Rocky Mountain House Speed Skating Club

**Parent Information Hand Book**

Speed skating is a very rewarding and enjoyable sport. Looking for fun and exercise as well as a supportive team atmosphere? You've found it with the Rocky Mountain House Speed Skating Club!

The children learn proper skating techniques in a fun-filled atmosphere with a high standard of coaching through skill building, games and fun races. Speed skating is a great way to keep fit. Skaters can make it as competitive as they like. Some members try to make it to every meet on the schedule, others may attend only a few meets in the year and others simply come out for the fun and exercise of the
practices. Flexibility is the key to the success of the club!

Speed skating is about achieving your personal best. Skaters are always striving to improve their times and techniques. Although it is seen to be an individual sport, club members cheer on their teammates and have great camaraderie on and off the ice.

**History**

The Rocky Mountain House Speed Skating Club was formed in 1988 due to the efforts of coach, Phyllis Loewen, and a group on interested parents. Over the years, a great number of skaters have gone through the program. Several have gone on to great success within the sport at provincial, national and international levels. Even more have continued to enjoy the sport on a recreational level.
The Rocky Mountain House Speed Skating Club is managed by volunteer executive members. RMHSSC’s programs are run by its coaches who perform a great deal of volunteer work on and off the ice. The parent volunteers, a devoted and hard-working bunch, have been key to the success of the club

**Speed Skating - The Sport**

There are two disciplines in speed skating: long track and short track. Long track speed skating is practiced on a 400m oval. Short track speed skating is practiced on a 100m oval or a hockey arena with protective mats along the boards. On a flat surface, skaters travel faster than any other human being without mechanical assistance. There are over 150 speed skating clubs in Canada. Rocky Mountain House offers short track training for most of the season with a brief session of long track training in the month of January if the weather and ice conditions are favourable.

**Clothing and Equipment**

The best clothing for speed skating allows for full freedom of movement, while conforming to the body shape so as not to cause unnecessary wind resistance. It should also provide necessary warmth. In general, several thin layers are better than one bulky garment. Layering sweat pants over long underwear works well. Jeans are not allowed. Some skaters also purchase their own skinsuits to wear during practice. RMHSSC provides team skinsuits for all skaters to wear during competitions.

**Safety equipment**

The right equipment is mandatory for all skaters. Skaters will not be able to participate if they do not have all of their safety equipment on. Required equipment includes:

* Helmet – speed skating helmet or hockey helmet (bike helmets are not acceptable)
* Gloves - cut resistant
* Shin guards
* Knee pads
* Kevlar ankle protectors
* Neck protector – must have a bib
* Safety glasses with a strap
* Long sleeved shirt or hoodie
* Long pants or sweats – no jeans!
* Speed skating skinsuit - if you have one
* Skates – must have hard guards and soft guards

**Boots and Blades**

RMHSSC rents out speed skates for the season, for a fraction of the cost of purchasing skates. The boots can be heat molded to fit the skater's foot precisely. Novice skaters usually begin with a pair of stock speed skates until they become more proficient. Recent advances in technology give speed skaters a wide range of materials to choose from, both for boots and blades.

Accomplished skaters customize their skates in various ways, by changing the rocker, bending the blade and experimenting with different weighted materials. All customizations of the skates and blades are done at the coach’s recommendation, with the skater's style in mind.

Short Track Speed Skates are designed for stability and durability. The correct boot and blade combination is crucial to the skater's enjoyment and success in the sport. There cannot be enough emphasis placed on the fit of the boot. The skaters toe should touch the front of the boot. Not cramped, but snug. Wear thin socks for the best result during fitting. A growing child who needs new skates can allow some room for growth.

**Sharpening -** Unlike figure or hockey blades, the base of the speed skate blade is square and is sharpened by hand to maintain the rocker and the squared base. Skaters use jigs to secure their skates and sharpen the blades with a sharpening stone. After the blades have been sharpened, the "burr" is removed. Deburring is the process of removing the minute metal shavings left after sharpening. This process provides the sharpness in the blade, which contributes to speed and agility on the track.

