

# *Peninsula Speed Skating Club*

## *New Members' Guide*

Fall 2012



*Special Thanks To Our 2011-2012 Sponsors*



## 1. What is Speed Skating

Skating is one of the oldest winter sports. Ancient bone skates from Finland date to 5,000 years ago. Of course, we don't know if people raced each other on those skates, but I can easily imagine kids using the skates ("Sure you can use them, but I need them back in an hour for my hunting trip.") and trying to outdo one another.

We do know, however, that the first "official" speed skating race took place in 1763 on the Fens in England and covered roughly 24 km. Canada's first recorded race is said to have been in 1854 on the St. Lawrence River when three army officers raced from Montreal to Quebec.

Speed skating made its debut at the Olympics in 1924 in Chamonix, France. Thirty-one skaters from ten countries competed in the 500 m, 1500 m, 5000 m, 10,000 m and All-round. Results were lopsided: Finland took 8 medals, Norway 7, and the US took the remaining 1.

Short track speed skating was often practiced in North America in the 1900s — partly due to the fact that hockey rinks are so much easier to come by — but it took some time for the sport to become established. While the International Skating Union (ISU) adopted short track in 1967, international competitions were not organized until 1976 and the first world championship was not held until 1981. Short track made its Olympic debut as a demonstration sport in Calgary in 1988 and became a full Olympic sport at the following Olympics in 1992.

### Long Track

Generally referred to simply as speed skating, long track has a longer history than short track and is generally more popular in Europe, particularly in the Netherlands. Due to the size of the ice — 400m long, the same as a running track — there are comparably few rinks. North America has only four indoor long track rinks (Calgary, Milwaukee, Kearns, Utah, and Fort St John, BC).

### Short Track

Short track competitions take place on hockey rinks with an oval of 111.12 m (100 m ovals are sometimes used in kids competitions). In contrast to long track, events skew shorter. At the Olympics, they compete in 500 m, 1000 m, 1500 m, and the relay (5000 m for men, 3000 m for women). At the world championships, racers also compete in 3000 m and an Overall medal is awarded based on individual standings. Short track is dominated by non-traditional long track countries, namely South Korea, China, the US, and Canada. Of the 36 medals awarded at the 2011 World Championships, only five went to other nations (three to Italy and one each to the Netherlands and Germany).

## 2. Peninsula Speed Skating Club

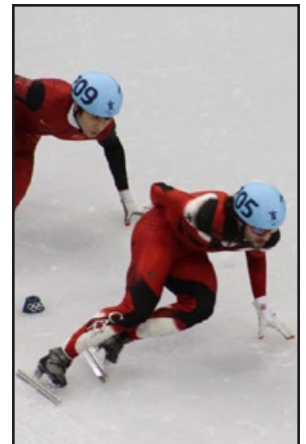
Our club is an all-ages, all-abilities family oriented club with both competitive and recreational members.

### Club History

The Peninsula Speed Skating Club (PSSC) was started in September 2003 by Brenda (Shields) Hennigar. The PSSC hosted its first open house at this time with Olympic long



Canada's Christine Nesbitt won the gold medal at the 2012 world championships in both the 1000 m and 1500 m (long track).



Canada's mens short track team won the 5000 m relay event at the 2010 Olympics and the 2011 & 2012 world championships.

track medalist and world record holder Kevin Overland, who won the bronze medal in the 500m in Nagano. It was standing room only at the rec centre during this event. Since that opening day the PSSC has been honoured to host such great Canadian Olympians as Catriona LeMay Doan (two time Olympic gold medalist), Christina Groves (four time Olympic medalist), and the Canadian National Long Track Team.

## **Coach Bios**

Our club coaches have tremendous experience and knowledge in the sport of speed skating, and our club skaters young and old benefit immensely from this.

### **Ian Hennigar, Head Coach**

Ian's coaching career and accomplishments began over 30 years ago. During this time Ian has coached world record holders, Olympic, and world champions. Ian often says he feels his greatest coaching accomplishments have been at the grass roots club level.

