

Gary Ream Doesn't Speak For Me

Why I cannot and will never support skateboarding in the Olympics.

by Bud Stratford

A Brief Synopsis

I really don't think that this idea of taking skateboarding out of the hands of skateboarders, and putting it into the hands of third parties for the ultimate goal of ramrodding into the Olympic Games (against the will of most skateboarders, mind you) is a good idea for anyone. Instead, I think it's the perfect recipe for the biggest disaster that the Olympics has ever seen. If the IOC and USAS ignore this simple advice, and goes ahead with their agenda, they're probably doing so at their own peril.

Personally, I'm already boycotting the 2012 Olympics. It's not that hard to do; I already avoid the Olympics like the plague, anyway. Just because they're boring, and I'd much rather watch something else. Or, better yet, nothing at all.

On the other hand, I've never actively opposed them, either. Until now. And, I think you're gonna find a whole lot of skateboarders doing the same exact thing.

“The point, as I see it, is that skateboarding isn't owned by anyone. Its evolution is the product of all of us over the last 40 or so years. In that respect, we all own it by simply doing it, but none of us has the authority to control it.

The Olympic structure requires a governing body.

Skateboarding has no governing body, as its direction is forged by the very act of doing it.

There can't be a governing body as it won't govern. It will produce an artificial aspect of skating created around a table and divorced from the very act it seeks to direct.

Now you may say 'so what,' and that's fair enough. But, a self-elected governing body is about to get rich both monetarily and in influence by claiming they speak for us, when in fact skateboarding's greatest asset is its freedom...”

—Steve G, from www.skullandbonesskateboards.com.

The Story

This week, I got a little heads-up from the online skateboarding community that, apparently, skateboarding is slated to make its Olympic debut at the 2012 London Summer Games. To be brutally honest, I was actually sort of shocked by this. Because, for one, I had no idea that the Olympics seriously wanted us "us" being skateboarding, of course to be there. I mean, it's never really been there before. And, I always stupidly assumed that it would never be there in the future either. Skateboarding, depending on which skateboarding historian you ask, is by most accounts a pastime that dates back at least half a century. Maybe even longer than that. So, I suppose, the running assumption amongst skateboarders has always been that, if the Olympiad seriously wanted us to be a part of their program, it probably would have happened some time ago. Or, at least, already.

On the other hand, I also had no clue whatsoever that we, skateboarding, even wanted to be there. There has never been any serious movement that I know of, to legitimize skateboarding in the eyes of the powers-that-be that control which sports are recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and which aren't. The inference that could be made here is that, skateboarders just didn't give a shit. It's not really that big of a deal to us. Skateboarding already has a fairly effective infrastructure of industry, demos, contests, appearances, and media that works to promote, support, and grow skateboarding both locally, and worldwide, completely from within. So, there has traditionally been little to no need for any sort of outside entity to legitimize skateboarding in the eyes of the world (Although the "outside entities" usually feel like we do, anyway, regardless of what we might think about it). Skateboarding is an extraordinary pastime in itself; that's almost totally obvious to anyone that's exposed to it. It's truly an American icon that has effectively spread itself all over the world, strictly based on its own merits, and its infectious appeal to kids and adults, young and old, everywhere. It doesn't need to be hawked like an energy drink, or an extreme snack. It sells itself just fine on its own.

"The IOC (International Olympic Committee) wants to make the program relevant for young people,' spokeswoman Emmanuelle Moreau said last Friday. More specifically, the IOC wants to make the program relevant for NBC, which owns the American broadcasting rights to televise the Summer Olympics in London. If NBC [determined] that a custard-pie food fight competition is relevant for young people, that [would] be next on the IOC's agenda..."

—John McGrath, *The News Tribune* (www.thenewstribune.com)

So, why the Olympics? And, why now?

Skateboarding is usually thrust into the greater public's consciousness, either via the mass media, or corporate interests. The reason is pretty simple: Skateboarding is widely perceived as being "cool" and "popular". Of course, these things are entirely true: Any skater worth his salt would be more than happy to babble on endlessly about how fucking cool skateboarding is. And, by any measure, there are more skaters today than there ever have been in the whole history of skateboarding (Although, most skaters aren't quite as enthusiastic about this as the mass media might have you think).

