

Skating club ends season with British rock extravaganza



CanSkaters Isabella Best, Averí Card, Lane Humen, Jynelle Robbins, Raelynn Robbins, and Taylor Switzer perform to Blondie's/One Direction's 'One Way Or Another.' TONY PEARSON Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

Some of us remembered the lace collar and frock coat worn by the young lad checking tickets at the door of the North Hastings arena on Saturday. We had seen them on Mick Jagger and Peter Noone when they first came to North America in the 1960s (and a special prize goes to those who remember who Peter Noone was, and can still remember who they are). Along with other 'mod' costumes, it set the tone for the Bancroft Skating Club's 2016 ice show 'its 44th' entitled 'British Invasion.'

At the North Hastings arena on Saturday, the various skaters, from the CanSkate beginners to the Senior Stars, performed to British pop music from the '60s right up to Adele. The full audience expressed their support and appreciation with waves of applause. Even the occasional miscue by the youngest participants brought encouragement from the crowd.

The efforts of a host of organizers and helpers were evident. The club's core group of 10 workers blossomed to scads of helpers, according to the club president, Tracey Dale. For example, a crew spent the previous evening decorating until 10 p.m., and stayed after the show to take down the décor. Volunteers worked hours on the costumes. The program was both comprehensive and informative.

The skaters have been working with their coaches for a month and a half to two months getting their numbers ready. Volunteer Lindsay Simpson explained how the skaters had started their lessons in the fall under the guidance of the club's five coaches (Jennifer Knopp, Martina Hill, Sarah Dillabough, Seanna Dale and Lisa Allore). Over the course of the winter, they worked their way through testing of their skills, from the badges earned by the really young in the CanSkate program, through to the gold awards given to accomplished senior skaters. Most also took part in competitions, from five or six in the case of the Stars, to a couple in the case of more advanced Can-Skaters.



Madelynne Saylor performs to Martina McBride's 'Concrete Angel.' TONY PEARSON Special to This Week

To indicate the value of the introductory program, Simpson noted that many current NHL players had actually started their careers learning in CanSkate.

Dale noted that her daughter Seanna, now a coach, had started skating at the age of two, and did her first ice show at three. Another daughter, Annika - a noted gymnast who performed at the Pan-Am Games opening ceremony last summer - has been skating since the ripe old age of four.

Both Dale and Simpson further noted that their daughters loved the program, couldn't wait for it to start, and felt a let-down when it ends. To inspire this amount of devotion when practices are held three times a week speaks volumes about the enjoyment the young skaters derive. As Simpson said, 'They love it. After all, it's what we do in winter in this area.' The show's program added a further salute to the skaters and their families: 'It takes a lot, and it gives a lot.'

The club is assisted financially by Canadian Tire's Jumpstart program, aimed at increasing kids' involvement in physical activity, Quinte Children's Foundation 'Playing for keeps,' and Giving BAACK (Bancroft Area Athletic Charity for Kids). In addition, over 20 local businesses sponsor the club, running alphabetically from Allmake Appliance and Bancroft Autobody to Watts and Sutherland Autobody and William Watson.

Again, the program was rife with congratulations from sponsors. What Doctor Peter McEnery wrote was echoed by the entire crowd: 'Well done! Good job on a great year and a wonderful ice show!'

After the show, Dale pronounced it a success. 'It was very well received by the audience; I had so many positive comments. People really enjoyed it.' For many of the young skaters, it will seem a long time until the season starts again in the autumn.