### **Murray Byers, Coach**

Murray has been coaching at the club and provincial level for over 5 years and has been a head coach at the BC Winter Games.

### **Brenda Hennigar, Coach**

Brenda is a three time national long track champion and former national team member. She has been coaching for over 25 years at the club, provincial, and National level. Brenda is the head coach and coordinator for the "On the Edge" school speed skating program.

### **Steven Freer, Jr. Coach**

Steve is our club's Jr. coach. He's been coaching for 3 years at the club level as well as with the school program. Steve is also a skating instructor for Panorama Recreation.

## **How Practices Work and On-ice Safety**

Practices are held in Arena B at the Panorama Rec Centre. When you enter the rink from the main lobby area, turn right and go through the door under the stands to get to the change rooms. (We do not have a designated change room.) Please be sure to give yourself enough time to get into your gear before the start of practice. We only have an hour on the ice, so we need to get practices started promptly. (We don't want to waste expensive ice time sitting in the change room.)

Before practice can start, the safety mats must be in place around the boards. They must first be pulled out of our storage room and brought out near the rink door. It's ideal if this can be done early, so that practice can start on time. Parents' help is most appreciated! As soon as the Zamboni is done, we can go out on the ice and put the mats in place. It's great to have a parent (or two) in shoes who can drag the mats to the door. (But shoes should be kept off the ice because dirt or rocks can be left on the ice, potentially damaging skate blades.)

Once skaters are on the ice and the mats are set up, practice will begin. If you are late and skaters are already skating around the track, please wait at the door until skaters stop and it's safe to get on the ice. The door must be kept closed during practice.



*Head coach Ian Hennigar working with the youngest skaters.*

During practice, skaters are generally split into two groups. Speed skating is very much a skill sport, so the groups are not necessarily split by age. It's very common to have novice adults and kids in one group. In fact, parents who have just joined the club often can be found in the same group with their kids. When one group is on the track, the other will be resting or doing drills inside the track.

For safety reasons, skaters always skate counter clockwise and skaters inside the track should be careful not to stray onto the track.

If you need to leave the ice during practice, you must ask a coach. Extreme caution must be used when crossing the track.

At the end of practice, the mats have to be stored again. Usually adult skaters will bring the mats to the door while the coach organizes a game or two for the kids. Again, it's great if parents can help drag the mats from the door to the storage room. It's not a huge job, but it's a lot easier and faster if skaters don't have to do it.

### 3. Gear

Take care of your gear, and your gear will take care of you!

#### **Mandatory Equipment**

The following is mandatory safety equipment: you must wear it every time you come to practice or you won't be allowed on the ice.

- ✦ Helmet
- ✦ Knee pads
- ✦ Cut resistant gloves
- ✦ Shin pads
- ✦ Neck guard
- ✦ Protective eye wear

#### **Helmet**

Regular bike or hockey helmets are fine for practice, but if you compete in a race, you will need to get an approved speed skating helmet. Speed skating helmets can be ordered from the online stores listed at the end of this guide.

#### **Cut resistant gloves**

In order to minimize the chance of injury, cut resistant gloves must be worn. These can be leather, Kevlar, or reinforced nylon braid. While you can buy Kevlar speed skating gloves, long finger bicycle gloves, curling, or baseball gloves work just fine. For kids, you can find cheap bike gloves at Zellers or Canadian Tire. You can also find them at bike shops and MEC.

#### **Neck guard**

These are the same as the neck guards used for hockey and can be purchased at Sport Mart or Sport Chek. Little kids may prefer the type without the bib, but the bib style offers better protection and is required for racing.

#### **Knee pads**

These are the same as the knee pads used for volleyball. They can be purchased at Sport Mart or Sport Chek, but you might have trouble finding some that fit for kids under 8 or 9. You can try Spank It Sports, or you can also use hard knee pads, which are often sold for use with skateboards, roller blades, or bikes at places like Toys R Us.