Because of this, skateboarding is looked at by mass marketers and the mass media as an ideal target market. They see skateboarding as something to be embraced or, as we see it, exploited. Skateboarding is typically used as a mass-market magnet of sorts; to draw the “youth market” to whatever [non-skateboard-related] product or service they're peddling this week. I don't think I really need to embellish on this point a whole lot: The piles of products, packages, advertisements, and endorsements that feature skateboarding in some form or another is almost endless. It can be more than a little nauseating. But, that's the burden of being cool, I suppose.

"London's organizing committee, of course, is keen to have skateboarding on board... and is pushing hard... knowing that it will increase their cred-factor and global audiences..."
—Ryley Bane, *Label Networks Online*

The Olympics are really no different than any other corporate marketing department. They are affected by the same market forces that dictate the success or failure of any other marketable product. They have to appeal to consumers to support their bottom line, and insure long-term fiscal health. Much of their revenue is derived from selling exclusive broadcasting rights (For the 2012 Olympiad, that would be NBC) to Olympic coverage. In turn, the broadcasters have to be assured a large viewership, in order to secure advertising dollars ad dollars being the networks' major revenue driver, of course. And, ultimately, ad revenue is largely driven by market viewership. If people aren't tuning in to watch dudes jumping hurdles, racing downhill on skis, tossing discs around, and doing that ice-skating ballerina bullshit then, the networks aren't going to make their money. It's that simple.

So, basically, the Olympics is queuing up to exploit skateboarding's mass popularity. Just like the rest of corporate America has been doing for years. Put that way, I can see all too clearly the reason for their sudden change of heart. They don't care about skateboarding. If they did, skateboarding would have been in the Olympics way back in the '70's. But, it wasn't popular then. Or, at least, it wasn't popular enough to leverage as a selling tool. Today, though? It is. Looking at it from that angle, you realize pretty damned fast that all they care about are their ad dollars, and their bottom lines.

Who's Speaking On Our Behalf?

Well, we basically have two groups speaking for us right now. We have the skaters themselves, who largely think that this whole thing sucks ass, and won't have a goddamned thing to do with it. You really don't have to take my word on that, by the way. A quick visit to any skateboarding message board or website oughta confirm that sentiment in pretty short order. A few message boards even have running topics titled "Fuck The Olympics". If that's not obvious enough, I really have no idea what would be.

But then, we have a sanctioning body working on our behalf, as well. Or, so they say, at least. The thing is, this "sanctioning body" is actually working to get skateboarding *into* the Olympics. As opposed to, keeping us *out* of them. Which seems to be what most skateboarders actually want. The sanctioning body is called USA Skateboarding (USAS), and is headed up by some chum named Gary Ream.

The Irony Of It All

"The meeting itself was hilarious. It was run by Gary Ream and Mike Jacki of [Camp] Woodward. Because of their ties to Olympic gymnastics, they have been approached by the IOC [to introduce skateboarding to the Olympics]..."

—Dave Carnie, in a letter to www.skateboardingsucks.com, regarding the USAS' introductory meeting.

Gary Ream has, somehow, succeeded in installing himself as the head of USAS. Or, duped everyone else on the board into installing him as the head of USAS. The board includes guys like Tony Hawk, Jim Fitzpatrick, Don Bostick, Miki Vuckovich, Mark Waters, John Bernards (My personal fave of the bunch), Neal Hendrix, Buster Halterman... and, oddly enough, Dave Carnie is in there, too. As an "executive board member no less.

With credentials like that, I would usually have to assume that he must be some sort of leading expert on the "sport" of skateboarding, and its culture. But, considering that I'm a pretty good expert on these things (And if I'm not, well, I certainly do know an awful lot of folks who are) and, I haven't heard of this chum? Then, he must not be the "expert" that he makes himself out to be. Strangely enough, during the research I did for this essay, I found that he actually seems to be far better known for his work in the realm of gymnastics and bicycling, than for any contribution he has made to the world of skateboarding. What gymnastics, bicycling, and skateboarding have in common is really quite beyond me. So far, I have yet to hear an adequate explanation for this. I think it might be obvious to most people why this might be the case: They simply don't have any damn thing in common at all.

There are several inconvenient reasons for this odd alliance. The main one being that getting a sport, any sport, into the Olympics is a painstakingly long and frustrating ordeal, filled with red herrings, delays, and pitfalls. Any sport with Olympic desires needs to, among other things, have an organizational body representing it. Then, that organizational body needs to be recognized by the IOC as the sole representative body of that sport. However: If the sport in question does *not* have a recognized sanctioning body and, skateboarders are definitely not famously known for their organizing savvy, that's for damned sure then the sport, in order to qualify for IOC recognition, must be sponsored and/or sanctioned by a sport that the IOC *does* recognize. This is intended to fast-track the approval process, and insure that decisions are made in a timely manner regarding upcoming games. Whether those sanctioning bodies are approved by a majority of that sport's participants, infrastructure, or athletes seems to be almost entirely beside the point.

