
THE VALLEY EAST SKATING CLUB



<http://www.vesc.ca>

MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

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VALLEY EAST FIGURE SKATING CLUB

INTRODUCTION

Many people belong to skating clubs for some time before they fully understand how their club operates. This handbook has been prepared as a guide for all members and to help newcomers and their parents become acquainted with figure skating and our organization. We hope you will find it a useful reference throughout the skating season. If everyone knows how the Club operates, many misunderstandings can be avoided.

Getting information to all the members within a short time can be very difficult. Please be sure to read your monthly newsletter, check the Club bulletin board frequently and visit our web site at <http://www.yesc.ca> . Feel free to contact the appropriate Board of Directors Chairperson if you have any suggestions or questions.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to a new skating season. We know you will have an enjoyable year learning about skating and making new friends! Our new season is exciting, with lots of changes, new programs and special events. The Board has been working hard during the summer months on ideas that will make your skating year full of fun and new experiences.

Our Programs Feature:

- ~ An extended season, beginning in September and finishing at the end of April
- ~ Canskate
- ~ Pre-Junior Junior
- ~ Intermediate Senior
- ~ Power Skating

Special Events Include:

- ~ Halloween
- ~ Christmas
- ~ End of Year
- ~ Carnival caps off our season with a spectacular entertaining event on ice.
- ~ There are many more surprises...Please read your newsletter and bulletin board and visit our web site at <http://www.vesc.ca> .

We have the best professional staff in the area, and a lot of hardworking volunteers, but that doesn't mean that we can't improve. If you have any ideas or suggestions for future activities, please contact one of the Board members. New, exciting, invigorating and entertaining....these are the keywords that will motivate our Club-our skaters, our coaches, our executive and our volunteers!

CLUB COACHING STAFF

DEBBIE MOYLE

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HOW YOUR BOARD WORKS FOR YOU

Our Board of Directors is a team of hardworking, dedicated parents who donate their time, effort, experience and expertise in a variety of ways to benefit ALL members of our Club.

Each Board member has made a commitment to assist in the management of our Club for a minimum of one year. They receive no remuneration or concessions for their contributions. They do it for the skaters and for the good feeling that comes with helping out.

Should you have any questions during the year, or if you would like to help out in some way, please feel free to contact the Board member responsible for your particular area of interest. See the current Board list for members' names.

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

PRESIDENT - Head of the Executive. informed in all areas of club management, responsible for seeing that all committees run smoothly.

PAST PRESIDENT - Acts in advisory capacity for the President.

VICE-PRESIDENT - Represents the President in his/her absence, takes over as President the following year.

SECRETARY - Handles all Club correspondence, issues notices of Board and General Meetings, files reports required by Skate Canada.

TREASURER - Administers all Club funds, prepares annual budget, keeps records required for an audit, heads Finance Committee which must pre-approve expenditures.

BY-LAWS & POLICIES COMMITTEE - Reviews and updates Club Constitution, Members Handbook, Skaters Code of Conduct and other policy information.

CARNIVAL - Plans and produces our annual Carnival held each spring.

INTERCLUB - Arranges club competitions, prepares club competitors for their participation in Interclub competition.

PRO LIAISON - Acts as liaison between the Board and Professional Coaches.

FUNDRAISING - Looks after fundraising activities within the Club, responsible for Bingos, Tag day and others.

ICE AND FACILITIES - Plans ice requirements. Books ice, hall and other facilities required for sessions, special events and test days. Publicizes schedule changes. Liaison with Leisure Services Department.

CANSKATE, PRE-JR, JUNIOR, INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR PROGRAM COORDINATORS - Organize and supervise the skating sessions.

JUDGES/TESTS - Arranges and supervises all test days. Maintains test records database. Arranges for judges for club tests and competitions. Encourages volunteer training at Accounting and Judges Clinics.

MEMBERSHIP & REGISTRATION - Registers members. Maintains membership database. Co-ordinates volunteers. Reports to Skate Canada.

MUSIC- Arranges for playing of music at all Club sessions and special events. Purchases and maintains equipment and tapes authorized by the Executive.

