

MY SPEED SKATING EXPERIENCE

It was February 2010! The anticipation had built to a feverish pitch. And now it was here! The first Canadian Olympics of my life (I'm eleven years old)! All my family and friends ran to the TV to watch the magic begin. When the games began, I was in awe. How did these people get so good? That was the beginning of two weeks that led me to where I am today.

The next day my dad brought me a magazine. At first I thought it was my National Geographic magazine or the latest comic, but instead it was all the events in the 2010 Olympics. The one thing that really caught my eye was an event called 'speed skating.' I had no idea what it was, but it sounded interesting, and that was all that mattered to me. So the next day I found myself plunked in front of the TV waiting for the skating to start.

The first thing I noticed was the skates. They seemed so awkward and thin. I wondered how anyone could skate with those wonky, knife-like things. Suddenly, the pistol went. The skaters were skating so fast sometimes all you could see was a blur of colour. I couldn't even imagine going that fast. From that day on, I watched the Olympic speed skating every day until the end of the Olympics.

The day the Olympics were over, I was devastated. Those speed skaters had been like my best friends for two weeks. I didn't want them to, just, go. But then my mom called me to the computer. I decided it must be important, if she wanted to miss some of the closing ceremony to show me something. It was so worth it...

Five months later I found myself at the Olympic Oval in Calgary, Alberta for the first time accompanied by my friends Molly and Molly trying out speed skates for the first time. I was astounded. These skates didn't feel like knives at all. In fact, they were actually quite comfortable. We whizzed around the ice, doing lap after lap after lap. Our coaches taught us about crossovers, recovery position, pushing, basic position, and how to go fast. I loved it so much I decided I wanted to add speed skating as one of the sports I do over the school year. I've now realized speed skating is a big commitment. I skate long track twice a week and short track once a week. It takes Molly and Molly and I an hour to get there (not to mention the traffic, and Calgary's inconvenient snowstorms), but I am speed skating, and that's all that matters to me.

A few weeks ago, something came we had all been waiting for. My club was holding a "mini meet" for everyone that was taking speed skating. I was so excited. I had wanted to do this since I first saw speed skating. But when I stepped on the short track ice, I got really nervous. What if I made a fool of myself? What if I fell? What if I got disqualified? Then I remembered those Olympic skaters and how brave they had been. Some won, some lost, some even got disqualified, but they all gave their best. That inspired me.

I think I did really well at the meet. I won in 200 metre pursuit, and came second most of the time in the other races. We haven't received our rankings yet, so I am still waiting to find out how I did overall. I am looking forward to a meet in Medicine Hat with Molly and Molly, and I'm sure we will do great. Above all, we will be working towards the goal that was motivated by this year's Olympic athletes... to become the best we can be. Who knows, maybe we'll even be in the Olympics one day!

I would love to meet one of my speed skating heroes and I love the Oval, so I hope you will consider me as one of your contest winners.

- Emily B.