"However, the IOC, as they recently stated to news sources, doesn't "recognize" any skateboarding organizations and have turned to the International Cycling Union (UCI) to introduce the sport to the Games. We had an immediate déjà vu reaction when we heard this, reminding us of the time when the IOC didn't "recognize" any snowboarding organization and so umbrella'ed the sport under skiing, and look how smoothly that went..."

— NY Herald

Besides the revenue generated by advertising dollars for the networks, the other monetary windfall that these events produce is the millions of dollars up for grabs in the form of official IOC funding for whichever sanctioning body is responsible for the “development” of skateboarding as an Olympic sport. You might think that the most logical organization to be blessed as the World Figurehead Governing Spokespeople of Skateboarding just might be comprised of actual skateboarders preferably, with some documented track record of their longtime involvement. This, again, is just not the case. In skateboarding's best interests, IOC funding will go to the first organization that the IOC recognizes as our sanctioning body, and is willing to expedite our involvement in the Games. Regardless of whether this organization has any ties whatsoever to skateboarding, or not. Basically, insofar as the Olympics are concerned, skateboarders can't be trusted to get themselves organized, and play by the IOC's agenda. Hey, we don't really want to be fucked by the Olympics, right? So, we're not put in charge. The gymnasts and bikers *are* put in charge, because they'll kiss the IOC's ass, and happily fuck skateboarding while they're at it. And, to make it suck even worse: They get *paid* to fuck us. How bullshit is that?! Yeah. I think it's pretty bullshit, too.

The Elephant in the Room

The problem that almost everyone recognizes with all of this and, the one thing that the mass media has yet to really latch on to is that, skateboarding is quite unlike any other Olympic sport. And, skateboarders are not really your typical Olympic "athlete", either. Within the world of skateboarding, this is widely known and, typically, carried as a badge of pride. I'm not so sure that the Olympics is ready for “athletes” that are cut from this cloth of outward rebellion that most skaters are cut from. For that matter: I'm not even sure if the Olympics really know what they're getting themselves into.

"With videos like these around, skateboarding will never become an Olympic sport. You can thank us for that later."

—Andrew Reynolds, on Baker 3G, via sublimated.net

Snowboarding is the closest "sporting" relative that the Olympiad has dealt with, to this point. As referenced earlier, this went over none too smoothly, upon snowboarding's approval for Olympic status (Via the FIS, which is the sanctioning body for the quite unrelated sport of skiing). Right away almost immediately one of snowboarding's most prominent spokespeople, Terje Haakonsen, went on record regarding his utter contempt for this turn of events, largely because of the FIS "hijacking" of his sport. Which, we all knew, really meant “fucking.” And, he went on to decree that he would be boycotting the whole thing altogether. Public opinion quickly followed suit, and the result by most accounts was rather disastrous. A high-profile drug test scandal didn't help matters in the least. The problem is that compared to most skateboarders snowboarders are pretty damn chipper athletes, and generally the picture-perfect definition of conformity and professionalism. Put another way: If you thought that snowboarders were a goddamned ulcer-inducing pain in the ass, just wait 'til you get a load of skateboarders.

The Slick Sell

"Its most visible star, Tony Hawk, derided Olympic inclusion years ago, saying the IOC needed skating way more than the other way round..."

—Dan Barnes, *The Edmonton Journal*

"The International Association of Skateboard Companies ([IASC](#)) held an open meeting at ASR in the fall of 2004, and I was fortunate enough to be there. They discussed many things, but the most heated topic was skateboarding becoming an Olympic sport. Gary Ream, president of the USA Skateboarding Association led the discussion. "We're Damned if we do, damned if we don't," said Ream. He explained that if the world of skateboarding doesn't pull together and enter the Olympics on purpose, someone else will eventually succeed in entering it, and then we will have no influence over what it will look like. "It's going to happen with or without us," Ream explained..."