PUBLICITY- Arranges for club publicity. Publishes monthly newsletter and updates bulletin board. Liaison with local newspapers.

SKATER DEVELOPMENT - Plans and arranges workshops, seminars, and other special training for the development of club skaters. Three member committee includes one coach and one senior skater.

VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT HAPPEN !

WHERE CAN WE FIT YOU IN!

The 5 W's of Volunteers

- * **Who** **Parents, Grandparents, Business People, Skaters, Program Assistants**
- * **What** **Your talents, your energy, your experience**
- * **When** **A few hours a month, or more if you like**
- * **Where** **In your home or at the arena**
- * **Why** **New experiences, helping your child, self-fulfilment**

Volunteers are a vital part of our organisation. Without ***YOUR*** help, we would be unable to handle the enormous responsibility of club management. There are lots of interesting things to do. Sitting on one of our Standing Committees is a great way to learn how our club operates.

Your contribution of time, energy and experience will benefit all of our skaters. You'll make new friends and enjoy the tremendous feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. Everyone has experiences they can share. Come on—show us your stuff.

HELPING YOUR CLUB

1. I don't know anything about skating.
2. I don't have time.
3. I don't know anyone at the club.
4. All they have to do is ask.
5. I don't have any talents.
6. My child doesn't want me in the arena.
7. The same people run everything – their way!

Sound familiar? Everyone who has tried to enlist new blood into an organisation has heard one or all of these excuses.

WITHOUT VOLUNTEERS ALL ACTIVITIES DEVOTED TO OUR CHILDREN WOULD COLLAPSE!

Of course, skating clubs are not unique in this situation. Guides and Brownies, Scouts and Cubs, Minor Hockey, Baseball, Lacrosse, etc. - all are experiencing the same problems – too many jobs for too few hands!

The frustrating part of this problem is that skating clubs have so many jobs that require no preparation, no equipment, no experience – just your time, one or two hours a week (even once a month) could make all the difference!

Think back to the last time you sat through your child's session. You probably took it for granted that the children found their designated patches, the music started when free skating began, dance music was played during dance session, and someone was near the gate to deter skaters from leaving the ice to administer some "TLC" after a fall. Did you receive calls regarding time changes, test days, cancelled sessions, etc? Someone had to make them and the buddy system (I call you and you call five) reduces a horrendous list to a more manageable job for several people. Another little job – no experience required – but essential to the smooth operation of your club.

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Back to the beginning:

1. Playing the music is a great way to learn the dances.
2. One or two hours a month? Come on!

3. Phoning is an easy way to meet other parents.
4. They can't ask you if they don't know you.
5. Helping a child onto the ice is a talent?
6. You may be pleasantly surprised.
7. This is a toughie – but I like to think this happens when it's easier to “do it themselves” than trying to get others to help. A few voluntary offers just might bring about the necessary changes.

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

1. A caring parent
2. An interested parent
3. A fair parent
4. A dependable parent

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

A great deal of the success of any skating club is dependent on an enlightened, active and communicative volunteer system. There is a lot to learn when you decide to become an active volunteer in a Club, but help is never very far away. Many seminars and courses are held to give parents and volunteers lots of information and guidance.

Accountants' Clinics help interested parents and skaters to interpret the results of a competition. More in-depth clinics are given to train those who would like to become Competition Accountants.

Judges' Clinics are held regularly to train skaters and parents to become Judges and Evaluators.

FOR INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS, PLEASE CONTACT ANY MEMBER OF THE BOARD

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Volunteers are very special dedicated people who give their energies and talents freely - never expecting to receive awards for it. However, the Club, Section and Skate Canada have developed a series of awards intended to recognize the efforts of our volunteers.

Each Section of the Skate Canada selects one nominee in each of the following categories from nominations received from its member clubs: Skater of the Year, Canskate/Pre-Junior Award, Volunteer of the Year, Special Achievement Award, and Club Award. Recipients of the Coaches Award, Judges Award, Accountants Award and the Elizabeth Swan Memorial Award are nominated by their peers - Section Coaches, Judges, Accountants, and Synchronized Skating Committees respectively.

Nominees from our club are honoured at our year-end banquet.

