

CHILLER SPEEDSKATING CLUB FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (updated Jan 2011)

1. What does it take to become a member?

Becoming a member of our club simply means that you attend practices on a fairly regular basis, follow our safety rules and the directions of our coaches, and that you have fun. Our practice times can vary and they are listed on the Chiller Website at <http://www.thechiller.com/programs/speedskating/schedule>.

2. What about the coaching staff?

Our head coach is Charlie King. His list of accomplishments in speedskating is extensive and includes membership on the United States Olympic Short Track Speed Skating team, a former United States National Champion, and a former United States speedskating record holder. Assisting in coaching duties are David Lee, Chris Knapp, Diana Harrell, and Glen Gardner, all of whom are elite skaters who have won awards at state/national competitions.

3. How much does it cost?

There is no membership fee. Other than the cost of your equipment, the only charge to be a member of our club is the cost of getting on the ice when you attend practice. The first practice you attend is FREE. This will allow you to decide if you would like to continue to participate. Please contact us 1 day in advance if possible so we will know to expect you. We are currently meeting one evening a week for an hour--cost \$10.50, and Saturday morning for one and a half to two hours--cost \$15. You will pay at the Chiller front desk and sign a waiver sheet when you arrive. You will be given a cash register receipt. Simply write your name on the top of the receipt and hand it to the coach before getting on the ice. There's no cost associated with the practices you don't attend. If you do skate regularly, we encourage you to join The Ohio Speedskating Association, which has a \$10 annual fee.

4. How can I learn to speedskate?

We welcome skaters of any ability to attend our regular practice time. You will be grouped with other new skaters and will receive informal instruction that is appropriate for your individual experience and background. In addition, we work with the Chiller Rink management to offer a "Learn to Speedskate" class 2 or 3 times per year. This is a series of 4 Saturday morning classes of 1/2 hour each that are directed specifically toward new speedskaters. The class series are arranged based on inquiries and are not part of the normal Chiller learn to skate program.

5. What equipment MUST I wear to skate with the club?

You will notice that accomplished speedskaters in competition wear formfitting spandex clothing called "skins", with color-coordinated helmets, gloves, and skates. You'll also notice some of this clothing at our practices. We don't recommend that you make that investment right away. However, you MUST wear the following in order to skate with us:

a. Helmet-- There are helmets made specifically for speedskating. However, you can wear a bicycle helmet and some skaters even wear one of the helmets available for loan at the Chiller.

b. Eye protection -- Occasionally, a person skating ahead of you may kick up some ice chips. We don't want you to be hit in the eye. Therefore, if you wear glasses, that will be fine. If you don't wear glasses, you will need to wear some kind of lens to protect your eyes, such as sunglasses. If you find that the darker lenses distort your view of the ice, you may opt for clear lenses or safety glasses.

- c. Neck guard -- You may be able pick these up in the hockey section at a local store such as Dick's Sporting Goods. Look for a neckguard that has a "bib" that fits under your shirt. The materials should be cut resistant such as a Kevlar neck guard that uses Velcro. We try to keep a small selection of speedskating neckguards in stock that can be purchased at a club discount price of \$20-\$25.
- d. Long-sleeved jacket or shirt – Layers are highly recommended. The ice is cold. Sometimes we will stand still and listen to instructions, while other times we will be moving and generating heat.
- e. Gloves – should be comfortable and fit well.
- f. Long pants or sports tights – these should be comfortable and should not drag too low.
- g. Knee pads -- padded knee guards such as those used in soccer or inline are fine. Again, these should be available at any local sporting goods shop. They can be worn over or under the pants.
- h. Shin guards -- these are generally a plastic guard that fits over the shin and is secured behind the calf with an elastic strap. Again, these are similar to what is used in soccer or field hockey.
- i. Ankle guards -- we require our skaters to wear Kevlar ankle guards. Because these are difficult to find commercially, we have them available for \$5 per pair.
- j. Speed skates – for younger skaters, we recommend renting skates from us if we have a pair that fits. New skates can be expensive. Before making the investment you may want to be sure the feet have stopped growing. We have a limited number of skates under oversight by Chris Knapp that have been donated or purchased with rental money over the years, but unfortunately we cannot guarantee that they are perfect. Some rental skates are also available for adults who join us. However, in order to preserve our inventory, we ask the adult skaters to obtain their own skates once they've been with us for a few months. We will be happy to provide you with more information about the rental program when we fit you for your skates.

