

Elvis Stojko to perform in Bancroft April 6



By Nate Smelle

For half a century, the Bancroft Skating Club has entertained the community with its annual Ice Show/Carnival. To help celebrate this milestone, last week the club announced that they had an extra special guest skater coming to town as the main attraction at this year's show. Joining the club for its 50th anniversary Ice Show/Carnival on April 6, will be the two-time Olympic Silver medalist, three-time World Champion and seven-time Canadian figure skating Champion Elvis Stojko. With anticipation for his upcoming performance in Bancroft mounting, Stojko recently spoke with Bancroft This Week about his illustrious career and love of the sport. There are few figure skaters in Canadian history with a list of achievements as long as Stojko's. Along with his collection of Olympic medals, World and Canadian Championships, he received: the Norton H. Crowe Award for Canadian Male Athlete of the Year twice, the Lionel Conacher Award for Athlete of the Year for 1994 by the Canadian Press; and the Meritorious Service Cross from the Governor General of Canada. He was also named an inductee into: the Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in 2006; the Ontario Sports Hall of Fame in 2009; and the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame in 2011. In addition to his awards, Stojko raised the bar for his competitors as the first athlete to complete a quadruple jump combination in world competition in 1991; and the first to successfully complete a quadruple/triple jump combination at the 1997 Champions Series Final in Hamilton. Looking back on his career, Stojko said he is grateful to have so many fond memories. When asked to choose one that stood out, he said winning the Silver Medal at the Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan while dealing with a severe groin injury and battling the flu was an extra special moment. "There's so many different moments in my skating career, but 98 was a big one in Nagano with the injury and everything. That was a huge one, as I was basically skating on one leg. It was pretty nuts." Having grown up in Queensville, just south of Keswick, Stojko has a special place in his heart for smaller communities such as those found in North Hastings. In fact, when he and his wife Mexican figure skater Gladys Orozco aren't spending time on their 140-acre ranch near Bowmanville, they are enjoying time at their cottage north of Maynooth. As a child in Queensville, Stojko remembers how fun it was to go to the local rink and watch the big name figure skaters' perform at the annual carnival when they'd come to town. He recalls one encounter with World Champion, four-time Canadian national champion, and 1960 Olympic bronze medalist Donald Jackson that had a strong impact on him as a young skater. "In Newmarket when I was little, I remember Donald Jackson came out and did a seminar for us. That was really nice of him and I remember how it inspired me, so it's nice now that I can give back now. It's great to perform, and I like performing some new numbers that I'll be doing on the tour for Stars On Ice. I tried them out at the small town shows before I end up going on tour with them, which is quite nice. It gives me a chance to get a feel for the crowd and see if they like the numbers or not." Recognizing the many years of training and countless hours spent in the rink since he first laced up his skates, Stojko said all of the hard work was worth it and he would do it all again. He said it feels wonderful to still be able to skate at his age, and that people remember him. Offering advice to up and coming figure skaters who want to follow in his skate strides, Stojko advised them

to ?Follow your heart and don't let anyone stop you. That's the biggest thing. It's not about if you're going to be discouraged, you will get discouraged. It's one of those things that's just part of it. Allow yourself to get discouraged, take some time, pick yourself up and keep going. if it is really what you want to do, you can't give up. People will say 'you're so lucky that you're talented', but talent only takes you a portion of the way. I've seen a lot of talented skaters over the years that can really skate, but they don't have the willpower. It's all about the will, wanting it, how bad do you want it, and what you want to do with it. Don't give up and don't let anyone discourage your dreams. That's the biggest thing along the way, because there's going to be people that are going to be jealous, and envious, and all of that, but don't let those people stand in your way. You have to focus and be on top of what you feel is right for you. That's the most important, if you love it, you do it. ?Acknowledging the financial struggles faced by the Town of Bancroft and surrounding municipalities in order to maintain the ice surface at the North Hastings Community Centre, Stojko stressed the importance of having a local arena for a community. Pointing out how there can be a limited amount of things to do for youth in a small community, especially during the winter, he said losing the ice surface at the North Hastings Community Centre would be a big loss for the communities in North Hastings. ?It's huge! My wife, who is Mexican, when we drive to these smaller towns, she's like 'Oh my God!' In Guadalajara [Mexico] where we used to live there were 6.5 million people and one rink in the whole city ? and then it closed up. So there is no skating except for in a mall ? it's a small rink. Having arenas allows kids to go and enjoy themselves and learn skating. Not just to become a champion, but it's all about getting it out there and being active. Skating is such a huge part of our heritage in Canada, whether you're a hockey player, figure skater, short-track/long-track speed skater, whatever it may be. Skating is great for fitness, and as a way to get in shape. It allows kids to experience what that is like. Up there in Bancroft, I think it's a perfect place to have an arena. ?Highlighting how hard all of the local figure skaters have been working to prepare for the upcoming show in Bancroft, Stojko urged the community to come out and show their support. The bigger the audience the better, he said. ?The skaters, they're working most of the year, and they're putting together this show, ? Stojko said. ?The biggest thing is for them to perform in front of an audience. With figure skating, it is all about having an audience, so it would be great to have the community come out and support the skaters, and see what the kids are doing. ?The Bancroft Skating Club will put on two shows at the North Hastings Community Centre on April 6, with the first show at 1 p.m., and second at 7 p.m. For more information on the Ice Show/Carnival visit the Bancroft Skating Club's website at: www.bancroftskatingclub.com.