Nominees selected by the Section are honoured guests at the Section AGM. In addition, their nominations are forwarded to the Skate Canada. Recipients of Skate Canada awards are guests at a Banquet at the national AGM.

POLICY FOR SKATERS' AWARDS & TROPHIES

Eligibility:

To qualify for any of the awards you must be an amateur skater registered with the Valley East Skating Club. Skaters' eligibility is based on where the skater registered at the first of the year, not at their level at the end of the year.

Qualifications:

Junior – must have passed at least one (1) Preliminary dance

Intermediate – must have passed all Preliminary Dance tests

Senior – must have passed Junior Bronze Free Skate and Senior Bronze dances

Criteria for Dance Awards:

The first criteria for awarding the highest level passed is completing a set of dances. If a second determining factor is required, then it will be based on which skater passed the most dances at that level.

Presentations:

Will be made at the annual banquet at the end of the skating season.

Time Frame:

The time frame for eligibility is roughly from May 1st to April 30th

SKATERS' AWARDS & TROPHIES

HIGHEST DANCE – PRE-JUNIOR

This award is given to the PreJunior skater who has passed the highest dance test. More than one skater may be eligible for this award.

HIGHEST DANCE - JUNIOR

This award is given to the Junior skater who has passed the highest dance test. More than one skater may be eligible for this award.

HIGHEST DANCE - INTERMEDIATE

This award is given to the Intermediate skater who has passed the highest dance test. More than one skater may be eligible for this award.

HIGHEST DANCE

This award is given to the skater who has passed the highest dance test. More than one skater may be eligible for this award.

PRELIMINARY TESTS

This award is given to the youngest skater who has passed all the preliminary tests, according to the age of the skater.

JUNIOR BRONZE

This award is given to any skater who has passed the Junior Bronze Dances as well as all of

the Junior Bronze Free Skate. More than one skater may be eligible for this award.

Each of the above recipients will have their name engraved on the club trophies and will also be given a small souvenir trophy.

GOLD TESTS – SPECIAL AWARDS

An award will be given to any skater who passes any of the Gold Tests. Any dances higher than the Gold will be acknowledged by the board.

SKATER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Please respect the authority of the Professional Coaches and the rights of other skaters.
2. Please keep noise to a minimum, as it is distracting to other skaters.
3. Chasing games are allowed only under coaches' supervision.
4. Food, drinks and gum are not allowed on ice. Water bottles will be permitted at the players' bench.
5. Only authorised persons and skaters may enter the ice surface. Boots are **NOT ALLOWED** on the ice at **ANY** time.
6. Skate guards must be worn in the lobby at all times.
7. Discipline problems will be dealt with by the Session Supervisor on duty or by the Professional Coaches. Offenders may be asked to leave the ice.
8. Music room is out-of-bounds to all except those authorized by the Music Chairperson to play music. Every effort will be made to play a skater's solo music at least once per session. Skaters are requested to refrain from asking for their music. Rotating solo lists are posted in the music room.
9. Parents are requested **NOT** to interrupt or speak to the instructors while on ice.
10. TESTS
 - a) All test applications must be approved by the skater's coach before that skater may try a test.
 - b) Test applications and fees should be turned in to the Test Chairperson or private coach one week prior to test day. No tests will be permitted if amounts due to the club are unpaid.
11. Only club members are allowed to compete in Club and Interclub competitions.

12. It is your responsibility to watch the Bulletin Board and Newsletters for possible ice schedule changes.
13. There is a per-session guest skater fee for Freeskate or Dance as noted in the current Fees Schedule.
14. Please do not leave money or valuables unattended in the dressing rooms.