*We were very excited when four time Olympic medalist and former world champion Kristina Groves visited in spring 2011.*

## Shin pads

These are the same as the shin pads used for soccer. Many soccer shin pads now come with built-in ankle protection. These are no good for speed skating because the ankle needs to be in the skate. If these are the only kind you can find, you can cut off the ankle protectors. You can get these at Sport Mart and Sport Chek or, for more variety, you can try a specialized soccer store like Soccerworld (831 Vernon Ave).

## Protective eye wear

Rounding out our protection is shatter-resistant protective eye wear. You will probably want clear lenses, as the rink isn't bright enough for sunglasses. The cheapest option is probably safety glasses from somewhere like Mark's Work Wearhouse. You could also buy clear lens bike or sport glasses at somewhere like MEC. (Optometrists sell clear lens sport glasses, but they may be expensive.) Your glasses must be held on the head with a strap.

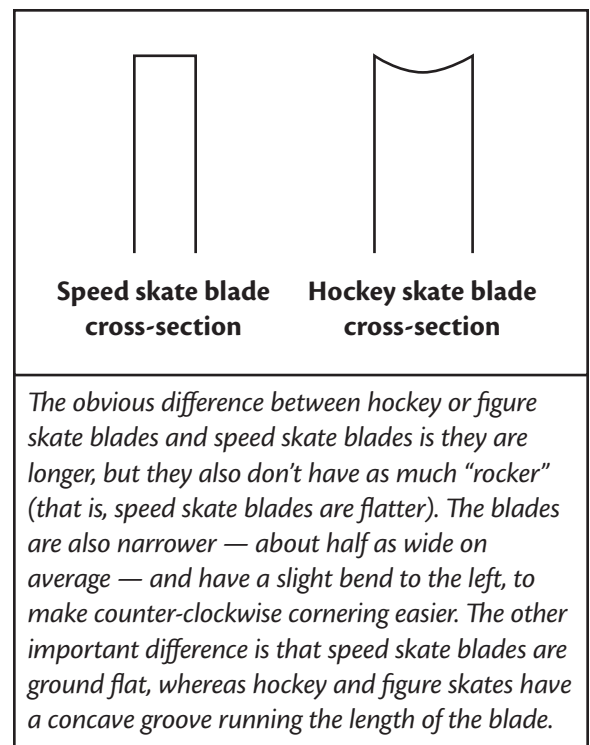
## What To Wear

Competitive skaters will wear lycra speed skating suits, but loose fitting clothes will work, too, as long as they aren't too baggy. Running pants, yoga pants, tights, or even track pants are fine. Any comfortable long sleeve shirt (long sleeves are mandatory) should do, although you will be better off in a wool or a "tech" fabric that doesn't retain moisture. Obviously it can get cold on the ice (especially during certain drills when you have to wait your turn), so a sports (running, cycling, etc) jacket is a good idea.

## Caring For Your Skates

Your skate blade is your most important piece of equipment. It's your connection to the ice and racers will obsess over a sharp blade. And unlike hockey and figure skates, speed skates are hand sharpened, so taking care of them — on and off the ice — will help keep them sharp longer. Blades are also very expensive, so you want them to last as long as possible. Here's how to keep your blades happy.

- ✦ Rust is your enemy. Always dry your blades thoroughly when you are finished with them (keep a towel in your skate bag) and **do not** store them in their protective plastic covers because they will rust inside them. Ideally you should transport your skates with a soft skate cozy on the blades to help protect them from nicks and dings. (You can order speed skate cozies through speed skating websites and, possibly, through the club.)
- ✦ **Never** walk in your skates without skate guards on them. Speed skating blades are not as tough as hockey or figure skating blades and treading on a small rock could damage them. Wear your guards from the change room to the rink and only take them off as you get on the ice. Put your guards back on as soon as you leave the ice.
- ✦ Your blades will need to be sharpened roughly every two months, depending on how you treat your skates, how much you weigh, and how often you skate. The coaches will sharpen them, but skaters (or their parents) are encouraged to learn how to help take the burden off the coaches.



