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Adult Skating

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U.S. FIGURE SKATING



Skating Injuries — When, Not If

by Ellen Zurfluh

Fracture...laceration...back pain...muscle strain...concussion...shoulder dislocation...torn ligament...the list goes on. What skater, young or old, elite or adult competitor, hasn't experienced an injury or known someone who has?

Former adult skater Christine Lawless, M.D., of Chicago, board certified in cardiology and sports medicine, maintains that injury comes with the territory in athletics. "It's like driving a car," she says. "If you drive for 30 years, you're bound to have an accident sooner or later."

A 2007 study of U.S. figure skaters found that 1.7 injuries occurred per 1,000 hours of skating. A skater training 20 hours per week might expect 1.7 injuries in a year. Those who have never experienced a skating injury are indeed lucky.

Dr. Lawless, a member and former chair of the U.S. Figure Skating Sports Science and Medicine Committee, gave up competitive adult skating due to knee and ankle problems stemming from misalignment. Despite therapy to strengthen her leg muscles, she eventually decided skating was not for her. She now walks, does weight training and contemplates starting ballroom dancing.

The good news for adult skaters is that keeping one's body well-conditioned may determine whether an injury is a mere distraction or career ending. Dave Garber, a masters pairs skater in Pittsburgh, firmly believes in doing whatever is necessary to prevent injuries. He stretches daily for 30 to 45 minutes, uses free weights to strengthen his knees and shoulders for lifts, warms up before skating sessions and stretches afterward.

His partner, Kim Sailer, hasn't been so lucky. She, too, does off-ice conditioning and cross-trains by riding road bikes, but three years ago she broke her wrist in a bad landing after a throw Axel. With surgery and therapy, the wrist is now 100 percent. However, a recent hip injury, likely from overuse (too many landings, she says), will require arthroscopic surgery and keep her off the ice for six months. Sailer's physicians feel confident she will return to jumping and pairs skating because she's in good physical shape.

Skating injuries may be acute, such as fractures and torn ligaments, or chronic (often resulting from overuse), such as strained tendons and bumps on the feet. "Skaters often have ankle problems because their feet are encased in boots, which are almost like casts," Dr. Lawless says.

To minimize setbacks from injury, Dr. Lawless advocates "prehab" rather than rehab. She recommends that adult skaters strengthen weak areas of the body—such as knees and ankles (shoulders for pairs skaters)—maintain normal weight, get proper nutrition and enough sleep, and completely rehab previous injuries. It's also good for one's physical and mental health to cross-train in other sports and occasionally take a break from skating.



"Don't skate in pain," Dr. Lawless adds. "Especially if it's new pain, have it checked out and then follow the physician's or physical therapist's instructions."

Adult gold freestyler Lisa Fitzmaurice of Elmhurst, Ill., is another committed athlete who has done what it takes to return to skating. Two years ago Fitzmaurice ruptured the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in her left leg while competing. After surgery that involved a donor graft and six months off the ice, her physicians were doubtful she'd be able to jump again. She is now training for the 2009 U.S. Adult Figure Skating Championships. "My physical therapist is impressed with what I can do," she says.

This writer, an adult gold pairs competitor, has experienced a number of sports-related injuries, ranging from a torn hamstring to a dislocated left shoulder that required months of physical and occupational therapy. When pairs skating and jumping horses have been passions for more than 30 years, it's hard to let injuries get in the way. But with age comes wisdom, so it's good to be sensible, exercise a bit of caution and heed the advice of Northwestern University orthopedic surgeon James Hill, M.D., who says, "Listen to your body...and be careful!"



Christine Lawless, M.D.

Coaches' Corner: Testing Tips

by Sandy Wittman



Testing can be exciting, nerve-racking, rewarding and even a learning experience. It's a time to perform the skills you have mastered in front of a panel of qualified judges. You have practiced and practiced, and remember, the judges want you to pass and skate well. Below are some things to know before you test:

One month prior:

1. Discuss with your coach if you are ready to test.
2. Fill out your application properly with necessary signatures, and send it in on time.
3. Call in a familiar judge to "mock test" your elements.

One week before testing:

1. Get enough rest
2. Eat properly
3. Practice the full test and make changes where needed. *(Testing Tips continued on Page 3)*

"Skating through a performance without 'hitting the wall' requires endurance that comes from cardiovascular training."