RECREATIONAL SKATING PROGRAMS

CANSKATE

- ~ Learn to Skate program for children 4 years of age and up
- ~ FUN program in an enjoyable learning environment
- ~ Combines small groups, music, warm-up exercises, and group instruction

PRE-JUNIOR

- ~ Recreational figure skating program taught in group lesson format that introduces the skater to skills, free skating, dancing, stroking and precision skating
- ~ Provides skill awards (badges) so participants can measure their progress

JUNIOR

- ~ Must have passed at least one (1) Preliminary Dance
- ~ Group lessons in Freeskate, Stroking and Primary Dances
- ~ Group stroking and Edges provided
- ~ Private and semi-private coaching is available. **Parents are responsible for arranging and paying the coach of their choice.**

INTERMEDIATE

- ~ Must have passed Preliminary Dances
- ~ Group stroking and Edges provided
- ~ Private and semi-private coaching is available. **Parents are responsible for arranging and paying the coach of their choice.**

SENIOR

- ~ Must have passed the complete Junior Bronze Freeskate.
- ~ Group stroking and Edges provided
- ~ Private and semi-private coaching is available. **Parents are responsible for arranging and paying the coach of their choice.**

THOSE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE SKATING TERMS

FREESKATING is a term applied to such movements in skating as jumps, spins, spirals, etc. It is quite separate from dance and requires separate lessons. With respect to free skating, it isn't only what movements a skater can perform (technical) that counts, but the way the movements are performed (artistic). There are five free skating tests: Preliminary, Junior Bronze, Senior Bronze, Junior Silver, Senior Silver and Gold.

STROKING is a push-off and glide sequence used to build speed and endurance in freeskating.

Figure skating is defined in terms of "**EDGES**". The bottom of a figure skating blade is ground into the shape of a hollow arc, and the "points" of the arc are what actually touch the ice. These "points" are called edges, and each skate blade has 2 of them -- the "inside edge", and the "outside edge". On the skater's left foot, the right side of the blade would be the "inside edge" (the inside of the foot).

In **DANCE**, a couple skates together in various dance positions. For good progress, separate lessons are required, as in free skating. Unfortunately, most clubs have too few boys. Dances have a set pattern to music that is of a specified type and tempo. For test purposes, these are divided into seven Dance tests: Preliminary (Dutch Waltz, Canasta Tango, Baby Blues), Junior Bronze (Swing Dance, Fiesta Tango, Willow Waltz), Senior Bronze (Ten-Fox, Fourteen-step, European), Junior Silver (Keats Foxtrot, Harris Tango, American Waltz, Rocker Foxtrot), Senior Silver (Paso Doble, Starlight, Blues, Kilian) Gold (Viennese Waltz, Westminster Waltz, Quickstep, Argentine Tango) and Diamond (Tango Romantico, Ravensburger Waltz, Yankee Polka, Rumba...) There are also Interpretative (Silver and Gold), Bronze Rhythm, and Variation dance tests (for quite advanced skaters).

PAIR SKATING is performed by a couple who skate in unison. They may not perform all the same moves, but they give the impression that they are in harmony with one another. In contrast to Dance, Pairs Skating has lifts and jumps. There are five Pair Skating tests: Juvenile Pre-Novice, Novice, Junior and Senior.

SYNCHRONIZED SKATING involves a team of twelve or more skaters performing various group manoeuvres and formations in a synchronized routine set to music. The skaters may be male and/or female and the music may be vocal or instrumental.

ARTISTIC skating emphasizes skating to a theme and musical interpretation. There are four tests: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Masters.

FOURS is a team of four skaters representing the club at Interclub competition. Each skater performs a different skill and is then scored with the highest team total winning.

SKATING INSTRUCTION

GROUP LESSONS

Group instruction is provided in the Learn to Skate, Pre-junior, Junior, Intermediate and Senior Programs. These lessons are given by one of the Professional Coaches. Some children learn well in a group, while others do not. If your child is not making as much progress as others are in the group, try to analyze the reason objectively, without putting unreasonable blame on the instructor. Some children are able to do useful practice without supervision right from the start. Others won't practice carefully even when a parent is watching. Try to encourage your child to practice what he or she is taught in the group. Alternatively, you might consider private lessons.

PRIVATE LESSONS

A child at any level can receive private lessons. When your child has mastered the problem of balance, and can stroke freely and evenly, private instruction might be beneficial. The best sign that your child is ready for private lessons is when he or she is trying to copy what the more advanced skaters are doing. A child will improve at a much faster pace with private lessons than without. Private or semi-private lessons must be arranged with the Coach of your choice. Fees are paid directly to the coaches upon receipt of their statements. Feel free to discuss your child's progress with his or her professional coach. Generally, a fair number of private lessons are required to prepare for Skate Canada Tests.

