

Volunteers chill out at ice arena

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Skating rink covered with ice in preparation for season opening Friday

By LEE JUILLERAT

Up all night, just chilling out.

Volunteers from Klamath Ice Sports, the group that operates the Bill Collier Community Ice Arena, have spent the past two nights participating in an annual ritual: covering a 17,000-square-foot concrete slab with a sheet of ice.

It's a necessary step in preparing the arena for its opening, which is set for Friday. Ice skaters will find new features this season, including a sound system that will provide skating music, and permanent, indoor restrooms.

Before the skating begins, the 200-by-85-foot rink needs to have a layer of ice. That's where the volunteers come in.

"You couldn't pay me to do this," laughed Roger Brown, between rounds of using a 200-foot long hose to spray layers of water on the ice.

Brown served as the nozzle-man Friday night, assisted by five hose-hauling volunteers - Geoffrey Machado, Tom Feeley, Lyman Mason, Rollie Knaggs and Bill Collier. Moving in a conga line, the team held the hose, which wriggled like a mammoth boa constrictor, to prevent it from touching the slab surface. It takes 15 to 20 minutes to spray water on the surface, then about that much time to allow the layer of water to freeze.

"You can almost watch it freeze," Brown said.

Each application of water results in a layer of ice about 1/16th of an inch thick. About 1 3/4 inches of ice, which requires 20,000 gallons of water, is needed before the arena's Olympia ice grooming machine can be used to keep the slab iced through the rest of the season.

Icing the slab is done at night to take advantage of chilly temperatures. As Brown explained, "It's hard to make ice when the sun is up."

Between rounds, volunteers were treated to pizza and soft drinks, and occasional naps.

"Pizza and Pepsi will keep you awake pretty well through the night," Brown said.

This year marks the fourth year Brown, Collier and Feeley have iced the slab at the Collier arena, which is located near the entrance to the Running Y Ranch Resort off Highway 140.

Until 1999, icing was done at the weather-temperamental outdoor rink beside Lakeshore Drive near Moore Park.

The Collier arena, which has 10 1/2 miles of PVC pipe underneath the slab, can be temperature-controlled to keep the slab surface chilly enough temperatures to ensure the ice doesn't melt.

"We're very grateful for all our volunteers, and very excited about our season," said arena director Suzette Machado as Brown and his team applied the ice.

For more about this season's plans, including skating lessons, open skate sessions, hockey leagues, special programs and holiday parties, call 850-5758, e-mail kismgr@cvc.net or visit the Web site at www.klamathicesport.com.

Skating spectacular

The third annual Figure Skating Spectacular at the Bill Collier Community Ice Arena is set for 7 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 13, featuring Darlin Baker of Sun Valley, Idaho and skaters from Medford and Bend. Admission is free but donations are appreciated.

Baker is a U.S. Figure Skating Association gold medalist and professional ice skater who has performed with Scott Hamilton, Nancy Kerrigan and Todd Eldredge. Baker will be available to teach private lessons and lead figure skating clinics on Sunday, Nov. 14.

Skater brings lifetime of experience

Published November 12, 2004

By CHARLES COSSEY

For the Herald and News

When Darlin Baker, a professional figure skater and ice skating instructor, steps on the ice at the Bill Collier Community Ice Arena Saturday evening, it will be a continuation of her life-long involvement with the sport and art of figure skating.

"I could say that I was almost born with ice skates on my feet," said Baker, who will be the featured guest artist at Klamath Ice Sports free third annual Figure Skating Spectacular gala exhibition Saturday.

"I began skating at the age of 1 1/2 years, which might seem a bit young, but every member of my family was a professional figure skater and it seemed perfectly normal for me to be on skates," she said. "I fell in love with figure skating and I've never stopped."

Baker was born in Orange, Calif., grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah. Her parents, five sisters and brother skated in the big Ice Follies and Holiday On Ice shows, which toured the U.S. continuously during the last half century.

"I grew up on skates, and my sisters were my first teachers. But, I began taking official lessons when I was 3 or 4 years old."

She began competing and performing as a young girl.

