

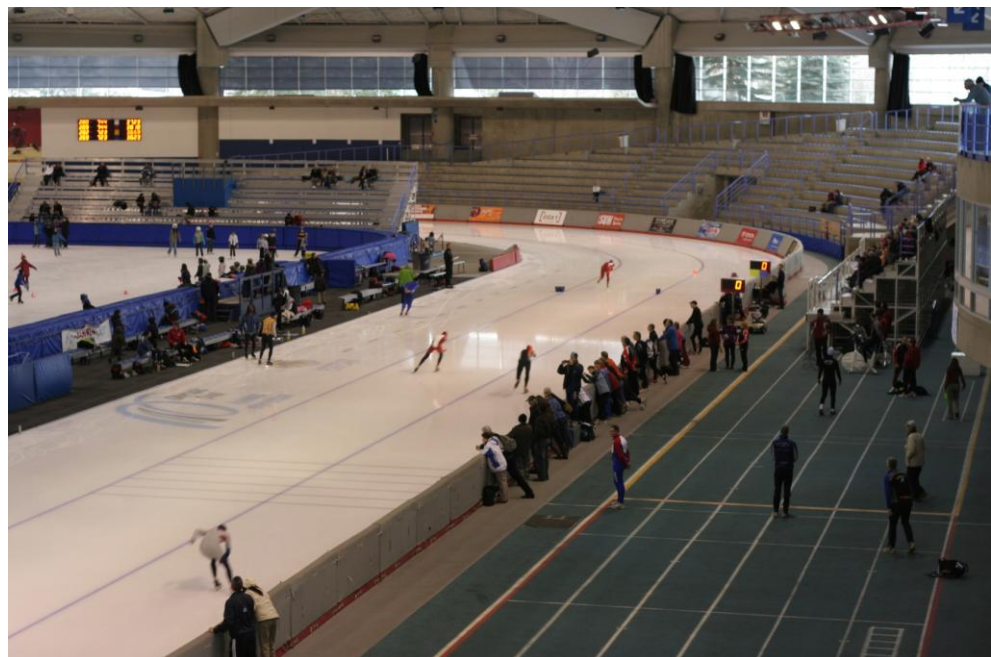
20th Masters' World Games – Calgary AB Canada

From February 24th to the 27th, the international masters speed skating community assembled for the “big meet” of the season. This year, the 20th Masters Allaround meet took place in beautiful (and cold, -28degF on Friday morning) Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Calgary was the site of the 1988 Winter Olympic Games. This oval was the first covered oval in North



America. What makes the Calgary oval special is the fast ice and is the integration of the oval with the other facilities associated with the University of Calgary. The managers of the facility take great pride in providing high quality ice ... fast, firm, and clean. This was evidenced by many personal bests, season bests and age class world records being set during the meet.

This year more than 200 skaters from across Europe and North America took part in the 20th Games. Having attended three previous Games, there were many familiar faces and many welcome reunions with



friends I have made over the years. There were some new faces and there were some missing faces as well ... Antonio, Paulo, Stephan, Boris, and Andrew, to name a few.

These Games followed two weekends of elite speed skating competition in North America, with the World Allaround Championships here in Calgary and World Cup competition in Salt Lake City. Some of the masters skaters took advantage of this opportunity and arrived early to North America to watch some great skating and adjust to the time and altitude changes.



Following the Games, many skaters headed for Salt Lake City for competitions. Some by plane and some by car with a quick stop at the Butte oval for a workout.

A significant number of North American skaters who are new to international competition took part this year. The few that I spoke with during and following the Games were happy to have met so many interesting skating competitors who share a passion for this sport. They



witnessed the sense of “family” that surrounds these Games. They felt the competitive energy that surges through skaters and spectators when the hoods are pulled up and pairs are

called to the line. They experienced the genuine interest in how each other's races went or felt. They heard how quickly words of support, encouragement, and praise are offered across all boarders. They *felt* the essence of the Masters' Games.... the brother/sisterhood that binds speed skaters together.



It is hard to imagine that only two years ago I was the lone skater representing the whole of North America at the Games in Bjugn, Norway. How far we have come in such a short time. The US and Canadian masters speed skating movement is gaining momentum and is being recognized and vital part of a healthy and sustainable elite speed skating program. Acknowledgement of effort is due many, but particularly the North American IMSSC members, Andrew Love and Brett Arnason for the leadership they exhibit nationally and for their continued roles as IMSSC Members.

Blending the needs of the masters community with the goals and needs of USS and Speed Skating Canada is a key element to the long term success of both programs for all age levels.



Continued local, national, and international level involvement and participation of all North American masters skaters is essential. I am looking forward to being part of a large North American Team that will be skating in the 21st Games in Erfurt next year.

In closing, this was a special gathering for Genevieve and me. After becoming acquainted at the Erfurt Games and spending much time together over the past two years, we became engaged this past

Fall. Sharing these Games with you was our coming out, that is, our return to the speed skating family as a couple. It was the Masters' Games that helped us to find each other. Experiencing the Games again together completed the circle for us. Thank you.