CHOOSING A COACH

All coaches are different: in qualifications, ideas, methods and interests. Watch the coaches as they work on ice (their enthusiasm and that of their students). Once you've narrowed the choices to one or two coaches, ask around. Do they encourage competition and trying tests? Do the kids like him or her? What about the fees? When you've made a choice, speak to the coach personally, giving them as much information about your child as it relates to skating. Good communication is essential. It helps the coach in dealing with the child and the skater learns faster. Consider yourselves a team - Skater, Coach and Parents. Together establish goals that are attainable and don't be afraid to ask questions.

PROGRAM ASSISTANTS

Skating clubs rely greatly on the co-operation and assistance of their volunteer Program Assistants. These skaters are trained to assist with the instruction of Canskate, Pre-Junior and Junior members. Their role is that of leader, model and counsellor - they must be reliable and punctual. Program Assistants must be knowledgeable about and able to demonstrate the Canskate, Pre-Junior and Junior Skills. They must be able to deal effectively with skaters, other coaches and club officials.

SKATE CANADA BADGE AND TEST PROGRAMS

CANSKATE / PRE-JUNIOR BADGE TESTING

CANSKATE members are evaluated on a day-to-day basis, and no formal testing is required. As in CanSkate, PRE-JUNIOR members are continually evaluated. Members of this group may also take the Skate Canada Tests, if they meet the requirements set out below.

In Canskate and Pre-Junior, each badge requires several separate skills. A skater is not eligible for his or her badge until all parts are passed. The professional coaches will award badges during the sessions, upon completion of all elements of the badge level.

SKATE CANADA TESTING

From time to time the club holds Skate Canada Test Days. When your child is ready to take such a test, the Professional coach submits his or her name. The coach is the best judge as to whether your child is or is not ready. Only Skate Canada members may take these tests. Generally, there is no regular skating on Test Day. A test fee, set by the Skate Canada, must be paid before the skater goes on the ice. It is forwarded to the Association by the club's Judges/Test Chairperson.

All skating tests are administered by an Evaluator. All are amateurs who give their time and experience without remuneration, although a travel allowance is paid to out-of-town evaluators. Skaters are required to show decorum when in the presence of evaluator and may not challenge his or her decision. On successfully completing a Test, a certificate is issued. Badges or Pins may be ordered through the Judges/Test chairperson.

TEST STREAM OR COMPETITIVE STREAM

If a child has dreams of going to Canadians or of representing his or her country at the Olympics, he or she must be in the competitive stream of skaters. Skaters have a choice when they pass the fourth figure and senior bronze freeskate or, for dancers, all junior silver dances. They may remain in the test stream, where they will continue to be tested under Skate Canada criteria as they improve their skating ability. Alternatively, they may choose to go 'competitive'. The skater's coach will help make this decision. Much depends on the skater's ability, drive and aspirations. It's a major step in a figure skater's career. A very low percentage of skaters are in the competitive stream. Only the top skaters choose this path.

THE SKATE CANADA TEST AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

HOW SKATERS ARE EVALUATED

Judges have been trained as evaluators and under the Evaluation System, a single evaluator observes and decides whether the skater's ability to perform various skills is 'excellent, good, satisfactory, or needs improvement'. A skater needs to obtain a specific number of check marks in the satisfactory to excellent range to successfully complete the test. Positive and immediate feedback is given to the candidate. The Evaluation System focuses on the positive-how well a skater performs a skill.

CHANGES TO TEST CONTENTS

Free skating Tests consist of two parts:

1. Elements in Isolation
2. Program to Music

Each part is marked separately, and re-tries are only necessary on the unsuccessful part.

As for the Dance Tests, skaters must have passed all dances in one level before trying one in the next.

INTERCLUB COMPETITION AND CHAMPIONSHIP

The Sudbury Region Interclub is made up of 16 clubs in a geographically adjacent area. On a rotational basis, we host the Interclub Competition every 4 years. The member clubs are determined by our 'Section', The Northern Ontario Section of Skate Canada. It is the sanctioning body for all tests and competitions held within its boundaries.