A glance at any supermarket checkout reveals stacks of magazines encouraging us to exercise, lose weight, look great and feel better. They often point out that exercise is important to prevent or slow the progress of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, high cholesterol, obesity, arthritis and a host of other ailments. What they don't mention is that the same combination of cardio and strength, plus flexibility and balance training, builds the foundation of a strong, agile body required for figure skating.

Cross-Training by Heather Ross

CARDIO

Any skater, young or old, will confirm that time slows to a crawl for even 1:40 of an artistic program, let alone the nearly four minutes of a championship masters adult free skate program. Skating through a performance without "hitting the wall" requires endurance that comes from cardiovascular training.

Cardio includes any activity that raises the heart rate to an aerobic level, commonly defined as about 75 percent of maximum heart rate (MHR equals 220 minus your age, beats/minute; MHR for a 40-year-old is 220 minus 40 equals 180 beats/minute). For example, a 40-year-old with an MHR of 180 beats/minute would aim for a sustained heart rate of 135 beats/minute for cardio training.

Cardio may include running, cycling, swimming, in-line skating, speed skating, aerobics or spinning classes, cardio machines at the gym, and some vigorous forms of yoga. Skating coach, choreographer and distance runner Grant Rorvick points out that, while beneficial for overall health, not all cardio helps skating. "You can go running for an hour, but that's not going to get you through a two-minute program. Doing something like sprinting for the duration of your music comes closer to the energy that you need on ice."

STRENGTH

Free weights or circuit machines at the gym can help develop strength. However, skaters benefit from long, lean muscles rather than muscle bulk and should avoid lifting very heavy weights. More repetitions with lighter weights builds strength without bulk.

Adult skater and coach Jill Kinsley, who passed senior moves at age 51, recommends using ankle weights to build leg strength required for spirals. "Use small weights – just a few pounds at most – and hold a spiral position. Aim first for 30 seconds, then work up from there," Kinsley recommends.

Core strength, crucial for spins, checking turns and nearly every other aspect of skating, is built with the dreaded abdominal crunch. Activities like Pilates help build a strong core. Exercises involving an unstable surface (like a stability ball, wobble board or BOSU) engage and challenge core muscle groups for balance, providing a welcome change from routine crunches. Even without specialized equipment, performing strength exercises like bicep curls or squats standing on one leg achieve this balance effect. Dance and some active forms of yoga also challenge strength and balance. Strength exercises requiring stability and balance multitask by challenging several muscle groups at once, making a workout more effective in less time.

Adventurous types may try surfing, snowboarding or rock climbing to build core and limb strength for a change from crunches and lunges.

JUMPS

The explosive power required for jumping can be mimicked off ice. Many skating programs and coaches offer off-ice jump classes to work on the power and technique required. An exercise such as jumping straight up to land in on-ice landing positions helps build muscle reflexes for successful jumps without ice time costs, crowded sessions or fear of falling on ice. You can also practice rotational jumps off ice. More specifically, you should practice take-offs that mimic your on-ice jumps.



Adult skaters are always time challenged between work schedules, family life, other activities and, of course, sleep. That small escape from everyday life often requires waking up early or sacrificing evening time with loved ones. Whether competitive or recreational, many adult skaters just don't want to miss a day of ice time. If you travel for leisure or work, time away from the ice is inevitable. It is possible to combine skating and travel, and planning ahead can get you on the ice nationwide and overseas. Take advantage of it!

Skating Travel Tips

- Research the area you will be in first (major cities usually have multiple rinks)
- Determine your closest and next closest rinks, and call for freestyle/public sessions
- Inquire if there are adult skating sessions
- Ask what sessions are least crowded to ensure quality ice time
- Work times into your travel schedule
- Look up other adult skaters in the surrounding area who can help with rinks/sessions
- Competing at adult sectionals and the U.S. Adult Championships is an opportunity to meet adult skaters around the country

Resources: ArenaMaps.com [Figure Skater's Website](http://FigureSkater'sWebsite) FindRinks.com



(Testing Tips continued from Page 2)

The night before testing:

- Write down goals you want to achieve when testing.
- Visualize each move and element you will be performing.
- Know the order of test elements (moves in the field).
- Prepare your equipment and clothing.

