

## Only African American Ice Dancing Team in America Skating toward a Bright Future and to the Olympics in 2014



### Only African American Ice Dancing Team in America Skating toward a Bright Future and to the Olympics in 2014

A sunny southern California community, where most teens are out surfing, boogie boarding and skate boarding, is NOT where one would expect to find the only nationally-ranked competitive African-American ice dancing team in the entire United States - at any level (from Juvenile through Senior). But that's exactly where you'll find 14-year old Kassy Kova and her 18-year old ice dancing partner, Justin Ross.

We have just begun our fourth year of partnership together, in what we see as a long-term commitment to reach our goal of becoming National Ice-Dance champions, and Olympic competitors , declares Kassy, with fierce determination in her eyes. We placed 7th at US Figure Skating Junior National Championships in Salt Lake City, UT, in a field of the twenty three best intermediate-level ice dancing teams in America.

This is just one small step on the long road ahead for these two dedicated athletes in an unusual competitive sport for African Americans.

Ice Dancing -- an unusual sport indeed for Kassy whose parents arrived in San Diego from Africa the year before she was born. She wound up on the ice at the tender age of two, because her older sister fell in love with the sport - so the family was spending most of their free time inside a frozen rink. The cool climes of an ice rink seemed pretty appealing when San Diego summer days sizzled. San Diego's warm and sunny climate also propelled Justin Ross into skating. His mom sent Justin and siblings to the neighborhood rink for some cool summer fun, and he stuck with it.

Kassy and Justin formed a Juvenile ice dancing team in the summer of 2005, qualifying to compete at their first Junior National Championships in Colorado barely five months after getting together. Their strong first free dance performance on the national stage earned them an entry into the final rounds of competition, a thrill for this young team. This past December, Kova and Ross performed their personal best at their third appearance at a US Figure Skating Junior Championships, resulting in a 7th place national finish in a field of the top twenty four Intermediate-level ice dancing teams in America! Their steady climb over the first three years gives reason to count on a bright future for them on the national and international ice dancing scene!

The team has made amazing strides together since its very humble beginnings. Although Kassy had begun testing up the US Figure Skating ladder of skating skill levels since the age of two, her new partner Justin had to pass some thirty US Figure Skating tests in the first three years to hone his skating skills to a highly-competitive level. But these two young athletes know a thing or two about hard work and discipline! They pursue their Olympic dreams on a schedule that most youngsters in Southern California (or anywhere for that matter) would recoil from! Three hours before a dazzling cobalt and golden dawn breaks over the eastern mountains in San Diego, Kassy and Justin crawl out of their beds to go around the corner to the rink for their four hours of daily training. Rhythmic aerobics and stretching to an eclectic ethnic beat gets their blood pumping before the skates are laced up. Then synchronized skating drills, freedance choreography and run-throughs, and practice runs of compulsory ice dances (such as the Foxtrot and the American Waltz) are executed under the tough but loving direction of their coaches, Olympian Ice-Dancer and 3-time National Ice Dance champion Suzy Semanick Schurman and Skating Director, Wendy Smith. "There is so much potential with these kids!" exclaims coach Suzy, when asked about her team. And what's best is that no matter how hard they are working& she continues, "they are having the time of their lives!"

Kassy and Justin have a lot of things going for them as a team. They've both known each other since they were very young. And the uncanny thing is that Kassy and Justin look so much alike everyone who meets them for the first time mistakenly thinks that they are brother and sister! They have the same long and lithe body type, same coloring, with the similarities running as far as their same deep dimples when they break into matching big grins! They live only two blocks apart with the ice rink they train in and call home in between! They get along like brother and sister too! Inside and out they are uncannily alike; both have the same deep commitment, strong work ethic, and passion for their sport, as well as the ability to smile and laugh at any moment, with bright eyes twinkling. They are both fully committed to the many hours of serious training at what most people would think of as ungodly hours (from 4AM to 8 AM daily!).

One of the major obstacles to many African-American skaters is the sheer cost of participating in a nationally-competitive skating team. In addition to their rigorous training schedule, and school, both Kassy and Justin work part-time, Kassy as a professional model, and Justin as a Junior Skating Coach to help contribute toward some of the team's expenses. The determination is there. They know what they are aiming for - national and international-level medals and in a few years, a shot at the Olympics. They will pour their hearts into achieving it. The bright California sun is shining on their bright future.

See the "News" page on their website for more National articles about Kova and Ross.

See team website: [www.kovaandross.com](http://www.kovaandross.com)

© 2008 Todays Drum LLC. All Rights Reserved.