Skaters who qualify for the *Sudbury Interclub Competition* are encouraged to use the additional practice ice that is provided through the Club. Schedules will be posted on the Club's bulletin board and in the newsletter when this extra ice is available.

A Parent/Skater Orientation is held, usually 6 weeks prior to the Competition, for those skaters who are competing for the first time. We discuss what skaters will experience as they take part in what may be their first away-from-home competition. Topics include how to dress, protocol and so on.

Participants will compete with skaters from all sixteen-member clubs. Those who place 1st, 2nd or 3rd at the Interclub will receive medals, whereas 4th, 5th and 6th receive ribbons. The winners of Preliminary Freeskate and up in each final event will qualify for the ***Northern Ontario Sectional Interclub Championships*** which are held in March. All Section Interclubs are represented at these Championships. From there, final event winners will compete later that same month at the ***Ontario Interclub Championships***.

OTHER AREA COMPETITIONS

Skaters who wish to compete in other competitions beside InterClub have many opportunities to do so during the year. Arrangements can be made with the skater's coach to enter any of the below competitions.

Powassin

Skokie Skate (Huntsville)

Santa Skate (Port Carling)

Make It A Date (North Bay)

Island Skate (Manitoulin)

Let's Skate (Sudbury)

SKATING EQUIPMENT – A BUYER’S GUIDE

Children's skates

Every parent has had the experience of buying shoes or other clothing for a growing child and having them no longer fit after only a few weeks -- and not due to shrinkage, but due to a growth spurt. Unfortunately, feet grow erratically, and the growth is not always accompanied by an increase in height.

If you buy children's skates too loose, they will interfere with the skating and may actually be dangerous due to the lack of support. They may also repeatedly raise blisters. If you buy them too small, or have your skater continue to skate in them for some time after they have become too small, either the skater will quit (because it hurts so much), or the skating will suffer, OR the feet will suffer -- perhaps permanently.

To check the fit of the skates your child has now, ask him to put his skates on loose and put his foot right to the front of the boot. If you can put an index finger between his heel and the back of the boot, he has enough room to grow. When he skates, check to see if his skates are perfectly upright.

The only way to lessen the cost of keeping children's feet in skates that fit is to buy used skates (on consignment, or at skate swaps), and to sell your outgrown skates as well. Used children's skates are very available and usually in far better shape than used adult skates. Get the children's coach to help you select them, (and yours, too, if you go that route) so that you don't get stung.

For Advanced Skaters - Buying Boots

The first thing you'll notice at the skate shop is that boots and blades are sold separately. The boots you need must be stiff enough to prevent most lateral motion (ankle flopping!) but must still allow flexing of your ankle, enough to let you bend your knees deeply while skating. For comfort, the boots should also conform somewhat to your feet. The only material that really fits the bill is thick leather; the plastic of department store skates doesn't even come close. With new boots the flexibility at the ankle will develop as you begin to wear them (an important part of "breaking in" your skates - more about that later.) Old boots can become so heavily creased at the ankle that they no longer provide support (they've "broken down"). The better the boots you buy, the longer they'll last without breaking down, so look at good boots as an investment. In any event, your boots should be stiff enough at least to support their own weight if you grab them by the cuff and turn them upside down.

Additional support can be had with thicker leather and with internal steel stiffeners, all at higher cost. More expensive skates also have other features that add to comfort, support, and injury protection, e.g. leather linings and padding of the tongue and areas around the foot. Especially useful are built-in Achilles' tendon pads that cushion on either side of the tendon.

None of this expensive support is much good if your skates are too big. Filling up oversized skates with thick socks will lose your support since your foot can still slip inside the boot. Your boots should be large enough to let you wiggle your toes, but decidedly snug through instep and heel while wearing thin socks (e.g., the weight of tights). Note that to keep your feet warm in figure skates, you add insulation to the outside of your boots - boot covers are available in a wide range of materials.

The best way for a beginner to achieve a proper fit is to seek out a skate shop with a good reputation. Be prepared to buy boots one to one-and-a-half sizes smaller than your street shoes - that's what it takes to get the snug fit. Ask the salesman for advice on brand of boot if you suspect you have any orthopaedic peculiarities. The styles of different manufacturer's boots are slightly different, and making a careful choice at this point may prevent many problems down the road.

