

**The Matchless Six**  
**The Story of Canada's First Women's Olympic Team**  
Written by Ron Hotchkiss



**Category:** Juvenile Nonfiction - Sports & Recreation - Olympics; Juvenile Nonfiction - Sports & Recreation - Track & Field; Juvenile Nonfiction - Biography & Autobiography - Sports & Recreation

**Imprint:** Tundra Books

**Format:** Trade Paperback

**Pub Date:** February 2006

**Age:** 11 UP

**Trim Size:** 7 x 9

**# of Pages:** 200 pages

**ISBN:** 978-0-88776-738-8 (0-88776-738-9)

**CDN Price:** \$22.99 / **US Price:** \$16.95

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

It is July 1928, and Canada's first women's Olympic team – "The Matchless Six" – is heading to Amsterdam, the site of the ninth Olympiad of the modern era. Canada's finest female track-and-field athletes, having survived rigorous training and the grueling selection process at the Olympic Trials, are determined to take their big talent and big dreams to the top. Meet Jane Bell, Myrtle Cook, Bobbie Rosenfeld, and Ethel Smith, the "Flying Four" who comprised Canada's first relay team; Ethel Catherwood, the "Saskatoon Lily," who became the champion high-jumper and the most photographed female athlete at the Olympic Games; and Jean Thompson, the youngest member of the team at seventeen, who became one of the world's most outstanding middle-distance runners. It was an impressive achievement.

For many years, historian Ron Hotchkiss has been fascinated by "The Matchless Six," the conquering heroines who took Amsterdam by storm. His extensive research has led to this riveting account, full of black-and-white archival photographs, of the events leading up to and following that fateful summer in the history of Canadian sport.

## ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

Ron Hotchkiss is a retired high-school history teacher with a passion for research and a particular interest in twentieth century Canadian history. His involvement with the "Matchless Six" began while researching an article on Ethel Catherwood for *The Beaver: Canada's History Magazine*. That early research spawned many other articles and interviews and two documentaries. Ron Hotchkiss has published numerous articles

about Canadian history and does regular presentations to school groups and historical associations. This is his first book.

## TEACHING IDEAS

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

#### LANGUAGE ARTS

Are women's sports and women athletes treated differently in the sports pages of newspapers and sports magazines?

For one week, have students study the sports pages of their local newspaper and a national newspaper. Ask them to make note of the following:

- a. the number of articles that appear about women as compared to men;
- b. how long the articles about sportswomen and women's sports are compared to those about men;
- c. the subject of the articles;
- d. who wrote the article — male or female.

Is sports reporting regarded as a male occupation? If so, why is that? Is there a problem if only men report on sports?

#### HISTORY

How and why did attitudes toward women in sports change between 1900 and 1920? Ask students to study the cartoons on pages 27 and 43 and make notes on a chart such as the one provided below. Afterward, ask the class to consider the following:

- a. Are there more similarities or more differences between the two pictures?
- b. What are the most obvious differences between the two pictures?
- c. What might account for changes in attitudes between 1900 and 1920?
- d. How did women's roles in society change during the same time period?

Have women's sports, opportunities for women in sports, and attitudes toward women athletes changed? Have the students interview their mothers, grandmothers, or other older women about their experiences and recollections of women in sports.

Sample questions may include the following:

- a. What sports did they play when they were younger?
- b. Was this a positive or negative experience for them?
- c. How many sports were available to them as young women as compared with those available today?
- d. What is their opinion about women and sport today (the Canadian women's Olympic hockey team, for example)?
- e. What are their views about gender equality in sport? (Are women athletes given the same recognition as males and celebrated as much today? Why or why not?)

#### GEOGRAPHY

Hosting the Olympic Games — only a few need apply. Why? On a map of the world have students locate and mark all the cities that have hosted a modern Summer Olympic Games. (This information is available at [www.olympic.org](http://www.olympic.org).) Next, have them note the following:

- a. How many times have the Summer Olympics been held on each continent?
- b. Which continents have never held a Summer Olympics?
- c. Why might this be?
- d. How and why are the Olympic Games awarded to host cities?

