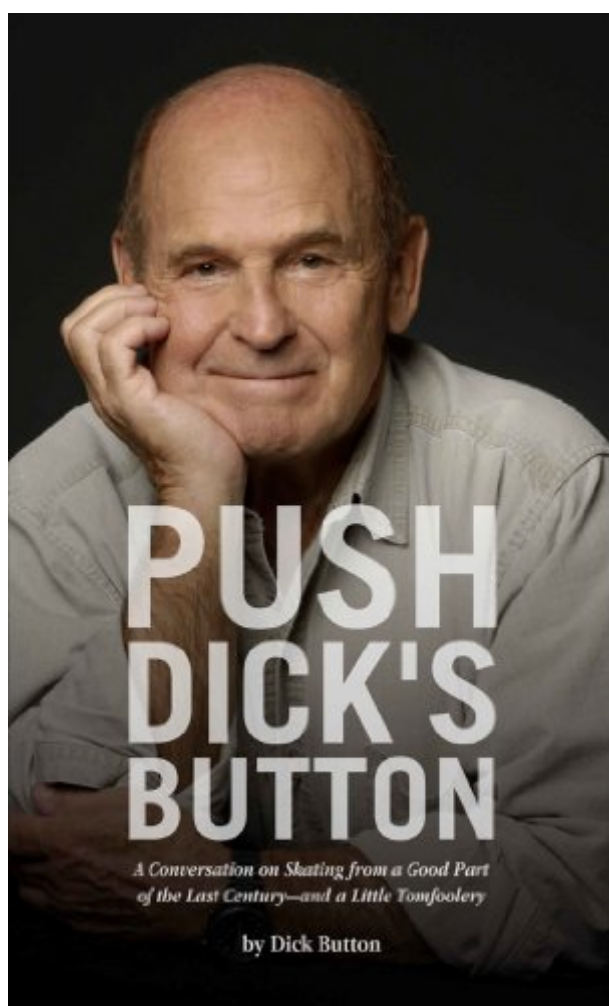


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Push Dick's Button: A Conversation On Skating From A Good Part Of The Last Century--and A Little Tomfoolery



Synopsis

Everything many of us know about figure skating, we learned from the man who's been called the "Voice of Figure Skating." Now Dick Button, the Emmy Award-winning skating commentator famous for his precise, passionate, opinionated rinkside analyses and for his historic career as a two-time Olympic gold medalist, five-time World Champion, and seven-time U.S. Champion (plus being the inadvertent inventor of the flying camel, the first to successfully land a double Axel in competition, and the first ever to do a triple jump) demystifies this art and sport beloved by millions. In *Push Dick Button*, you'll learn about the difference between a Lutz and a Salchow . . . performance highs and lows . . . memorable entrances, exits, and falls (including his own) . . . costume delights and disasters . . . the new judging rules . . . and nuggets of skating training and history, PLUS stories about Katarina Witt, Peggy Fleming, Johnny Weir, Brian Boitano, Dorothy Hamill, and more, including today's champions, such as Evgeni Plushenko, Davis and White, and the latest sensations. Droll, dishy, dramatic, and dead-on, this book is like a one-on-one conversation with the man whose unsurpassed knowledge, experience, and love of figure skating have influenced generations.

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Customer Reviews

Even though I had to cringe at the writing, editing, and copyediting throughout the book, I still totally enjoyed Mr. Button's unique commentary on the history of the sport of "figure" skating. Many of his descriptions conjured up enduring images that are emblazoned on my memory from televised competitions throughout the years. His perspective on the new judging system and its impact on the watchability of the sport is spot on as is his opinion on twizzles, which I humbly share! Give your inner English teacher a day off while you do a quick read of this entertaining book.

This is a wonderful book, and not just for die-hard fans of figure skating, but for everyone who has ever been amused by Dick Button's colorful skating commentary. Button has understandably scaled back on that commentary in the last few years and that has been a huge loss to the sport. None of his many replacements has even come close to providing the depth, honesty, humor, and reverence for the sport that Button brought to his commentary. This book helps to make up for that loss. It is a wonderful account of Button's involvement with sport, of the things he loves about it and the things he doesn't. It uses the conceit that the reader is actually a guest in Button's home, sitting on his couch and watching skating with him. I initially found that annoying, but as the book progressed, I found it increasingly charming. Button punctuates each reflection with a digression on food and drink (popcorn, nachos, beer, scotch...) with the result that if you read the book through in one sitting you're likely to feel you've over indulged. There's a lot of material here on the work that went into Button's apparently effortless skating commentary. Many readers will be surprised to learn that in fact a great deal of effort went into that commentary, particularly in the beginning. That part of the book makes it a nice compliment to *Skating on Air: The Broadcast History of an Olympic Marquee Sport* (another must-reading for fans of figure skating). There is just too much good material in this book for any summary of it to do it justice. You need to read it. There are Button's observations on skating itself and then there are his observations on how the sport is governed. Button, along with Sonia Bianchetti, and other prominent members of the figure skating community were part of the short-lived WSF (World Skating Federation) a valiant attempt to break the suffocating stranglehold the ISU (International Skating Union) has had on the sport. What Button doesn't say (very likely because of a confidentiality agreement) is what spelled the end of the WSF was not simply the incredibly short-sighted failure of U.S. Figure Skating to support it, and the blatantly illegal move on the part of the ISU to disqualify any and all skaters who participated in any WSF events from ISU events (including the World Figure Skating Championships), but the fact that the then wealthy ISU hit the WSF with a SLAPP suit that forced them to close shop before they even got started. Nice, eh? It is wonderful to see that Button is still going as strong as ever. I'm eagerly awaiting the sequel!

First off, Dick Button has been skating at the Olympic level since about 25 years before I was born. Second: He became the commentator du jour (in the U.S., at least) long before I was a gleam in my mother's eye. His longevity alone deserves respect. I don't agree 100% with Button on everything, but I am always thrilled when he points out how the IJS (the "new" judging system imposed by the ISU in the wake of the 2002 vote-trading scandal) is ludicrously corrupt and is likely to stay that way. If only U.S. Figure Skating had thrown its (debatable) power behind the WSF ... but it's too late for that now. The best we can hope for is that U.S.F.S. will miraculously seize the reins (history suggests this is not likely) and force the ISU to abandon the hilariously corrupt practice of anonymous judging. God, sometimes this sport makes me wish I were a shot-putter.

Fun, conversational type writing style. I read it in one sitting. I listened to Button's skating commentary for decades, and used to grin every time he'd squawk about the free leg position in a layback spin (something not mentioned in the book). Took me back to my skating days, and running into Janet Lynn at the Wagon Wheel. Good memories, and Button shares some great stories.

The writing style is way cuter than it needed to be, which is why I gave it 4 instead of 5 stars. Although I can't even stand up on ice skates, I love to watch figure skating competitions on TV and always enjoyed Dick Button's commentary. He could explain the fine points and what to look for, without becoming pedantic or yakking to the point of distracting from the performances. The book is part memoir and part commentary. I completely agree with his disdainful opinion of all the arm-flailing that substitutes for choreography these days. He explains that its purpose is to score points under the present rules. I think it looks dumb and was happy to read that this expert thinks so, too. I enjoyed the information about how music is selected and edited, because that's something I've wondered about for some time. I was sorry when Dick Button and Peggy Fleming were dropped as figure skating commentators. I don't dislike Johnny Weir and Tara Lipinski, but Dick and Peggy were more informative for me. As I said at the beginning, I can do without all the cutesy stuff, but the core of the book is good. If you like watching figure skating, read it.

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