Buying Blades

The blades of good skates are screwed (not riveted!) to the boot soles so that different blades can be attached to meet the particular needs and activities of the skater. Also, this arrangement allows adjustment of the mounting of the blade to provide for individual physical requirements.

Blades are available with modifications for freestyle and dance. For beginners, a pair of the less expensive freestyle blades is a good choice, even if your ultimate goal is ice dance (dance blades are shorter from front to back and present difficulties for the beginner). If you plan to do any jumping, choose blades with a reasonably competent set of toe picks (MK Single Stars or the equivalent). The picks of less expensive skates tend to give you a less secure purchase on the ice during jumps with a toe pick take-off. On the other hand, the wicked-looking picks of the blades designed for advanced skates (e.g. MK Phantoms) are definitely "over-kill" for beginner-intermediate skaters.

Your skate seller will mount the blades for you using only half of the available screw holes on the sole plate. He's not short-changing you; the rest of the screw positions are then available for future positioning adjustments or as alternatives if the original holes become enlarged through wear. Mounting blades correctly takes skill, which is another reason why you should make the effort to find a competent shop.

Care of Your Skates

Always use blade guards when walking around off the ice, or, second best, stick to the rink's rubber matting. Never let your blades contact cement or metal. When you use guards, be sure there is no gritty dirt on the bottoms of your blades or inside the guards.

Water is the enemy. When you take off your skates, wipe boots and blades dry with an old towel. Don't put your guards back on! Instead slip on a pair of terry cloth blade covers. These will wick away moisture that condenses on your cold blades as you move into a warmer environment. Storing your blades in the rubber guards actually encourages corrosion.

After skating, don't stuff your sweaty socks into your skates and seal them all up in your waterproof skate bag to rot until the next weekend. Unpack your skates as soon as possible and leave them to dry out (but not by a heat source!). Treat your boot uppers occasionally with a leather preservative such as Luxol.

IN YOUR SKATING BAG

There are several items that belong in every skater's equipment bag. These include:

- extra mittens or gloves for either the colder weather or when the first pair gets wet
- small towel or cloth to wipe the skate blades after a session on the ice. Never leave your guards on the skates as they cause the blades to rust
- kleenex
- extra sweater for those cold days in January

For the more advanced skaters (Pre-Junior and up):

- keep an ice pack in your skating bag for those bumps and bruises
- "Second Skin" bandages for blisters. They really help eliminate the pain and speed healing
- bubble pad to prevent blisters from forming.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF SPORT INJURIES

*From a lecture by Dr. Robert Brock, Orthopedic Surgeon, Head of the Sports Clinic
At North York General Hospital, Member of the Skate Canada Medical Advisory Board.*

"The best way to get over an injury is to prevent it."

PREVENTATIVE CAUSES OF MOST SPORTS INJURIES

1. Poor preparation-insufficient strength, training fitness and flexibility;
2. Stress/Overuse and Abuse-Stress applied repeatedly creates an alteration in the normal physiological state; the lines between use, overuse and abuse are very indistinct and the onset is gradual in most cases. It is important to assess each child and not to work through their pain.
3. Previous injuries-in ratio to other preventative causes, these seldom relate to a current injury;
4. Equipment failure and the failure to use equipment properly-this includes clothing, ice and skates.

PREVENTATIVE ACTION TO AVOID SPORTS INJURIES

1. Strengthen with on- and off-ice exercises. Muscle imbalance is often a problem for skaters. Exercise sport-specific muscles. Instead of doing a lot, do exercises with efficiency. The adage “No pain, no gain” is wrong. There will be DISCOMFORT, but not PAIN, if stretching is done properly. Slow stretch to sustain action.
2. A skater’s most important piece of equipment is his/her skates. An improper boot fit not only hurts the foot but can cause injury as far up as the hip. Consult coaches when in doubt about fit. REGULAR skate sharpening is essential.
3. Learn the basics well to enhance performance and decrease chance of injury. Try to deflect unnecessary pressure from coaches and parents. Coaches should be able to read signs of fatigue, even in beginners, gradually ease back into program after a period of non-activity.
4. Good habits developed in early stages of sport participation are essential. Spend time in warm-ups.

