

SUDBURY SPRINTERS SPEED SKATING CLUB



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Spectator's Guide to Long Track Speed Skating

In The Beginning

The roots of ice skating date back over 1,000 years to the frozen canals and waterways of Scandinavia and the Netherlands when men laced animal bones to their footwear and glided across frozen lakes and rivers.

By the 1600's, traveling on blades between villages had become a useful and enjoyable means of transportation for the Dutch. Surprisingly, credit for the first pair of all-iron skates goes to a Scotsman who invented them in 1592. The iron blade accelerated the spread of speed skating and in 1642 the Skating Club of Edinburgh was formed. In 1763 the world's first organized speed skating race, which covered a distance of slightly more than 24 kilometres, was held on the Fens in England.

Eventually, the fledgling sport found its way to North America, where a lighter, sharper and longer all-steel blade was first produced in 1850. In 1889, the Dutch organized the first world championship with skaters covering four distances — 500 m, 1,500 m, 5,000 m and 10,000 m. The International Skating Union (ISU)

was formed in the Netherlands in 1892. By the end of the century, the sport had attracted a mass following in many parts of the world.

Canada's first recorded ice skating race took place on the St. Lawrence River in 1854 when three British army officers raced from Montréal to Québec City. Speed skating races became a regular feature of winter life; and by 1887 the Amateur Skating Association of Canada, the young country's first sport association, was formed. In 1887, the first official championship was staged by the Amateur Skating Association of Canada; and in 1894 became the first non-European body to join the ISU. (The name was changed to the Canadian Amateur Speed Skating Association in 1960, then to Speed Skating Canada in 2000.)

Three countries — Norway, Germany and Canada — contested the 1897 World Speed Skating Championship in Montréal with the world title going to Winnipegger Jack McCulloch.

About Long Track Speed Skating

Long track skating is performed on 400 meter rinks. 333 meter rinks are used as well, but not on national and international level. Long track speed skating has been an Olympic sport since 1928.

Racing

Skaters are allowed only one false start before they are disqualified. They are not allowed to skate inside their individual lane markers. The inside skate may cross the lane line when entering a corner, providing the gliding skate, the one bearing the skater's weight, remains outside. Skaters must cross over on every lap. The skater moving from the outer lane to the inner lane has the right-of-way when both skaters exit the corner simultaneously.

Technique and Strategy

Force is maximized in speed skating by adopting the crouched position which reduces air resistance and which is characteristic of the sport. The lower the crouch, the more the leg can extend to the side during the push, lengthening the time spent applying force to the ice.

With conventional, fixed-blade speed skates, good technical speed skating is almost soundless — except during the start — because the push is delivered through the middle of the skate, not the toe. The new klapskate, however, permits skaters to push with their toe, thus utilizing their calf muscles more efficiently and generating more speed. Klapskates also prevent the tip of the blade from digging

into the ice and more importantly, they let the blade stay in contact longer with the ice. Most skaters adopt a starting position with their weight evenly distributed between the two skates. The front foot is placed on the ice, perpendicular to the starting line. The back foot is placed at an angle to the starting line so that the initial push is as powerful as possible. Some skaters run off the starting line, going for maximum leg speed; others try to skate off concentrating on maximum push and leg extension. Whatever the technique, all skaters strive for a smooth transition from the short steps of the start to the long, smooth efficient push of full speed skating.

Equipment

Equipment:

- skates
- gloves
- skin suit