6. How do practices work?

We recommend arriving at the rink at least 20 minutes before the start of practice. This will provide sufficient time to be completely ready to get on the ice the minute practice is scheduled to start. Some of our members arrive earlier in order to do some stretching or other warm-up exercises -- always a good idea before getting on the ice. If you happen to arrive late, you may still participate, but please enter the rink using the far door and be sure the group is aware that you are entering.

We spend the first couple of minutes "putting out the pads", which means lining the walls of the rink with padding. All skaters assist in this operation, as well as in putting the pads away at the end of practice. While the pads are being placed, one of our elite skaters will place seven small rubber "blocks" at each end of the rink to mark the track.

Once the pads are in place and the track is laid out we begin a warm-up at a slow to medium speed. The flow of traffic is ALWAYS counterclockwise. Then Charlie or another coach will come out onto the ice and call everybody to the center. Club announcements are made and new skaters are introduced. Charlie then assigns each skater into one of three groups: (1) younger skaters and new skaters; (2) experienced skaters; and (3) elite skaters. For safety and instruction purposes, each group will be on the track by itself, either doing slow or fast laps or a specific drill. Meanwhile, the other two groups will be in the center of the rink, one will be recovering from having been on the track and the other will be preparing to go onto the track.

The key to skating fast and under control is to master speedskating technique. Practices generally include a mixture of exercises involving technique, speed, endurance and starts. Charlie will observe each skater and determine what specifically he or she needs to work on. He will continue to work with each skater to be sure his or her technique continues to improve. This applies to new skaters and elite skaters alike. Generally, if he's not talking to you, it's because you're doing it right. Feel free to ask if you are not sure if you understand. The other coaches and experienced skaters may also see something you are doing and offer their own suggestions to try.

7. Is there a minimum age?

Our club does not have a strict minimum age limit. We've had skaters as young as five years old do extremely well. If your youngster can skate without assistance, he or she should be fine skating with us. It's sometimes surprising how fast young skaters develop skills. If you are uncertain as to whether your child should join us we will be happy to talk to you specifically about your concerns. In the alternative, your child can join us for a practice session, after which our coach will let you know his recommendation.

8. What about competitions?

We sometimes have short races during practices and will occasionally run a “mock meet” where our skaters compete for fun with each other. Many of our skaters also attend regional and national meets. However, not all of our skaters do so and it is certainly not a requirement of our club. If you so decide you want to compete, there are a number of opportunities throughout the fall and winter months. Occasionally, we may hold a meet on our home ice, but this requires nearly 40 volunteers and is rare. Therefore, most meets require out-of-town travel to the Cleveland area; Rochester, NY; Pittsburgh; and locations in Michigan and Indiana. Many of these meets run an “All Points” format, where everyone who is registered earns points at all racing distances, and no one is eliminated. See any of the coaches for more information about meets.

9. How far could I (or my child) go in this sport ?

Speedskating is still a small “niche” sport in the US, so State and Regional competitions are open to all ages and abilities. It takes many years of technical development and experience to reach a nationally competitive level, but several of our skaters have actually gone on to attain national rankings and age group championships. With those ideas in mind, our primary goal is to foster sportsmanship and a lifetime enjoyment of the sport and allow individuals to set their pace and goals of training. Especially for young skaters, it is essential that the drive to improve come from within. If you are interested in competing at the highest levels, feel free to talk to any of the coaches about how to reach those goals.

10. Important Links

- a. www.usspeedskating.org For information about speedskating and a schedule of nationally sanctioned events.
- b. www.ohiospeedskating.com For all information about speedskating in Ohio.
- c. www.nationalspeedskatingmuseum.org/Photo%20Albums/JerrysAlbums.htm - Jerry Search takes photos at all important/national meets. These photos contain incredible detail of speed skating technique.

Further information For further information please contact David Lee at dtlee@wowway.com

Visit and join our **Facebook** Group “**Speedskating in Columbus OH**”

Thanks for checking us out! See you on the ice!