It is always important to keep your blades sharp and dry. DO NOT walk on your blade tips. This will cause damage to the rear cup. DO NOT store the skates with your nylon guards on. These guards are only for walking. Store your skates with cloth guards or wrap them in a towel. If the blades are not dry when stored, rust will build up and eventually affect seams and soldered connections.

Speed skates must always be sharpened by hand using a jig and proper sharpening stones. NEVER have them sharpened by a machine. If you have them sharpened by a power grindstone just once, the correct rocker can be removed and the blade will be permanently damaged. You will be held responsible for this. Instead, learn how to sharpen the skates by yourself. Ask experienced members for instruction, and watch for periodic clinics on how to sharpen skates at practices. How often you sharpen your skates depends on how often you skate and the condition of the ice.

Generally, sharpening your skates for every six hours of skating can be used as a general rule. RMHSSC teaches both skaters and parents how to sharpen skates. Ultimately, it is the skaters' responsibility to maintain their own skates. Comfort and a proper fit are essential for performance, proper technique and general enjoyment of the sport.

**Drying/Storing -** Dry your blades after each use If you leave your skates overnight with drops of water on the blades, you will find rust on them in the morning. Leave the (hard) guards off of your skates if they are even slightly damp. Instead, put on your dry soft guards or, leave the skates out in a dry environment. Also, try to prevent the blades from banging together if the guards are off. Hanging them in a dry area is the best way.

**Guards/Boots/Laces -** Always wear guards when you are in your skates but not on the ice. Never walk on your skates without guards. It can take an hour or more to restore a blade edge that is lost by not using guards. Also, keep the inside of your guards clean at all times. Even a little speck of dirt on the inside of your guard can damage the blade! As for the boots, keep them polished. When they become wet, dry them slowly away from direct heat. In terms of laces, if the laces are too long, remove a piece from the middle and tie the cut ends at the toe. Check your laces before you skate, and replace them if they are frayed. Always carry a pair of extras.

**Canada Best Program**

All skaters are eligible to participate in the Canada Best Program. During October, coaches will time skaters, then again at the end of the season. Skaters who improve their time over the course of the season will be eligible for a Canada Best certificate presented at the end of the season.

**Supervision**

Skaters are not allowed on the ice without adult supervision. Occasionally, there will need to be a parent on the ice to help the junior coaches during the training sessions.

**Meetings**

RMHSSC holds two or three general meetings a year. Parent participation is key in ensuring the club continues to grow and thrive. An annual general meeting is held yearly to elect an executive and to keep all volunteers up to date.

**Volunteer Positions**

Every year there are many positions to be filled including board members, equipment manager, skate-a-thon coordinator, historian, and many more easy and rewarding positions. It takes all our parents to run and maintain our club. Many parents who volunteer to help out the club have very busy lives and are not paid to do so, that is why the Rocky club expects every parent to give a helping hand and volunteer.

**Communication**

Regular updates will be sent to members by email, and will also be posted on the club’s website. The updates will provide information about registering for upcoming meets, skater accomplishments and lots of other important information. If you are unable to receive emails please let us know and we will be able to give you a paper copy.

**Practice Protocols**

One of the ways in which we can reduce the chance of injury is by following certain “rules of the
rink" during practices and meets. These rules exist to encourage a safe, productive and enjoyable
practice for all

1. At short track, safety mats must be in place around the ice for the protection of the skaters should they fall and/or slide into the boards. NOTE: the skaters cannon skate until these mats are in place.
2. A coach must always be on the ice when members ore skating.
3. All skaters, both competitive and recreational, are expected to follow the directions of the coaches. Failure to do so can and will result in the skater leaving the ice surface.
4. All skaters must skate counter-clockwise unless the coaches direct otherwise.
5. On the skating track, the fastest skaters have the outside lane and the slower skaters the inside lane. Where appropriate, faster skaters should try to let slower states know when they are passing by shouting “track.”
6. When skating on the track, skate in a consistent pattern. If you wish to stop or rest, stand up and glide carefully to the center of the ice. Do not stop suddenly or cut across the track. Do not stand on the track. Do not block the track in any way.
7. The safest place to be is at the center of the ice.
8. Skaters must NEVER stand against the boards, and especially against the mats, as a falling skater may crash into them. This is the greatest chance we have for serious injury.
9. If you must leave the ice, first tell the coach. Extreme caution must be used when
crossing the track: stop, look, and then when safe, cross the track quickly.
10. Deliberately falling and sliding across the ice or pushing skaters is dangerous to others
and will result in disciplinary action.
11. Please tighten skates and use the bathroom before coming onto the ice.
12. As a courtesy to others, all skaters must be prompt in getting on the ice so the coach
can follow his or her plan without waiting for any tardy skaters.

