

Pacers Speed Skating Club of Ottawa
2008-2009
Annual General Meeting
April 30th 2009

President's Report

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting for the 2008-2009 season. As our Club continues to grow, we reflect on all the changes in order to make our growth possible. Our season saw many changes from both our club and OSSA.

2008-2009 Highlights

- The biggest change was the increase of ice time from eight hours a week to eleven hours per week. The Intermediate and Masters Groups saw their ice time increase by 50%. Because of the increase of private ice time, our costs increased significantly and we had to pass this on to the membership. We expected a drop in enrollment for this season due to the increase but happily, this did not happen. This shows us what a strong and successful club we have.
- The Pacers hosted two very successful meets – The Eastern Regional Ability Meet in October (short track) and Ontario Long Track Mass Start & Olympic Style Meet in January.
- We also hosted an equally successful Long Track Camp in January. We had an excellent group of coaches and volunteers who helped ensure the Meet's success.
- We had an outstanding long track season at the Brewer Park Oval thanks to this year's weather and ice guru, Pete Gauthier, and his group of volunteers. Without Pete's many long dedicated hours, we would not have had these high quality conditions. We also thank Pete for all the special deals we received on trailer and equipment rentals that enabled us to stay within our budget.
- We also had a significant change on our Board of Directors with a number of new members this season that brought enthusiasm and fresh ideas to the table.
- Brigitte Patenaude, one of our new skaters this season, told the country about her love of speed skating and of the relationships formed with skaters much younger than herself in the Ottawa Pacers. This video won The Most Inspirational Video in the ING Speed Skating Challenge which brought national attention to Brigitte, and the Ottawa Pacers. It also brought a \$1000.00 prize to the Ottawa Pacers.
- We saw a number of skaters who achieved personal best's, achieve milestones, and surpass expectations in the Regional, Provincial, and National levels of competition in both long track and short track.
- Gerry Harrington achieved his Level 2 Coaching Certification, Rocky Lamontagne achieved his Level 4 Starters Certification and Mike Rivet achieved his Level 1 Evaluator Certification (Learning Facilitator). Mike is now able to evaluate and certify Level 1 coaches which is very important in maintaining growth in our club and in the sport of speed skating as well.

Through the dedication and pride of the skaters, parents, coaches and other volunteers, the Ottawa Pacers Speed Skating Club is seen and regarded as very strong and successful. We are still one of the largest clubs in Ontario. We still have a large number of volunteers whose children have moved on from the sport yet the parents have continued to devote their time and talent to ensure the success and dream of the up and coming new skaters. We also have a solid number of parents, skaters and relatives who also volunteer their time and energy to contribute to the viability and continuity of the club. It's through this cooperation, dedication and positive spirit that we can insure the Ottawa Pacers will remain one of the best clubs in the province, if not the country.

Growing for Next Season

While our membership numbers remained the same in the Intermediate and Advanced Hours, there was a decrease of skaters in the Development and Master's Hours. This is the first year since our move to the Bell Sensplex that we have not had a waiting list of skaters. This is also the year prior to the Olympics which historically has been the lowest enrollment in new membership. Advertising, marketing and promotion should start in May/June in order to recruit new members; especially targeting the Development and Master's skaters.

During our negotiations to secure our ice, we needed to purchase a set block of ice starting at 4:15pm, even though our Development skaters start at 5:15pm. We needed to come up with options to use this ice. Our Learn to Speed Skate Program, coached by Sarah Leslie, and our Intro to Long Blade Classes, coached by Sarah Leslie and Gavin Thulien were a success. Other classes had to be cancelled due to low enrollment. This was our first experience with short programs and while we dealt with the "growing pains" involved, we obtained a wealth of knowledge for future seasons. We need to better utilize our 4:15 ice. This will be done through earlier planning of programs as well as advertising. There is also a high-school program through OSSA that would be perfect for this time slot. Details are still vague but more should be available to us at the OSSA AGM. These details will be passed on to the membership once they are known.

The Ottawa Pacers have always had a solid group of volunteers who help out with all aspects, but as with any youth-based clubs, the children grow up and move on. In order to keep our club viable we need new volunteers to contribute their talents and time and help maintain a promising future. Volunteers are encouraged to help out during the week, or at Meets and in other areas such as fundraising, advertising/marketing, web design or other computer based work. All are welcome to become a member of the Executive. This is a great way to meet fellow Pacer families and learn more about this sport.

We are also looking for coaches for the very same reasons. We have been very blessed with an outstanding, highly talented and dedicated group of coaches throughout the years and as a growing club, we seek skaters who are interested in sharing their skills. This year we are also very fortunate to have Mike Rivet as a Learning Facilitator. Mike brings to us his many years of experience as both a skater on the National Team and as a coach for several years. His compassion for constant learning and teaching make him a perfect

coach to hold this position as an Evaluator. His positive attitude coupled with his vast experience will be an asset for anyone wishing to learn and to attain their Level 1 Coaching Certification.

Because we needed to cut costs last season, we opted to cancel our Thursday Ice in January. While it short-changed some short track skaters, it allowed members to experience long track skating. The number of skaters at the Brewer Park Oval on Thursday's in January was outstanding and was very encouraging to see. Skaters are invited to try both long and short track skating because they can offer different skills to skaters. Coaches are often the first ones to tell skaters not to choose one over the other until they have reached the Intermediate age category and they still encourage both long track and short track. All this said, we need to increase the skaters in our long track program. There has been a noticeable drop in younger skaters in long track competitions from our club. We have the best ice (thanks to Pete Gauthier) that we've had in years so we encourage the membership to take full advantage of the ice and explore your options. For the parents who don't like to stand outdoors consider the following options: Bring your skates along and skate on the outer edge of the Oval or volunteer your shovelling, sweeping or supervisory skills. I guarantee you will stay warm.

Next year promises to be a year full of excitement as we look forward to the 2010 Olympics and the awareness it brings to the great sport of speed skating. I look forward to seeing everyone again in September for the start of a new season.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Derro