

Masters' Report 2008 - 2009

Ottawa Pacers Speed Skating Club

Prepared by:
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Edited by:
 2008-09 board members

1 MEMBERSHIP DATA

	General	Advanced	Long track
Fees per member (including \$80 OSSA fee)	\$350 (or \$550 for General and Advanced together)	\$430 (or \$550 for General and Advanced together)	\$150
Number of skating sessions (each session is 50 minutes)	Approx. 24	Approx. 28	N/A
Head coach	Gavin Thulien		Mike Rivet
Assistant coaches	John Cox, Grant Edgar, Andrew McCallum, Iain McCallum, Sarah Leslie, Mike Rivet		Gavin Thulien
Masters' representative on the board	Gail Bouchette		

2 ENROLMENT AND RECRUITING

Enrolment in the masters programs was lower this year than in recent years. As a result, the revenue collected from masters' membership fees failed to cover the masters' ice costs (see the financial report for more details). This masters' deficit put a heavy strain on the club's overall finances. Most of the deficit was associated with the Advanced (Tuesday night) program.

To prevent this problem from recurring next year, a recruitment effort was undertaken by a sub-committee of the Pacers board. This group was led by Gail Bouchette and included Marc Brisebois, Phil Bolger, and Gavin Thulien. Sarah Leslie also contributed.

The sub-committee determined that most new skaters acquired through recruitment efforts will be beginners. The deficit was mostly caused by insufficient numbers in the Advanced program, so it is desirable for more skaters from the General program to move into the Advanced one. However, there is still plenty of space in the General program for many skaters to join before it fills up.

Recruitment activities implemented by the sub-committee:

1. The names of the programs were changed from Open and Elite to General and Advanced, respectively. The sub-committee found that many skaters were intimidated by the name 'Elite,' who might otherwise have joined the Advanced program.
2. Gavin offered to run a series of dryland sessions in September of 2009, targeted to inline skaters who wish to transition to ice. The series will run for ten weeks with the goal of increasing interest in ice skating among inliners. Gavin will encourage participants to join the Pacers at the end of the program.
3. An introductory lesson series was planned for new skaters, focussing on adults, coached by Sarah Leslie and assisted by Gavin Thulien. The session ran in February and March of 2009 during the 4:15 time slot. The Thursday session had good enrolment with eleven participants, and the new skaters were enthusiastic. It is hoped that several of them will join the masters next year.
4. It was planned to procure some media coverage of the club, for example by inviting a local TV personality to come and learn speed skating with some of our coaches and skaters. This idea was not pursued due to lack of time available from sub-committee members. If this plan is pursued in the future it may be helpful to recruit a non-board member of the masters to take on this project.

Of the recruitment activities undertaken, the introductory class appears to have been the most successful, although it remains to be seen how many will join the club for 2009-2010. Further recruitment will likely be necessary next season to bring registration numbers up to the break-even point. A Fall session of the learn-to-speed-skate class is recommended, as well as a comprehensive advertising campaign leading up to registration.

3 LONG TRACK

The response from the masters to this year's long track season was overwhelmingly positive. Most skaters were very pleased with the ice quality this year, as well as other aspects of the oval facilities.

The one area where skaters see room for improvement is in creating a more formalized coaching program for masters similar to the youth program but designed to meet the needs of an adult skater.

4 SHORT TRACK

The short track program was successful this year, and met most skaters' expectations. Some skaters enjoyed the break from the Sensplex in January, as it kept costs down and brought them out to the oval.

There were some problems with organization of coaching; sometimes the evening's program was hastily put together by a coach who may not have known in advance that they would be head coach that night.

It may be beneficial to prepare a coaching schedule a few weeks in advance, so that all coaches are aware of when they are needed and coaching is consistent throughout the year.

It should also be noted that skaters and coaches have fallen into the habit of seeking out the maintenance staff and explicitly requesting a flood at each practice, which should not be necessary. An understanding must be reached with the Sensplex staff that provides flooding consistently at every practice, on time.

5 COMPETITIONS

An increasing number of masters participate in competitions, in short track, long track, and marathon events. Some new skaters find it difficult to navigate the complexities of competitions. The club has resources available, such as information sessions and hand-outs, for parents of new skaters and skaters attending their first meets. It would be useful to publicize these resources among the masters.

6 FUNDRAISING

In recent years it has been mandatory for youth families to purchase \$300/month of Loblaw's cards or use the buy-out option, while it has been optional for masters. With this year's great increase in ice costs, especially for masters' ice, the amount increased to \$400/month and became mandatory for masters. The board decided to split the masters amount into \$200/month for one-night-a-week skaters and \$400/month for two-night-a-week skaters. Initial concerns were raised by some regarding the monthly amount required to spend but overall the participation has been very positive.

Major changes to the Pacers fundraising methods are likely to happen next season (see fundraising report), and these changes will likely alleviate some of the difficulties masters face with the current program. It is unlikely that the club can afford to repeal the mandatory status of fundraising for masters, but these changes may make fundraising somewhat easier on masters.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

There are several ways that the club experience can be improved for masters skaters. The following four recommendations are the most likely to be greatly beneficial, and should be the top priorities.

Another learn-to-skate program for adults should be run as a recruitment tool. This will increase membership and make the masters program sustainable.

The club should undertake a comprehensive advertising and publicity campaign in the months leading up to registration night. This campaign should specifically target adults, and any other age group in the club that is low in registration numbers.

Next year's contact person for the Sensplex should discuss flooding with the management and reach a satisfactory agreement to provide quality ice for masters and youth skaters.

Next year's masters representative should form a committee of skaters and coaches, which will create a long-track coaching program that better suits masters' needs.

Next year's masters' representative should investigate what resources are already available to parents of new skaters and skaters attending their first meets. The rep should make that information available to masters and publicize its availability.

Next year's masters' representative should continue to liaise with Gavin to ensure the success of the proposed inline-to-ice dryland transition program, for recruitment purposes.

Next year's master's representative should search for a volunteer to organize some televised publicity for the club, perhaps in the form of a learn-to-skate session with a local TV personality.