## 4. Competitions

The first meets new skaters enter are Interclub meets. These meets take place all over BC, but because of cost our club generally only attends meets in the Lower Mainland. These meets are set up as “ability meets,” meaning skaters are grouped not by age, but by ability as measured by their previous best times. (If a skater hasn’t raced before, the coaches submit times from time trials at practice.) There are broad age categorizations, but the benefit of this system is that a new skater won’t be going up against someone who has skated for several years.

Interclub meets are usually one-day events lasting from first thing in the morning until dinner (7 am - 5 pm is common, with warm-ups starting at 7 am and racing beginning at 8 am). Skaters race 4 or 5 races of varying length, depending on their age. For example, an 8 year old might do two 100 m races (1 lap), one 200 m race (2 laps), and one 300 m race (3 laps). The day’s schedule is usually organized with the first race starting with the youngest and least experienced then moving through to the oldest and most experienced. Then they repeat for each of the four or five races they do. This means there is usually an hour or two between races. (Sometimes Interclub meets run skaters up to age 12 in the morning and the skaters 12 and over in the afternoon.)

Another benefit to the way the ability meets are run is that race organizers tinker with race groupings between each race. So, for example, a skater who won their first race may be moved up to the next faster group, while someone who finished last in their first race may be moved down to the next slower group. This gives skaters a chance to race different people and a better chance at doing well. The only downside of this system is that at less-organized meets, there can be a delay in racing while officials figure out the start lists for the next round of races.

While racing isn’t for everyone, kids usually love the meets and particularly enjoy hanging out with their friends from the club. Bring extra clothes — at more than one meet the kids have had snowball fights or built snowmen between or after races.

## 5. Extra Practice

With only two hours on the ice per week, you may find yourself wanting more. Unfortunately Victoria’s (relatively) warm winter prevents us from doing what most of Canada can do: head to the local pond or outdoor rink. We do have some options, though.

### **Public Skates**

This is a great way for new skaters to get used to speed skates. All the local rinks have public skate times, though they can be really busy from September to February. One hidden gem is the rink at UVic’s Ian Stewart complex. Since they don’t rent skates, their public skates tend to be less busy.

### **Inline Skates**

You may not be able to go skate on a pond in January in Victoria, but you can go inline skate on the Galloping Goose. A pretty good imitation of ice skating, inline skating is also great fun and a great way to practice in the off season (or even during the on season). Inline speed skates do exist and are quite popular in the US — Apollo Ono got his start on inline speed skates — but can be costly. You may be able to find cheaper pairs on eBay, as some

club members have done in the past. Another less expensive option is “fitness” inline skates which can be found at Sport Chek, and Sport Mart.

### ***Summer Speed Camp***

A favourite of many past and present members is the summer Speed Camp at the Calgary Olympic Oval. Held one week every summer (usually in July) this camp attracts kids (and adults) from across the country. Skaters have eight to ten ice times during the week on both the long and short tracks, dryland practice, and a talk from the national team (and a chance to get autographs). The week finishes with races on Saturday morning. Watch [oval.ucalgary.ca](http://oval.ucalgary.ca) in the spring for details. (If you happen to be visiting Calgary any time during the year, be sure to bring your skates and try the Oval during their public skate sessions.)

## **6. Following Team Canada**

Unfortunately, speed skating doesn't get a lot of attention in the media, but there are several ways to follow Team Canada during the season (Sep-Mar). The first place to start is the Speed Skating Canada website ([www.speedskating.ca](http://www.speedskating.ca)) where you can find team bios, race schedules, news, and results.

