



## **Fort St John Speed Skating Club**

### **Speed Skating Meets 101**

*The following is used with permission from the Vanderhoof Clippers Speedskating Club , and has been edited for our region and club.*

#### **What to expect at a speed skating competition**

We encourage all members to participate in local competitions, otherwise known as ‘meets’. Competitions are a fun and educational aspect of speed skating, allowing members to meet and race with skaters from across their region, and sometimes across the province. Meets also allow skaters to put their practice drills to use and apply what they’ve learned to a racing situation. If you are a parent or skater new to racing, the following information will help you navigate your first few competitions! Remember, for your first few meets, ask lots of questions and seek out other parents in the club for guidance! We are all here to help!

#### **Registration**

To compete at a meet, you must first be registered with a club as a competitive skater. (Time trials are open to all skaters.) You may then register for events. Through the weekly updates we will notify you of upcoming events, and provide you with registration links, information, and a timeframe within which you must register. (You can also access registration information yourself, by visiting SSBC’s Events/Results Calendar). Usually the deadline to register is about two weeks in advance of the events except time trials which are about 4 days in advance. Late registrations will not be accepted. The registration form will ask for your child’s previous best times: you can ask a coach for help. SSBC Lookup is also a source for your skaters recent times. Please ask a coach or the meet registrar how to log in. If this is the first meet, make a note of this on the registration form--it's okay to leave those fields blank.

#### **What to take to a meet**

**Ensure your skate bag contains mandatory equipment:**

**Skates (sharpened blades) with both hard and soft guards, and a towel for drying blades**

Knee pads  
Shin guards  
Cut resistant gloves  
Safety glasses with strap (clear lenses are a requirement at higher level meets)  
Helmet  
Bib style neck guard  
Kevlar ankle guards (prior to a meet, source these through your club)

### ***Additional Very Helpful Items***

- Personal water bottle
- Extra skating clothes (water is put down on the track at a competition--skaters that fall may get wet. Extra clothing is especially important for younger skaters.)
- Fix-it kit: band-aids, spare skate laces and strap for safety glasses, duct tape, Tylenol etc.
- Blanket (for sitting on in the stands or using to keep warm)
- Items to keep young skaters entertained between races (activities, books, games etc)
- Camera (flash photography is not permitted during races. Skaters can be distracted and accidents can occur)
- Nutritious, appropriate snacks and lunches (if not provided by the hosting club)
- Jig (younger skaters are less likely to need skates touched up during the meet but please ensure that skates are sharp prior to the meet.)

### **Foods to bring**

Some venues prohibit serving food altogether. Clubs are not required to feed athletes when they host competitions: some do, some don't! Pay attention to the information provided on the registration form for each meet and plan accordingly. If you're on your own (or prefer your own), bring along an assortment of food to keep your skater going approximately eight hours (Time trials are only for a about 3 hours):

Proteins  
Whole grains  
Fruit  
Veggies  
Carbohydrates  
Fluids (water is best)  
Homemade snacks (e.g. muffins, breads)

### ***Foods to avoid***

*Junk food (e.g. chips, pop, candy)*  
*Concession stand fast food (e.g. French fries, hamburgers, hot dogs, pizza)*

If you are not sure of a particular food, ask your coach before you bring it to the meet. Avoid foods you do not usually eat--race day is not the time to try new things! Skaters will have a lunch hour assigned, but they should eat soon after racing, far enough ahead of the next race so they won't be skating just after eating. Grazing is better than waiting for a full meal.

Always hydrate immediately after a race. Parents, please note you likely will not have time to leave the arena once racing starts, so make sure you prepare and pack food and items prior to arriving at the rink!

### What to expect when you arrive

Skaters will be divided into three or four warmup groups which go on the ice in turn prior to the first race starting. They will each have a block of time assigned for warming up and becoming familiarised with the arena. Example: if races are scheduled to begin at 9:00 (a common start time), then warmups may begin at 8:00, with three or four groups on the ice for 10-15 minutes per group.

Plan to arrive 20 minutes or more before warmups start. Give yourself plenty of time! Missing a warmup is a poor start to your child's race day.

You will usually be met with a registration table at the venue. Ask directions to the change rooms and find one showing your club name (or the name of your town). Look around for familiar faces to guide you if you need help!

Confirm either with the coach, or on the posted race sheets in or just outside of the change room, what group (division) your skater is racing in. Division lists, warm-up lists, and schedules should be posted in the change room, or nearby in the hall outside the change rooms.

Identify the warm-up group your skater is in (warmups, like races, are almost always set up oldest to youngest).

Identify and collect the helmet cover(s) showing the racing number assigned to your skater(s). Usually these are handed out by the coach from your club. If not, ask! Your child cannot race without one.

Leave skate bags and equipment in the change room. If space is tight, find another place for bulky personal items such as food coolers.

Be efficient getting skates on and off for the warm-up – this is the busiest time of the meet, with the maximum number of skaters in the change room at once. It's important to be calm and prepared so skaters have a great start to the day.