**Competitions**

Over the course of the season, Club members will have the opportunity to go to as many as 20 competitions in short track and long track. The types of competitions vary, and certainly no one goes to all of them. Short track meets are skated on a 100m oval track. Long track meets ore skated on a 400m oval track.

**Ability Meets** - Ability meets pit skaters of equal ability against each other in a mass start format
(up to 6 skaters racing at once). Thus, it is very important that seed times be accurate. Seed times are personal bests (PBs) for a skater in a given distance. RMHSSC keeps detailed records of skaters’ times for all distances. If you are ever asked for a seed time on a meet entry form, check with your coach. DO NOT put in a time that has not been skated.

Ability meets feature an equal number of races for all participants. They usually award medals based on accumulated points with respect to other skaters in a given age class, even though a given skater may not be racing against other members of their age class. Ranking is based upon higher ability levels being awarded higher numbers of points for their finishing positions.

**Age Class Meets** (seldom used) - At age class meets, skaters race against others in their own age class, and are further divided into A and 8 skill level groupings. Some provincial and national age class championships run on this mass start format. Each skater races four distances (pre-determined for their age class) at each age class meet. Whether they race more than four times depends on whether there are enough competitors to warrant heats and semi-finals.

**Mass Start** -This form of racing, used m both short and long track, has up to Six skaters race
against each other on a single lane/track.

**Olympic Style -** This is a style of long track racing where two skaters race in separate lanes, at the
same time, against each other and the clock. Each skater stays in his or her own lane, crossing over to the other lane at a predetermined point on the backstretch of each lap (to make the distances traveled equal).

**On Meet Day...**

1. Be at the arena in plenty of time. (Warm-up is normally very early and is not of much value if you are not skating until later. For some skaters, however, getting onto the ice early helps to calm the butterflies.)
2. Check in with your coach(es).
3. Check the race listing and note the races that you will be competing in.
4. Find the locker room assigned to our Club or go to the bleacher area where our Club members are gathering.
5. About five or six races before your race, have your skates on and report to the Clerk of the Course.
6. You will then be asked to wait with the other skaters in your race. There you will find out your position on the start line.
7. After a race, get off the ice as quickly as possible, return to the locker room/bleachers, remove and wipe down your skates, and wait for the next race.

For most competitions, the entry fee is $35 per skater, and $10-15 for active starts. Entry forms for the competitions will be available several weeks before. They will be handed out by the meet coordinator. The forms need to be fully completed and handed in by the date indicated. All cheques should be made out to RMHSSC, as we send in one cheque from the club for each competition.

**Speed Skating Meets in Rocky Mountain House**

RMHSSC holds one meet annually. Parent volunteers are required to ensure the meet runs smoothly. The meet coordinator will have a sign-up sheet for positions prior to the meet. This meet is the club's primary source of fundraising income.

**Short Track – Officials/Volunteers**

Like other sports, speed skating has many different officials who volunteer to organize competitions and make sure everything runs smoothly. The officials' responsibilities are as follows

1. Meet Coordinator - responsible for the total organization of the meet
2. Recorder - Assigns skaters to heats and tabulates results
3. Runners - collects race results from timers and place judges and takes to the recorder
4. Announcer - Keeps everyone informed
5. Referee - Responsible for all aspects of the meet and decides on matters of dispute
6. Starter - In complete control of the start of race
7. Lap Recorder - Keeps competitors informed regarding number of laps remaining
8. Chief Timer and timers - Responsible for timing each skater
9. Chief Place Judge and place judges - Determine the finish position of each skater
10. Track Stewards - Replace missing pucks during a race
11 Clerk of Course - Supervises draw for races.
11. Bell ringer - Rings bell identifying last lap