

Excerpt: Debi Thomas What Really Happened
By: Carol Denise Mitchell

It's the one thing you all want to know. What happened the night Debi Thomas lost the gold? Talking about intriguing, the superstar with the heart of gold, had yet to give a full answer about how she truly had felt about losing the gold in that special Olympic competition in Calgary, until about 2013. The most Debi previously said about that night, was that she was not supposed to win the gold! In a YouTube video from the *Skating Lesson*, she did not hold back on her feelings about what happened during that life-changing Olympic contest, when Katarina Witt walked away with the gold medal in figure skating.

"I had a long wait," Debi told a reviewer after the competition. She continued, *"I kept trying to tell myself that I could do it, I could do it. It's*

hard when you don't do the first jump," Debi explained. *"I didn't chicken out on anything. It, frankly, was not fun. I wanted to get off the ice; I am not as disappointed as I thought I would be. I must get on with my life now. I feel the most for my coach. He knew I could do it; I knew I could do it for him. All I can say is I am sorry. Maybe I can go to Budapest,"* Debi said, referring to her next competition. It took years for Debi to get into the true details of that loss. As promised, here is the latest explanation that Debi submitted to the world regarding her loss in Calgary, in 1988.

"My coach wanted me to learn repetition; I never believed it. During the Olympics, I was readier than I have ever been for a competition," Debi said, wearing her blue doctor scrubs in a video from YouTube. Debi shifted a minute before finishing the question as Jamie paced through the camera view, needing Debi's attention. I knew Jamie was a problem! *"It was an Achilles'*

heel. I would do intense visualization when I was thirteen. I was in optimization programs. I could pull a program out of my butt by imagining I could do it,” Debi said as

she prepared to answer the question. Jamie interrupted filming again until Debi finished.

“I realized how powerful the brain is; if you say you can do it, you can pull it out. I remember the long program. I used to spend hours pacing. I did not do that at the Olympics. I got out there at the start of the long program. My coach said to do it for America. Instead of getting tough, I got passive. I said maybe your body will do it; you cannot be passive. I learned a lesson that day... you do not want the Olympics to be a learning experience. I messed this up. At home, I could stop the music; I could start over again; it was essential for me, to nail the jumps. I needed to make that happen when it did not happen. I said I got four minutes you know. It was not my favorite event of all time. Now as a surgeon, if a plan does not work, I must stay focused; I do a lot of complex reconstructive surgery. It helps to go through that kind of experience; you cannot risk everything on one endeavor. I did the program every day. I mean, in '86', when I won nationals then worlds, I was not ready, but I had won my international competitions. My Stanford friends were out there drinking. When I won nationals, my roommates acted as if it was no big deal; ‘You always win!’ it was funny. I had never done it before; I wanted a six. I wanted to skate perfectly. I never got a six because I would always mess something up. I was particularly good at not being perfect; I do not know if I would have changed the goal. I would have gone more aggressive, like, you have done the triple-triple in your sleep-in warm-up, I did the jump; I thought maybe my body will do this,” Debi said. As you could tell she was reliving the moment, she described. “Be focused! You have to want to win; once you get into the head of that performer, they will fall apart; psychologically, it's hard to come from behind; it's important in

sports not to take that psychological side for granted; you have the talent; it's mostly psychological strength as a skater," explained Debi.