Testing day:

- Wake up early enough to not rush your routine.
- Eat a great breakfast and lunch.
- Arrive at the rink 45 minutes early and check in with the test monitor.
- Review your goals and find your coach.
- Stretch before your warm-up and be ready to get on the ice.
- Use your warm-up time effectively.
- Remember to drink water and keep hydrated before and after the test.
- Take a deep breath before beginning your test.
- During the test, stay focused and breathe. Leave what you did behind, whether it was good or not. All tests are judged by the total number of points. Some elements might outweigh another, and the scores will reflect that.
- After completing the test, wait to see if a re-skate is requested. If so, you will have a two-minute warm-up. Mentally visualize the element and walk it through. Breathe and go for it. Remember, it is in your muscle memory. You can do it!

(Testing Tips continued)

- We all hope for passes. However, re-tries are an important part of the learning process. Take the judges' remarks and use them as teaching tools.
- Take the time to ask the judges for feedback, and remember to thank them for their time and comments.

Training after the test:

- Review test sheets and judges' remarks.
- Begin a new test level or train for the re-try at a better level next time.

Testing is important in skating. It keeps us focused on goals and improves skills. Remember, you are in control of your body and your actions as you train day in and day out. Stay calm and focused, and keep practicing. **Oh, one more thing...listen to your coach!**

(Cross-Training continued from Page 2)

ICE DANCE

Solo or partnered ice dance is an excellent way to develop edge quality required for footwork and overall skating skills. Ice dance requires its own cross-training for success but can be incorporated into freestyle training.

One expert tip is to set goals for training rather than simply do workouts. A goal-oriented mindset results in stronger physical gains by increased motivation. Treat your off-ice workouts as training just as much as your on-ice time. In addition to training for an upcoming competition or test, you may want to sign up for a 5K run or sprint triathlon to help spur your cardio training with a challenge and dual training goal.

Above all, get out there and move! Make exercise a daily habit, even if you only have time for 15-20 minutes. Make your exercise multitask for you by combining strength and balance challenges that raise your heart rate, and use cardio to build stamina for your programs. A good cross-training habit will benefit your skating. More important, it will benefit your overall health.



Skating Figures

Adult skaters who do figures will be featured in an upcoming issue of SKATING Magazine. For a copy of adult compulsory figures, contact Juliet Newcomer at jnewcomer@usfigureskating.org.

<http://www.bootandblade>

The Adult Skating web pages are changing! Ideas or suggestions on navigation? E-mail Lexi Rohner at lexisk8@aol.com.

[U.S. Figure Skating Web Site](http://www.usfigureskating.org)



Adult Skating Committee Mission Statement

*It shall be the responsibility of the
Adult Skating Committee to:*

- Encourage and support the growth of figure skating for adults;
- Create and encourage the creation of programs addressing the needs of the adult skating community;
- Work in conjunction with the Competitions Committee to continue the development of the U.S. Adult Figure Skating Championships and other adult competitive opportunities.

U.S. Figure Skating

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U.S. Figure Skating has an extensive volunteer network of committees supporting all disciplines and aspects of figure skating. The Adult Skating Committee (ASC) is dedicated to the growth and advancement of adult skating within U.S. Figure Skating. Committee representatives exist in most areas of the country and are a valuable resource in assisting adult skaters with information regarding testing, clubs, rule interpretation, and, most of all, networking with other adult skaters. To reach an ASC member near you, or to get involved, please visit www.usfigureskating.org and click on “Programs” for Adult Skating, or click [here](#).

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2009 Adult Skating Calendar

April 2009

21-25 — U.S. Adult Championships, Grand Rapids, Mich.

May 2009

16-17 – Peach Classic, Atlanta, Ga.

28-31 – ISU Adult International Competition, Oberstdorf, Germany

June 2009

4-7 – Mountain Cup Adult Open and Training Camp, Villard de Lans, France

July 2009

24-26 – Spectacular Adult Skating Camp, Pleasant Arena, Saint Paul, Minn.

Other Summer Adult Camp Weeks

- Ice House, N.J., Adult Camp
- Aspen, Colo., Adult Week
- Lake Placid, N.Y., Adult Week
- Sun Valley, Idaho, Adult Week

2009 World Championships
Los Angeles, Calif.
March 22-29, 2009

Adult Skating

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**** Many open and club competitions nationwide also include adult open events.**