

September 1988

All attendees at the initial speed session at the Fashion Island ice rink experienced some significant differences from the Belmont rink.

First of all, it's 70 degrees in there! No more joking about shorts and T shirts on the ice. Wear lightweight layers that you can strip off as your temperature rises.

The ice is very 'wet' and softer than most of us are used to. Greg Toy, rink manager, has agreed to 'crank-up' the refrigeration system to harden the ice. This may not dramatically change the surface wetness, but it should definitely improve the texture. We also spoke to Greg about the various dips in the surface, and he assured us that they would flood the ice to level it off before our next session. This will be particularly good news to Bill Robertson, who lost it on a turn when he hit an unexpected drop in the ice surface. If you weren't watching, he made a great recovery, and was up and flying in about two seconds.

Ferd Schaffer was the first to test the new 'crash mats'. Those blue lifesavers belong to the club and will be in use at all future sessions. Thanks to donations of cold cash and hard, creative work from your fellow members: Paul Albert, Mike Bell, John Diemont, Gabe Kingsley, Kim Milstead, Jim Minami, Bobby Payne, Kristen Temple, Greg and Mary Wong.

We could use more than the minimal ten that were made. A total of \$400 was spent, plus the time of those who assembled them. They cost \$40 each, and anyone wishing to share the cost should give contributions to Mary Wong. (ask to see her unique wallet.) Skaters' Luck says, 'Whoever doesn't contribute will likely fall and crash into a segment of the wall that isn't matted.' Take charge of your Skaters Karma today. We had considered (laughingly) to assess every person who fell a fine of .25 cents, but that would require 160 crashes per mat, and we'd like to think our skaters are more stable. This is a 'WE' club, not a 'THEY' club. Cough-up before you crack-up.

A great plus about skating at Fashion Island is the constant crowd of spectators. We should be able to 'snag' a few because of our high visibility. Choose your skating togs carefully.

As soon as we can find a dirt-cheap printer, we will be offering subscription cards. They will essentially give you a 10 percent discount on the cost of skating. They will be valid for ten speed sessions, at a cost of only nine. \$54 gets you \$60 worth of skating.

Labor Day is behind us and school has started. Ahhhhh, back-to-school, when the ice rink population thins out at night. I knew school was good for something.

Ice Philosophy 101, or 'What do you do the other six days of the week to improve your skating technique?

You can't learn to skate from a book, but once you are able to move forward, turn and stop at will, you can certainly refine your technique with the aid of the written word.

Ice time, visualization of proper technique and attention to basic details; that's the secret. Work at your own speed. That is, go fast enough to give you the momentum required for turn technique, but not so fast that you are not in complete control of every motion.

Assuming three levels of skating ability, 'A' Advanced, 'B' Intermediate, 'C' Beginner:

'A' can work for speed, endurance, passing technique (pass prevention, too) and subtle refinement of the finer details of technique.

'B' needs the steady discipline of undistracted practice. 'B' works on turn technique, rolling edges, precision skate placement, taking the best line around the track, cadence, crouch, arm swing and turn entrance; always avoiding the temptation to go 'too fast'.

'C' should concentrate on balance over the blade (laterally), learn to 'sit' on the heels, become familiar with edges and how to place them, learn to cross over, pushing to the side on power strokes, and generally feel more comfortable on his/her skates.

Groups 'B' and 'C' can learn a lot from subtle feedback, if paying attention. ie: as you skate, look for the 'sweet spot' in the rock of your blade. This is the magic two or three inches between the heel and instep that make your glide feel effortless. A subtle move toward the toe will feel like you are putting on the brakes (back-off), too much lean to the rear, and you will run the danger of your skates going out from under you. Feel this spot and try to do all your skating on it. It will allow you shorter radius on turns, as well as reducing the pure muscle power required to move forward or keep up.

'B' and 'C' can also benefit from 'sculling', that is skating the straightaway without lifting either skate off of the ice! Skates should almost touch as they come back together. Once this learned, try it on corners. It helps you make the most efficient use of your strokes, and takes all of the 'slop' out of your actions.

John Diemont suggest an easy drill to help get you in the groove when you first step on the ice. Clasp your hands together (as if praying), in front of you. Skate a relaxed few laps, keeping this 'double fist' over the forward leg. Move your hands from side to side as you stroke. This places your weight (correctly) over the proper blade so your stroke delivers all of its potential power to the ice. This is also an excellent way to practice rolling edges, too. Try it. You will feel 'centered' and better balanced.

Dry Land Training:

Sure, you could wait to do all of your training and practicing on the ice, but supplementing ice time with dry land training is the best and most balanced regimen.

Objectives:

1. Keeping skating muscles strong and toned.
2. Building endurance in muscles and lung power.
3. Practicing technique/striving for accuracy.

Methods:

1. Bicycle riding (10 speed bike uses same muscles as skating)
2. Running (your own style, at your own speed)
3. Jumping rope
4. Weight training, primarily for leg muscles

With the exception of #4, all of the above are aerobic and potentially build muscles, endurance and wind.

