

A Surprising Discovery

► I was so excited to be going to the winter Olympic Games. Some of my earliest memories were of watching Olympic skaters glide beautifully over the ice. Finally, I would have the chance to watch them in person.

I was packing my bags when Mom came into my room.

“I have some bad news,” she said. “There are no tickets available for any ice skating events. In fact, tickets for most events are gone. I did get tickets for one event, though. It’s a new event called curling.”

I was very disappointed, but I was also curious. Curling? What was that? It sounded like something I might do to my hair!

Soon, we left for the airport, but I was still a little sad. I couldn’t believe I was finally going to the Olympics, but wouldn’t get to see the skaters. Dad assured me I would enjoy curling, but I didn’t quite believe him.

We checked into our hotel and then set out for the stadium. It was chilly, and had an icy floor with a large target in the center. As the games started, teams of four people worked together to guide a large granite stone toward the target. Before long, I was caught up in the excitement of the games. I had found a favorite team and was thrilled when they did well.

I was in much better spirits as we left the curling match. We were in a beautiful place, a soft snow was falling, and there were going to be plenty of fun things to keep us busy. I might not be able to see the Olympic skaters in person, but I could put on my own ice skates and try out the frozen pond nearby. It was turning into a great trip after all.

A Day for a Shadow Dance

► All night long, the wind howled and the rain poured down. Gopher woke to the sound of thunder rumbling. She looked out of her burrow at the big raindrops splashing on the ground. “It’s another rainy day,” she groaned. “When will I ever be able to run and play with my friends again?”

Gopher crawled deeper into her burrow and began digging a new tunnel to pass the time. After a while Gopher could no longer hear the thunder and rain of the storm and she went to sleep.

When she poked her head out of her burrow the next morning, Gopher felt the warm sun on her face. “Yippee!” she shouted as she scurried out into the sunshine. All of the animals were gathered in the meadow.

“Come on, Gopher,” called Rabbit. “The sunshine is back and we can play our sunny day games. I can even see my shadow,” he exclaimed.

Rabbit twitched his ears and watched his shadow. The ears of his shadow twitched in exactly the same way. Gopher was pleased to see that her own plump little shadow was back, too. All of the animals wiggled and waved and watched their shadows move.

“Let’s dance with our shadows to celebrate the sunshine,” suggested Rabbit. He immediately began to dance with his shadow. Gopher joined him, and then all the animals were dancing with their shadows. As they swayed and twirled, their shadows danced along with them. The animal friends danced around the sunny meadow until the sun began to set and

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the shadows faded.

Finally, tired and happy, Gopher said good-bye to her friends and promised to meet them again on the next sunny day. As she headed home, she hoped that tomorrow would be another perfect day for shadow dancing.

A Triple Challenge

► Do you know people who like to do several different sports? If so, a race with three stages or parts might be just the type of athletic event they would enjoy. The race usually begins with a swim and is followed by a bike ride. Finally, it ends with a run. Since there are three parts to the race, an athlete needs to train for all three sports to be successful.

Some people train specifically to compete in this type of race. The best competitors have a plan to help them do well in each part of the event. They know that they must have enough energy to finish each part of the race. That is why training for endurance is so important. Having the strength to go from one sport to the next during the race is the key to getting a good overall time. Moving quickly between the different parts of the race is also important. Races are timed from the moment swimmers jump into the water until they run across the finish line. The clock does not stop when they get out of the water and dry off to get on their bike or when they change their shoes to start running.

The first of these races was held in France more than eighty years ago. The sport didn't really take off, though, until recently. It has grown in popularity and is now an Olympic event. There are many types of races with three stages. The shortest is called a sprint and covers about sixteen miles. The longest type is called an Ironman and is over one hundred miles long. Today, similar races are held all over the world. They even have some for kids. Why not try one?