—Steve Cave, *via about.com*

The fact of the matter is, no sport can be shotgun married into signing up for the Olympics' Mass Media Corporate Whoring Plan. If a sport doesn't *want* to be there, then, they simply don't *have* to be there. The whole trick is merely *staying disorganized*. Because, in order to get into the Olympics, you have to be organized; that's the all-important prerequisite. Without an IOC approved sanctioning body or sanctioning sponsor, the Olympics are entirely out of the question for your sport. Most skateboarders would have been more than happy to stick with this status quo even including some of our most respected spokespeople. Including, as referenced above, our most recognizable of skateboarding icons, Mr. Tony Hawk. Of course, he recently flip-flopped his position on this, and suddenly he's all for going for the gold. Apparently, the USAS slick-sell ass-raping worked on Mr. Hawk. And, here's why:

Because he knew all of this and more, Mr. Ream has successfully shotgun-married skateboarding into the Olympic program, based on the fear that if they didn't do it now... that is, get organized, get moving, and with his help and guidance, get skateboarding fucked over... then, it would simply be hijacked by some other even less qualified organization, and exploited even more barbarically than he's exploiting it right now. Which, I suppose, might be a compelling argument, if only it were true.

The other option and, this is the option that I *thought* those dudes were going after, here was to get organized, and get recognized as skateboarding's all-powerful sanctioning body. And then, once that was done, the sanctioning body could just as easily said "No thanks, but we'd rather not be an Olympic sport. Sorry." And, the IOC couldn't have done a damned thing about it. But then, Gary Ream wouldn't have gotten millions of dollars from the IOC, either. Clearly, taking a stand against this sort of bullshit has once again lost out to The Almighty Dollar. This constant selling-out-of-skateboarding to the highest bidder is really starting to get a bit old, isn't it?

The way that these self-appointed spokespersons ally and appease the general skateboarding population as well as its industrial and marketing backbone (as represented by such organizations as IASC, the International Association of Skateboard Companies) is through neverending promises of future "growth of the sport" if conformity to their plans are assured. Of course, recent history illustrates that "growth of the sport", as applied to skateboarding, includes (but, is not necessarily limited to): The benefits of real organization (Which usually means, having unqualified and unknowledgeable representatives speaking on behalf of skateboarders everywhere, usually with either totally laughable or, at worst, despairingly damaging results); The promise of respectability amongst the public at large (The continuing illegality of even *riding a skateboard* on many American sidewalks is ample proof that this has yet to materialize); The whole world marveling at our capabilities and exploits (True, but usually to the consternation of most skaters, who resent the constant deluge of having vert ramps referred to as "Those U-shaped-thingies"); The promise of more free, public skateparks as a result of this greater public acceptance (Sometimes true but, oftentimes horridly engineered by the same sorts of clueless chums that are supposedly acting as our spokespersons at the same time, creating a very real conflict of interest); The hope of pro skaters and skateboard companies all making more money (Not particularly a real concern of most everyday skaters, who tend to think that the companies, and their pros, already make far too much money as it is); And, lastly, the neverending argument that there can *never* be too many skateboarders participating in the sport (Ask any skateboarder, and they'll more than likely tell you otherwise).

Then, we have those unspoken promises that our "spokespeople" *won't* be referring to anytime soon: There will also be even more mass market stores that carry skate fashion and hardgoods at the mall (To the detriment of our currently dying infrastructure of independent, specialty skateboard shops); More TV ads that will feature skateboarding (But, not representing it accurately); And, worst of all, even more B-movies like "Grind", and shitty rap songs by dudes like Lupe Fiasco that bastardize our sport in major theaters and on Top 40 radio, in the name of mass-market education and entertainment (Don't even ask a skateboarder about this one, because you might just get your ass kicked if you do).

But, worst of all, every time skateboarding makes another step toward mainstream acceptance, via mainstream exploitation, those of us that grew up watching skateboarding, quite literally, grow with us and, who today work within our industry to safeguard those things that we all know and love about our lifestyles and livelihoods have to endure witnessing a gradual receding of the culture, history, and traditions that make skateboarding so much more than just rolling about on a wheeled plank. Sarcastically speaking, it's all really quite a wonderful world that our exploiters paint for us time and time again. And, it all sounds so strangely familiar because, if memory serves me correctly, it's the same slick sell that the X-Lames, Gravity Gayness, MTV Sports and Cribs Festival, and a zillion other Lets-Save-Skateboarding-From-Itself fuckfests have been pitching to us for years. The notion that this time around and, in the watchful eyes and capable hands of Mr. Gary Ream things will be different, and the Olympics will be way, way more beneficial than every other mass media experiment has been, would sound really great. But, only if those of us watching this unfold didn't think it was just a bunch of bullshit.