Skaters' exercises:

1. Skater's Hops (arm swing jumps)
2. Double back cross overs
3. Low walking (not duckwalking)
4. Foot to foot (side to side) stroke
5. Lunges (forward and backward)
6. Squats (deep knee bends with 2x4 under heels)
7. Calf raises (up on toes with 2x4 under toes)
8. Hamstring and quadricap stretches

Aids:

1. Dry skating slide-board - easy to make - ask a member
Reinforces side push in straightaway stroke/practice arm swing
2. Bungi cord harness (requires a helper)
Practice cross overs on the grass
3. Rubber bands around ankles (use old bike inner tube, etc.)
Practice side push with resistance, gluteals, etc.
4. Stairs in a stadium - run 'til it hurts...then run some more
Develops all leg muscles-Try climbing in a crouch-hands on back
5. Mountain climbers-Step up and down on knee high bench
Works quadricaps and wind. No good unless it hurts.

Please, don't do more than you and your body feel is comfortable. Train every other day for best results. Your muscles need the day off to regroup and strengthen. Ask around at a speed session for information about building slide boards, making bungi harnesses, or for demonstrations of any of the above listed exercises. Double back cross overs would require an Arthur Murray drawing so complicated, that noone would understand...so ask.

Got any secrets of your own. Share 'em with everybody. Till next month, stay on the edge. L.A. races have been rescheduled for October.

'Coach' Jim Minami suggests the following:

Since our sessions are currently one hour long, we want to maximize our usage of ice time.

You should arrive early to do some stretching. Your upper leg muscles (quadriceps & hamstrings) are easily cramped if not properly warmed-up. Back muscles, calves, gluteals, shoulders, etc. could all benefit from warming-up and stretching for 15 minutes. You won't be alone.

For the first 15 minutes of skating, Jim suggests that you go at a moderately slow pace, concentrating on smoothness of stroke, arm swing, etc.. For the next 15 minutes, focus on turn technique. Incorporate any handy drills you may know or have learned at club sessions or in the news letter. If in doubt as to what to do, or the proper form, ask Jim. He'd love the chance to show you some personal torture methods that will enhance your skating skills and skating enjoyment.

The balance of your ice time will be involved with pace line skating, and other group activities.

Jim feels we need to dedicate as much personal, off-ice time as possible to dry land training on those days when we don't skate. See elsewhere in this news letter for suggestions.

Skate accurately, skate smoothly, skate often. Work hard and you will improve. You and your personal well-being are the beneficiaries.

The more organized we become, the more focused our training sessions.

All of us should be giving serious thought to safety. We have done something to benefit everyone by creating our 'crash mats', but there are things that each skater can and should do to insure his/her personal well-being. Gloves serve a higher purpose than keeping your hands warm. In the event of a fall, it isn't beyond the realm of possibility for another skater to accidentally run over your hand! Gloves might keep your fingers attached. Helmets are not a silly accessory, either. They are required at all training sessions in Southern California Clubs, and of course, at all meets. I remember a sign in a motorcycle shop, 'If you have a \$10 head, buy a \$10 helmet.' Enough said.

Knees are very fragile machinery, and once bruised or 'dinged', they take forever to heal (and sometimes don't). Ice is like cement with the sand and gravel removed. Take care of your knees. Even Olympic skaters 'eat-it' every now and then. Be prepared. Knee guards are cheaper than orthopaedic surgery, and look less silly than crutches.

Since our affiliation with the A.S.U. and the Southern California Speed Skating Association, we now have the opportunity to participate in racing meets. One is scheduled for some time in October. For details, see Greg Wong.

My personal apologies for the lateness of this news letter. I was engaged in a wage dispute with club management....but that has been settled. I only have to pay \$4 per hour to be allowed to write this!

One more way to improve your skating technique and enjoyment is to check out the tapes available from Jerry Search, Southern California video tape master. He has filmed many U.S. meets, and most importantly, the 1987 Training Seminar conducted at University of Michigan in Marquette, Mi., with Guy Daignault and Diane Holum, our two Olympic Coaches. Guy has more racing credentials than I have room for on this page, and Diane Holum is well known to all American skating enthusiasts as a past Olympic gold medal winner, and trainer of some guy named Eric. Jerry's personal knowledge of speed skating, and racing allow him to create films that are not only informational, but fun to watch. He specifically requests that copies not be made of his tapes, and we would encourage all to go along with his desire. They are inexpensive enough, and he has some great titles. Contact him for a list of tapes and prices at (213)424-5293 - 3584 Falcon Ave., Long Beach, Ca. 90807.

I have requested, but not yet received an up-dated list of new and used skates from High Peaks Cyclery in Lake Placid, N.Y.. When it is received, I will include it in next month's issue. They usually have some interesting skates available (used), such as Planert Specials, top of the line Vikings, and makes and models not generally known to us.

Hopefully, another benefit about being affiliated with the Southern California Association, will be our being able to be included in any skate swapping or selling that may go on. Any listings from there will be included here.

We welcome any information that you may have regarding skating equipment sources, or news of interest to your fellow skaters. Please don't be shy. It is going to take all of us to make this work and keep it going. Anyone interested in participating in the doing of necessary tasks should contact Mary Wong, and let her know what you think you have to offer the club, and what kind of time you have available.

Notice a couple of new faces at the recent sessions? We are getting some good P.R. from various sources around the U.S., and are building our roster all the time. From meager beginnings about six months ago, we have grown to the point where there are over 60 local skaters on the mailing list! Who have you brought skating lately? Prove you do have friends.....bring one out.

What do you think of the sessions as they are currently being run? Drop a note to Greg/Mary or Gabe, because we want this to be a club that has something for almost everybody. Would you want the ice time to be longer, do you like the instructional aspect, do you want harder training? Are you thinking of switching to hockey skates? Tell us.

Till the next time.....stay on the edge, keep your knees bent and your head up. Experience the Thrill!