### What to expect for warm up

Skaters get 10-15 minutes of warm up time on the ice in their designated racing groups. It's very important to warm up before racing, to make sure skaters are loose and confident on the ice they will be racing on.

Skaters should be ready a few minutes early prior to warm up. They must have helmets on and all equipment in order to be allowed on the ice.

After warm up, be sure to put skate guards back on to walk to the change room. Once in the change room, dry the blades and store skates with blade socks instead.

Skaters of all ages can benefit from a warmup off-ice (dry land) before each race. Practising starts, running, doing stairs are all good examples of dry land warmup. Do active warmups before racing, rather than stretches. Get muscles doing what they will do in a race!

## What to do to prepare for racing

### Race structure

Everyone wants to know: when will my child skate? A meet schedule rarely provides start times for races. Rather, distances are listed in the order they will be raced. Each group will skate distances appropriate to their age and ability. For each distance, the groups are divided further into 'heats'. The number of heats that may be skated are determined by the number of skaters in that group. There may be over a hundred races skated in a typical interclub.

The posted race schedules are important to become familiar with. Unfortunately they are often confusing to the first-timer! Follow the series number posted on the electronic scoreboard and be aware of the series number your skater will race in next. This is really important in case the scoreboard is behind or fails for some reason. Late skaters will not be allowed on the ice, and missed races will not be made up. Ask the heat box steward how far ahead you should be back in the change room and give yourself enough time to get your skater ready. This keeps both your skater and yourself from feeling stressed! Remember that 200 or 400 meter races will progress much more quickly than 1200 or 1500 meter races. Attach yourself to an experienced parent with a skater in the same division as yours and do as they do! You'll soon get the hang of it.

### Points

In short track speed skating, points are earned in final races (not heats). The heats determine which final a skater will be racing in: A, B, C or D. Primary, or 'A' finals, award the highest number of points, then 'B' and so on. Ask a coach or experienced parent how this works. A skater's accumulated total points from all distances raced determines their overall placing for the meet.

### Personal Best (PBs)

A skater's primary goal at a meet is to earn 'PBs' or 'personal best' times. A personal best time is earned when a skater races a distance faster than he or she has ever raced that distance before. Regardless of how they place in a race, the PBs are the goals worth really celebrating!

## What to expect at race time

Before races, the Heat Box Steward (or Clerk of the Course) calls skaters to wait in a specific area called the 'heat box' (not a box, and may not be heated) where they are organised into their racing groups. The Clerk will call them there ahead of their race time to make sure they are in order of racing. They will be checked for equipment and will not be allowed on the ice if they are missing anything. This would be a forfeit of the race as the skater would be disqualified for improper equipment. It is the parents' job to make sure skaters have all

mandatory equipment on and ready to race. Once your skater is in the heat box area, find a place to watch the race--parents should not linger in this busy area!

Skaters are lined up in order of the positions they will take at the start line. The first skater will carry a copy of the race to a referee on the ice. Skaters go on the ice when directed to do so by the Heat Box Steward. (Their skate guards will often be transferred to another gate where they will exit, after the race is over.) A referee directs the skaters to the start line and checks their equipment. The Starter then starts the race with these commands: "Go to the Start" (pause) "Ready" (skaters get into starting position); the Starter then fires a pistol or electronic device to indicate the start of the race.

Have fun, racers! This is your time to use the techniques you've learned and compete with other skaters on the ice. Listen for your coaches while you skate - they are giving you information to help you perform your best in the race. To help you keep track of how many times around the track you must skate, a Lap Counter calls out the number of laps remaining in your race while displaying the number (using coloured cards, a digital electronic display, or both). Go for personal bests, skate hard and turn left! Smile at the end of your races - you did it!!! After your race, the referee will direct you to the exit gate--the next group of skaters is waiting to come on for the next race!

### **After a race**

Put on skate guards to walk back to the change room.

Dry blades thoroughly with a clean towel and put on your blade socks

Coaches like to meet briefly with skaters after their races (usually in the change rooms). This talk is valuable to recap how the race went and get coaching suggestions for the next race.

Please make sure your skater has time to debrief with the coach.

Questions about race results must go through your coach. Parents and skaters are NOT allowed to challenge referees or enter the recorder's office. Only coaches can interact with these groups. Violation of this rule in the format of aggressive or hostile interaction could mean removal of the skater and parent from the rink.

At the end of an interclub meet, medals may or may not be awarded for the top 3 placements in each group (cookie medals or ribbons are sometimes awarded). Medals are mandatory at championships and are awarded to the top four placings.

Skaters: thank the meet volunteers assisting you and thank your coach! Your presence at a competition means a coach must be present, as well. As a coach he or she has spent many hours freezing in arenas during competitions! Show your appreciation!

Locally, events are planned with the Active Start races finished by noon. The total length of a meet will be influenced by registration numbers as well as other factors; most will last at least till mid-afternoon. Don't book anything for the rest of the day--the whole family will be tired out!

**Results**

**Results are usually posted by the host club on the BCSSA Events/Results Calendar several days following a competition. Clubs may forward results directly to members as well. Your child will enjoy seeing progress from one event to the next.**