Something for the Newbies, aka The Cultural and Traditional Significance of Skateboarding

Okay. If you're reading this and, you're a skater? You might as well save yourself some reading time, and just skip this whole part. Because, you already know this shit. This tidbit is for all those

clueless non-skaters out there that don't know jack shit about our pastime, our history, or our culture. Mass Market America, this one's for you.

Skateboarding, traditionally speaking (as if we really had all that far to look), has always been "anti" all of this bullshit. Anti money. Anti corporation. Anti organization. Anti representation. Anti judgment. Anti hero. Anti team mentality. Anti segregation. Skateboarding, when viewed through a skater's eyes, is anti everything that sucks in the doldrums of the everyday world of "reality". You don't skate to get roped into the reality of mass marketing, conspicuous consumption, and the rest of the bullshit that constitutes the reality of everyday life. You skate to *escape* the realities of everyday life. That's why we do it. Everyday life isn't particularly "fun". Skateboarding is. Skateboarders know this. Those that are speaking on our behalf obviously don't.

"So I don't really see skateboarding going anywhere. I mean, are we going to get into the Olympics? I doubt it, as long as people like me are still skating..."

— Jeff Grosso, from his *TransWorld SKATEboarding Pro Spotlight* (September 1990)

The Olympics essentially represents everything that skateboarding stands against. The Olympics gives one man (or, woman) a chance to reign victorious over their peers, and bask in the "joy of victory", while every other sad-ass loser gets to suffer through the "agony of defeat". This is totally contrary to what skateboarding is all about. In skateboarding, you determine your own destiny. You're not measured against other people. You're measured against what you're made of. If and when you fail and fall and, we all fail and fall in skateboarding, from time to time we're measured by our will to scrape our asses off the pavement, and have another go at it. The joy of victory isn't in conquering our friends and family, it's in conquering our environment, and the risks of the unknown. Skaters know this. But, our spokespeople apparently don't.

Money. Very few skaters make money at skateboarding. For the rest of us, skateboarding is a reality grounded in sacrifice. Monetary, or otherwise. We pay and, sometimes, pay dearly to be skateboarders. Skateboarding isn't cheap. Skateboards are expensive. Broken bones are even more so. Physical rehabilitation is many times more expensive still. But, forget all of that. What's the price that we pay, just in pain?! Can you even put a dollar figure on that one, dude? Then, there's the price we pay in fines because, unlike shotput, skateboarding is largely an illegal activity, of course. And then, there's the very real price that we pay for just being social rejects and freaks. Skateboarding is all about "paying your dues". And, in skateboarding, you pay them over and over and over again. Not for the ultimate goal of getting a fat check, and your house featured on *Cribs* because, most of us will never get that opportunity. At the end of the day, money can't buy or sell what skaters get out of skateboarding. We do what we do out of love and respect for skateboarding, and fun and memories are the best that most of us can ever hope to realize in return. But, our spokespeople would know that, too. If they were skaters.

Corporations. As I've illustrated, they're widely perceived as entities that habitually leach off of skateboarding, among most skateboarders. They love to use skateboarding, to advance their marketing aims. But, rarely do they ever give a cent back to the sport that we love and respect so much. I don't need to say a lot about this one, because any half-wit skateboarder would more than likely sum it up by saying that corporations suck ass. They're not accountable to anyone. Especially skateboarders. Why our spokespeople think that we'd suddenly condone further corporate leeching is way, way beyond me.

Tell me: How, exactly, do you "organize" a worldwide collective of unique individuals, separated by substantial geographical, racial, financial, and linguistic barriers? Skateboarders would say, give them a skateboard. Skateboarding, of course, being an activity that does not recognize such barriers. Skateboarders are skateboarders, no matter where they may live, what color their skin may be, how rich or poor they may find themselves, or what language they might speak. Skateboarding is a common uniter amongst a world of division. The Olympics, of course, divides the world by these exact definitions, and pits them against each other. If our spokespeople were skaters, they would instantly recognize that crucial difference. This one conveniently covers "hero", "team", and "segregation" in one fell swoop. Lucky me, I just saved my ass three additional paragraphs. Sweet.