TREATING OVERUSE SYNDROME

5. Reduce workload, but don’t stop activity.
6. Ice the injured area before and after skating.
7. Stretch muscles before and after skating skills (i.e. after 15 minutes of warm-up skating).
8. Strengthen.

TREATING AN INJURY

When injury occurs, immediate on-the-spot action is a must. What is serious? Is there deformity and swelling? Can it be moved? The body overreacts to injuries and the following steps will minimize this reaction and start the healing process;

1. Rest immediately
2. Ice to minimize swelling (never apply heat).
3. Compress injured area and elevate.
4. Follow up with professional diagnosis. (Coaches may tend to diagnose but might not be the best qualified to do so).

5. Assess and re-assess if the problem continues. Give the doctor a chance to evaluate results, maybe several weeks of trying different things. But if the problem persists certainly ask for a second opinion.
6. During ongoing treatment, continue activity of some sort if skating isn't allowed. Cycling or swimming is good. Coaches should be involved in any reconditioning program from the start. If the skater can't be on ice, he or she should be at the arena, walking through a normal routine.

OFF- ICE FITNESS TRAINING

Figure skating is a very demanding sport. Anyone who wants to become a successful skater should be concerned with physical fitness and conditioning.

In addition to the obvious "skill" requirements of balance, timing, and co-ordination, there is a sizeable "fitness" factor that includes endurance, strength, power and flexibility.

Cardiovascular endurance is important because a skater must be able to work continuously for a least a two minute period and often for as long as five minutes (for tests and competitions) and/or practice for extended periods of time.

Muscular endurance, the ability to resist muscular fatigue, is important to skating performance and for prolonged training sessions. When learning skills, one must often perform many repetitions of a single movement.

Strength is the ability of a muscle to exert force against resistance. Strength can be increased by repeated loading a muscle and accompanied by an increase in girth of muscle (hypertrophy). Strength can decrease by disuse of muscles (atrophy). Increasing one's strength will often increase the level of performance and, conversely, skating should increase one's strength. A stronger skater has less chance of injury. Skills may be learned more easily by a stronger skater.

Speed, endurance and power are, to a certain extent, dependent on strength. **Power** is a combination of strength and speed. It is the rate of doing work. Strength stands only for the ability to do work and speed stands for the quickness of doing work. To perform work quickly requires power.

Basic skating requires strength, but stroking requires power. Power is the predominant physical attribute displayed in figure skating. Most free skating skills depend on this quality in that the skater must move the body or body parts quickly, thus requiring strength and speed simultaneously. Jumps, push-offs and stroking require good leg power.

Flexibility is a quality that is joint specific, that is, a person may be very flexible in one set of joints (hips) but not so in another set (shoulders). Flexibility can be acquired. Young children are generally flexible due to their play activities, but flexibility decreases with age and lack of specific training. A full range of joint mobility is necessary for graceful, rhythmical, aesthetic

movements in skating. Good flexibility decreases injuries and contributes to a better physical condition.

Conditioning is any physical activity that places stress on the body to produce changes in fitness level. Conditioning results when exercise is repeated over a period of time at an intensity adequate to result in change. Such activities will cause the body to adapt or change to meet the increased workload. A person will maintain his or her present level or even weaker than this level, if there is insufficient training stimulus over a period of time.

Conditioning work can be done both on and off ice. Because of the limitations of ice time, it is wise to do the bulk of the work off-ice so that ice time can be devoted to skill practice.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE FITNESS

1. Endurance: Running, cycling, skipping, stroking (any activity that elevates the heart rate to 150 bpm) for at least 20 minutes, three times a week);
2. Strength: Callisthenics (sit-ups, pushups), weight training (any activity in which a muscle must exert force against a resistance).
3. Power: Stair running, bench jumping, depth jumping, weight training (any activity that requires short burst of near maximum effort);
4. Flexibility: Active stretching, passive stretching (any activity that increases the range of motion of a joint).

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