

Focus on Coaching

We see them every day, we entrust our children to them to train and to mold, but how much do we know about them? Each issue read a close-up profile of one of SDFSC's top coaches. Be prepared to say "Wow!"

Wendy Smith, Canada's Gift to the San Diego Figure Skating Community



Q: When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A: Looking back I would have to say I really didn't make that decision until I was 15 years of age. As a youngster, I was always busy singing, dancing or playing all types of sports with our neighborhood friends.

Q: How old were you when you started skating?

A: I was actually taught how to skate at the age of 3 by my mother who was a speed skater. Apparently I took to the ice quite easily, good balance etc., but only continued to skate sporadically from that point on until my best friend finally convinced me, after much prodding, to try out figure skating since she thought I might like it.

Q: Where did you live?

A: We lived in the town of Newcastle, New Brunswick, Canada that boasted a population of approximately 8,000. Most Americans don't quite know where the province of New Brunswick is but quickly understand when I explain that one side of the province borders the state of Maine and

the other side borders the Atlantic Ocean.

Q: What discipline did you begin with?

A: Being a singles skater in Canada we were trained in figures, freestyle and dance. The figures were done on a circle eight and had to be practiced several hours a week in order to accomplish the shape, size and tracing of each print.

Q: Please tell us about your competitive career - how far did you go?

A: Well I have an interesting answer for you on this one! Remember I had previously mentioned that I first touched the ice at the age of 3 and my friend had finally convinced me to try figure skating? Well, I was 14 years old!! This was considered far too old to start the sport and have any level of success.

Well as luck would have it, my mother was a school teacher and understood the importance of obtaining strong basic fundamentals. New Brunswick was fortunate enough to have landed a coach from the west coast who excelled in these areas. After much research, we were able to book lessons with Carol Rossignol who is not only highly respected in Canada but also the United States.

This meant moving away from my family at the age of 15 and living with my grandmother 105 miles away from home. Although hard to leave my family, I absolutely loved the sport and wanted to accomplish as much as I possibly could.

Because of my love of the sport, tremendous support from my family, a coach who never doubted me for a second, moving to the other side of the country and a ton of hard work, I was able to accomplish in two and a half years what most skaters of my generation accomplished in five or six years. At the regional level I had placed 2nd in Novice ladies out of a group of 18 and had become the Junior Provincial dance champion of Saskatchewan, with my partner Craig Pierce.

Now came the tough part... To stay and continue down the competitive path, after being asked to do so from the provincial skating committee, or move to Toronto and train with World and Olympic caliber coaches to obtain the gold credentials in all three areas of the sport I had been trained in. I chose Toronto. At 17 and a half, I knew my years were limited and felt I needed to have the triple gold credentials in order to do what I always wanted to do --- teach!

Q: Where and when did you become a skating coach?

A: I was hired as the head coach back in Newcastle, New Brunswick at the age of 22.

Q: What do you enjoy most about coaching?

A: Seeing the happiness on the skater's faces each time they accomplish one of their goals. Having them get the joy out of the sport the way I did is heart warming.

Q: What is the downside?

A: Absolutely the early morning hours!!