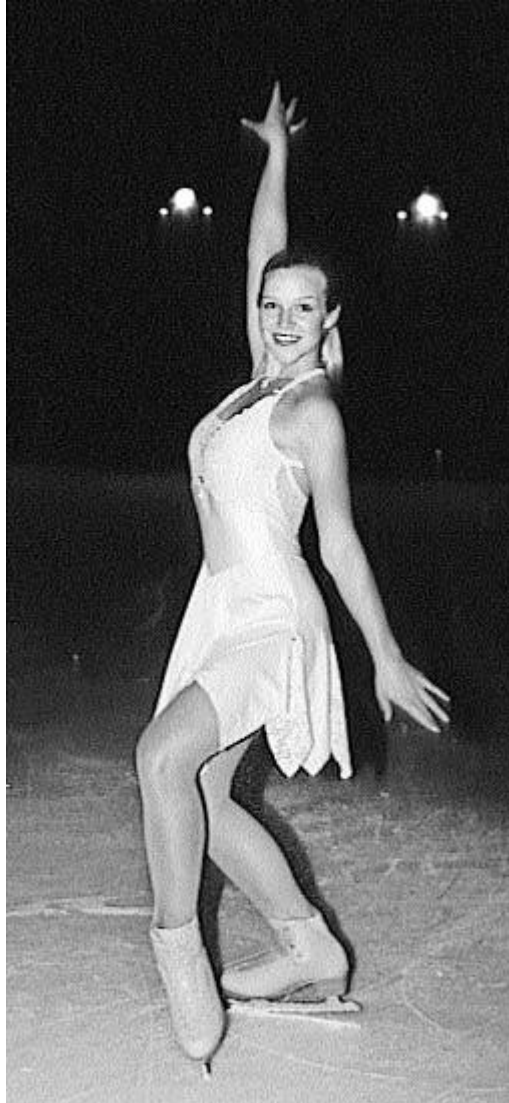
"I loved the freedom of being on skates as well as the grace and flow of moving over the ice. I also really enjoy performing for an audience."

In Saturday's exhibition, Baker will appear in four different numbers, including the opening and closing group numbers, which she is choreographing. Her two solo routines are set to Annie Lennox's recording of "Primitive" and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy's recording of "Minnie The Moocher."

"I'm also looking forward to working with the group of Southern Oregon skaters who will be appearing in the exhibition with me," she said.

Baker is a full-time skating instructor at the Sun Valley Skating Center and teaches 35 local skaters, "from beginners all the way through the senior levels of figure skating."

Sunday morning, Baker will teach a series of special figure skating clinics at the ice arena, including classes for tiny tots, basic skating skills and several special clinics for edges, spins, freestyle and glitz and glamour.



Darlin Baker strikes a pose on the ice. Baker will be the featured guest at the Bill Collier Community Ice Arena at the Running Y Ranch Resort on Saturday.

After competing in amateur competitions for ten years, Baker turned professional in 1994 when she competed in the U.S. Open Professional Championships. She has lived and worked in Sun Valley since 1997 and has appeared regularly in the popular weekend ice shows presented on the outdoor ice arena behind the Sun Valley Lodge.

"I've had the opportunity to share the ice there with many of the greatest skaters in the world, who all come there to skate in the weekend ice shows, which has been a real thrill for me."

Her favorite skaters include Jill Trenary, a three-time U.S. ladies champion and 1990 world champion; Sasha Cohen, whom she admires for her "grace and elegance on the ice;" and Michelle Kwan, who Baker hopes will win a gold medal in the 2006 Winter Olympics.

When not on the ice, Baker loves to work out, practice yoga, ski, snowboard, rollerblade and hike.

"Sun Valley is such a beautiful place to live and work. I've always loved the area."

Baker is currently attending the College of Southern Idaho with the intention of earning a degree in business.

"I want to start a clothing design company, but figure skating is still my primary interest, at least for the next few years."

Editor's Note - Cossey is the volunteer director of figure skating at the Bill Collier Community Ice Arena.

Skating exhibition

The Third Annual Figure Skating Spectacular will begin at 7:00 pm on Saturday evening at the Bill Collier Community Ice Arena, which is located just inside the entrance to the Running Y Ranch Resort.

An open skating session, at which regular admission prices apply, will take place following the gala exhibition.

For more information, telephone (541) 850-5758 or visit Klamath Ice Sports Web site at www.klamathicesport.com.

Limited parking is available beside the ice arena. Additional parking is available at the Running Y Lodge. A 13-passenger shuttle will be available to transport guests from the lodge to the ice arena.