## MATHEMATICS

How physically fit are the students in your class? Divide the class into groups of four to six students. Have each group design a survey with questions that gather information about:

- a. TV viewing
- b. Computer or video game time
- c. Organized sport participation
- d. Unstructured physical activity
- e. Family physical activity

Each group should decide on a consistent unit of measurement in which to record their results (minutes per day, hours per day, or hours per week, for example). Each group should administer their survey to two or three other groups in the class. They must determine the most appropriate way to record their results then present their findings to the class using a chart or graph. What do their surveys of a sampling of the class suggest about the overall fitness of the class?

## BEYOND THE BOOK

### WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE OLYMPIC GAMES?

Are you a medal winner? Test your Olympic trivia knowledge with this quiz to see if you can make it to the podium.

#### A. OLYMPIC HISTORY

1. The modern Olympics began in the year
  - a. 1892.
  - b. 1896.
  - c. 1900.
  - d. 1904.
  
2. The first Olympic Games of the modern era were held in
  - a. Athens.
  - b. Brussels.
  - c. London.

d. Paris.

3. The founder of the modern Olympics was

- a. Henri de Baillet-Latour.
- b. Lord Rochdale.
- c. Pierre de Coubertin.
- d. Eminem.

4. The nationality of the person in question #3 was

- a. American.
- b. Australian.
- c. Belgian.
- d. French.

5. The number of years between each Olympic Games is

- a. two.
- b. four.
- c. six.
- d. eight.

6. The first winter Olympics were held in

- a. Chamonix, France.
- b. London, England.
- c. St. Louis, U.S.
- d. Stockholm, Sweden.

7. The year the first winter Olympics were held was

- a. 1920.
- b. 1924.
- c. 1928.
- d. 1932.

8. Match the city (on the left) with the year (on the right) in which the summer Olympics were held in that city.

- a. Barcelona1936
- b. Berlin1948
- c. London1976
- d. Montreal1992
- e. Sydney2000

## B. THE OLYMPICS — PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

9. The country that has held the most summer Olympics is

- a. France.
- b. Great Britain.
- c. Greece.

d. United States.

10. The number of times the country in question #9 has held the summer Olympics is

- a. three.
- b. four.
- c. five.
- d. six.

11. The two continents that have never held an Olympic Games are

- a. Africa and Europe.
- b. Africa and Asia.
- c. North America and Asia.
- d. Africa and South America.

12. The 2004 summer Olympics were held in the city of

- a. Athens.
- b. Atlanta.
- c. Moscow.
- d. Rio de Janeiro.

13. The 2006 winter Olympics were held in the city of

- a. Helsinki, Finland.
- b. Oslo, Norway.
- c. St. Moritz, Switzerland.
- d. Turin, Italy.

14. The 2008 summer Olympics will be held in the city of

- a. Beijing, China.
- b. London, England.
- c. New York City, U.S.
- d. Paris, France.

15. The city that was awarded the 2012 summer Olympics was

- a. Istanbul, Turkey.
- b. London, England.
- c. New York City, U.S.
- d. Paris, France.

16. The number of times the city in question #15 has held the Olympic Games is

- a. none.
- b. one.
- c. two.
- d. three.

C. CANADIAN OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS

17. Match the Canadian gold medalists (on the left) with the year of the Olympic Games (on the right) when they won their medals. If you can correctly identify their sports, give yourself one bonus mark for each correct answer.

- a. Donovan Bailey1908
- b. Sylvie Bernier1928
- c. Robert Kerr1884
- d. Simon Whitfield1996
- e. Percy Williams2000

### SCORES

To calculate your score, add up the total number of correct answers for questions 1 to 17. In part C, give yourself a bonus point each time you correctly identified the athlete's sport. Check the chart below to see if you've earned a medal.

23-24 points = gold medal winner

20-22 points = silver medal winner

17-19 points = bronze medal winner