### **CBC**

Watching the team in action is a bit trickier. CBC has broadcast rights in Canada, but their coverage is usually limited to an hour or two of highlights per event. Nor do they broadcast all of the events. The best part of CBC's coverage, of course, is their focus on the Canadian athletes. They also have a collection of videos archived on their site.

<http://www.cbc.ca/sports/speedskating/video/>

[http://www.cbc.ca/sports/broadcast/?schedule=speedskating\\_on\\_cbc](http://www.cbc.ca/sports/broadcast/?schedule=speedskating_on_cbc)

### ***International Skating Union (ISU)***

The ISU has been working to improve the profile of speed skating worldwide by leveraging the Internet. Their Facebook pages are a great source of news and photos:

<http://www.facebook.com/ISUSpeedSkating>

<http://www.facebook.com/ISUShortTrackSpeedSkating>

Last year the ISU started broadcasting full live streams of many of their events. The only problem is that since CBC has the broadcast rights in Canada, we aren't allowed to watch those streams. This can be circumvented, however, by using a VPN or proxy server to make it look like you are in the US. The site also contains archived events (in the More Channels menu above the video):

<http://livemanager.eurovision.edgesuite.net/isu/site/index.html>

New this year the ISU has created YouTube channels. It's not clear if they will broadcast anything live through YouTube, but they at least have a selection of videos that aren't restricted by country:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ISUSpeedSkating>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/isushorttrack>

## **Vancouver 2010**

Okay, these races are long over, but the IOC has a great selection of high quality highlights and full events from Vancouver.

Short track: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCCEE96FE5E40BF4E>

Long track: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLoB39AD21BFEC4680>

### **2012-13 International Short Track Calendar**

Oct 19-20	World Cup #1	Calgary
Oct 26-28	World Cup #2	Montreal
Nov 30-Dec 2	World Cup #3	Nagoya, Japan
Dec 7-9	World Cup #4	Shanghai, China
Feb 1-3	World Cup #5	Sochi, Russia
Feb 8-10	World Cup #6	Dresden, Germany
Feb 22-24	World Jr Championships	Warsaw, Poland
Mar 8-10	World Championships	Debrecen, Hungary

### **2012-13 International Long Track Calendar**

Nov 16-18	World Cup #1 (all distances)	Heerenveen, Netherlands
Nov 24-25	World Cup #2 (middle & long distances)	Kolomna, Russia
Dec 1-2	World Cup #3 (middle & long distances)	Astana, Kazakhstan
Dec 8-9	World Cup #4 (sprint distances)	Nagano, Japan
Dec 15-16	World Cup #5 (sprint distances)	Harbin, China
Jan 19-20	World Cup #6 (sprint distances)	Calgary
Jan 26-27	World Sprint Championships	Salt Lake City, Utah
Feb 9-10	World Cup #7 (middle & long distances)	Inzell, Germany
Feb 16-17	World All-Round Championships	Hamar, Norway
Feb 22-24	World Junior Championships	Collalbo, Italy
Mar 1-3	World Cup #8 (all distances)	Erfurt, Germany
Mar 8-10	World Cup Final	Heerenveen, Netherlands
Mar 21-24	World Single Distances Championships	Sochi, Russia

## **7. Links and Resources**

### **Stores**

Specialized equipment for speed skating is available via the Internet. All these organizations are pretty small and their prices and shipping costs will vary so it is probably worth comparison shopping. If you are considering buying skates, though, talk to the coaches first.

I love Speed Skating (in Kamloops)

<http://www.ilovespeedskating.com>

Il Peleton (in Ottawa)

<http://www.ilpeloton.com>



Shoei Creations (a small family operation in Ontario)

<http://shoeicreations.com/>

Devault Speed Skating (in Quebec)

<http://www.devaultspeedskating.com/fr/home.asp?lg=2>

## ***Associations***

Speed Skating Canada

<http://www.speedskating.ca/>

Speed Skating BC

<http://www.speed-skating.bc.ca>