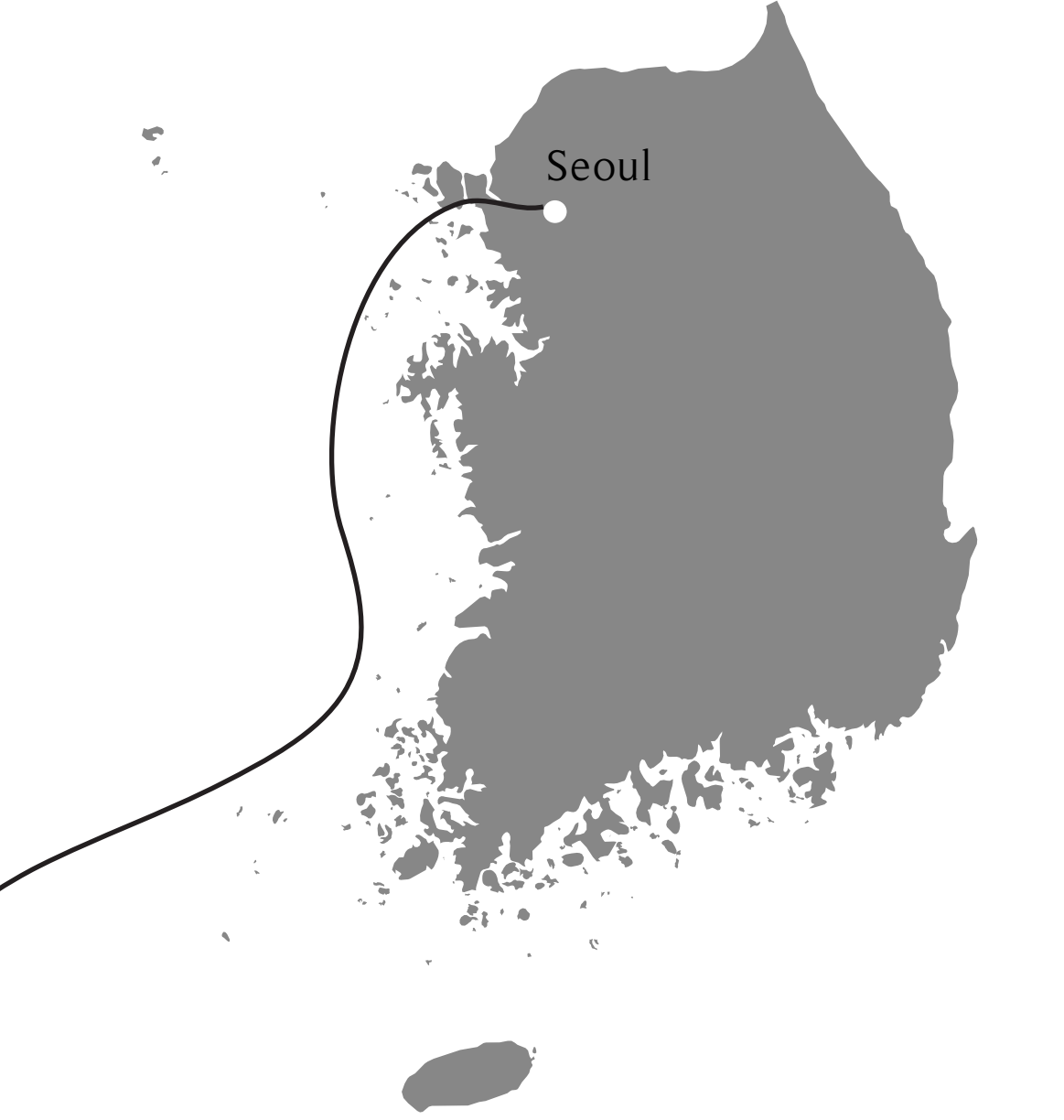


Sports Migration in South Korea

From the perimeter of a small country, South Korean athletes are increasingly entering foreign sports markets. They are becoming more present in the United States and also in European countries in a range of sports: baseball, soccer, golf, figure-skating, gymnastics and archery just to name a few. With the success of various seasons of Olympic games, many young athletes are beginning to move their fates into different countries. They are leaving South Korea to train in order to further develop their skills.



Take a look into Olympic figure-skating champion Yuna Kim. She is the first South Korean female skater to win the Olympic Games, the World Championships, the Four Continents Championships and the Grand Prix Final. In addition, she holds the record for highest combined total score under the International Skating Union judging system.

At the age of 16, Kim went to Canada to train under former Olympic medalist and Canadian, Brian Orser. Kim’s choreographer, David Wilson, is also Canadian.

Ice Rinks in South Korea are limited, often pushing young figure skaters to travel all over and outside of Seoul in order to practice.



“If I give up my career as a skater simply, because I fear, I won't show my best performance, I would be really sorry later in life.” —Yuna Kim



Especially in figure skating, ice-rink conditions are crucial. Ice rinks throughout Seoul are often public spaces, preventing athletes to have much time in private training sessions. Because public rinks, like that of Lotte World Theme Park, are not designed and maintained for professional athletes, the physical form of skating itself becomes another bump in the road for skaters like Kim.

When training for large competitions, like the Olympics, it is crucial for figure skaters to take in the size and alter their choreography according to the conditions and space provided. Hence, giving reason for athletes like Kim to travel abroad to train in better and larger facilities.

In an interview with CNN, Kim discussed her training experience in South Korea.

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During my early skating years, there were not many ice rinks in Korea and even the few rinks that existed, most of them were public. Even now, when athletes want to practice, they have to use the rink very early [in the] morning or late at night.

Also, as there aren't enough ice rinks to facilitate all the figure skating teams, skaters often have to train in different rinks from day to day. Furthermore, as most rinks are too cold, there is always high possibility of injury. As there were no rinks for competitive figure skaters, I found it most difficult to carry on a normal day life as I had to train very early in the morning and late at night.

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