"Sport". An activity that is defined by hard, concrete objectives. Basketball: Put a ball through a hoop. Football: Run or throw a ball past a goal. Racing: Be the first one to reach a line. Discus, Shotput, and Javelin: Throw something that's really big and heavy, really fucking far. Hurdles: Jump over shit. Well, what's the objective to skateboarding? Have a good time? Don't kill yourself? Be considered "cool", so you can get laid? Work up a beer appetite? Piss off a security guard or two? Wreck something? The fact is, the "objectives" that define skateboarding aren't so easily defined. Nor is it the same set of "objectives" for every skater. I'd propose that skateboarding isn't a "sport" at all. It is simply whatever you want it to be. That said, I'd have to wonder how in the hell those Olympic dudes are gonna score having a good time. Maybe they'll just give you a "10" if you kill yourself, because that would be great for ratings, wouldn't it?

My main problem is that, these guys that are representing us, and making decisions for us, regarding the future of our "sport" clearly don't have the first fucking clue of what exactly it is that our "sport" is, or what it represents. That is the biggest travesty that I could ever imagine. A travesty brought upon us by their quest for money, not by their regard, reverence, or respect for skateboarding. Yet, in the same breath, the USAS, and the IOC are depending on skateboarders to support one more attempt at obvious mass marketing, for someone else's financial gain. If these guys that were representing us though this process were skateboarders or even "experts on skateboarders" they would already know that, that just ain't gonna happen.

The Impending Doomsday Scenario

"If you ask any skateboarder on the street, 'Do you want to be in the Olympic Games,' especially in this country, they would probably say, 'No,' " Ream said. "Because right off the bat, that's the coolest, easiest thing to say. And I would probably say that's the attitude of skateboarding in general." But Ream believes skateboarding will wind up in the Olympics with or without the support of most skaters...

—The New York Times online. June 13th, 2007.

"Great. So, even if I plead with this dude not to fuck us straightup our asses he's gonna go ahead, and fuck us anyway? Man, am I glad that guys like this are in charge..."

— My response to The New York Times online.

The upshot of all of this is that, regardless of what I might have to say about all of this... or, what our indigenous media might have to say about this... or, what our industry leaders might say about this... or, what our most accomplished icons might say about this... at the end of the day, none of it matters one iota to either the USAS, or the IOC. The reality is simple: If they want skateboarding in the Olympics, well then, come hell or high water, skateboarding's gonna be in the damned Olympics. Mr. Reams' quote above is pretty much spot-on, in the grand scheme of things, and illustrates my point perfectly. He's entirely correct in inferring that most skateboarders would "probably" say "No" to the Olympics (My only contention here is that "probably" should obviously be changed to "definitely").

However, he completely misses the rationale behind our steadfast opposition to this impending reality. Probably because he isn't really a skater, so he doesn't really know anything about it. I'm not saying these things because I want to be considered "cool" by anyone. And, I'm definitely not saying this because it's particularly "easy" to fight a well-funded mass-marketing and mass-media agenda, either. So, why would I go against the grain, and fight the inevitable? Because, it's simply the *right* thing to do. And, if you ask any skateboarder if keeping skateboarding in the hands of fellow skaters, and determining our own fate is the *right* thing to do? They're "probably" gonna tell you the same exact thing that I just did.

The people that have taken up the cause of "rescuing skateboarding from ourselves," in the name of "watching out for our vested interests," and for the benefit of some contrived, self-serving "greater good," are going to find themselves with the mother of all battles on their hands soon enough. Just to be absolutely clear here, I'd like to reiterate: If you thought the snowboarders were difficult and uncooperative, you just wait until you piss off the entirety of skateboarding. So, what's the answer then? The machine is already in motion, and I doubt that there is very little that anyone can do to stop it, at this point. Stopping it, however, would probably be the best outcome, of course. Maybe the popular sentiment of "Fuck The Olympics, Leave Skateboarding Alone" should be taken up, and made into a quick reality. Maybe those that have taken on the dubious title of "skateboarding's non-skateboarding spokespeople" should just give it a rest, and give it up. Maybe, skateboarding should be put right back into the hands of the people that care about it, and its future, the most: Actual Skateboarders.

Anything short of that would be a ready-made recipe for the harshest and fiercest Olympic Boycott that the world has ever seen. That is definitely something that the IOC and USAS do not want to risk. Not at this time. And, definitely, not with this "sport."

Consider yourselves warned.

Bud Stratford is a freelance writer/skater who has written several articles on skateboarding. He can be contacted at budstratford@aol.com.