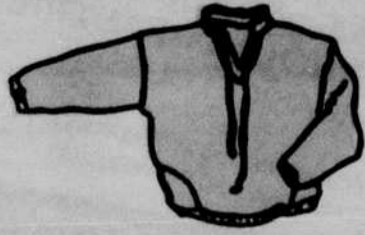


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IN TOUCH

HOCKEY

Continued from Page 5B

indoor winter exercise.

Bahls said his nine instructors have taught skating to hundreds of people of "all ages and abilities." He said lessons are important because most injuries occur to the skaters with no formal training. Those people who receive the most rudimentary training are much better off than someone just going at it alone for the first time.

Bahls said learning to properly fall without hurting oneself, and then learning how to get back up, are the most important elements of skating.

"We've had very few serious accidents, but they're always somehow related to either falling down or getting up," Bahls said. "Since we've really been pushing that with our beginning skaters, we've seen a real decrease in the injuries."

Bahls said most people who use the ice arena, which is located at 13th Avenue and Jackson Street at the Lane County Fairgrounds, fit into any of five "user groups." The Eugene Figure Skating Club, the Lane Amateur Hockey Association, the Lane Amateur Broomball Association and the Lane Speed Skating Club make up four of these groups. The fifth group is comprised of what Bahls called "recreational skaters": people skating during any of the 35 hours per week devoted to public sessions on the ice, and the people participating in lessons.

While the public sessions draw the most people, one area gaining interest is the sport of broomball, a game that Bahls said "combines part soccer and part hockey."

"It's a blast," he said. "There's nothing else like it. Everyone can play, regardless of whether they can skate or not. Because you're running in tennis shoes on an extremely slick surface, it takes away a lot of athleticism that one kid might have over another. It puts pretty much everyone on an equal basis."

While the only broomball league is for adults, that hasn't stopped the sport from catching on with kids of all ages. In early December, 100 middle school-age kids took part in a broomball tournament. And fraternities have been known to drop in for a Friday evening match now and then. Costs for participating on drop-in night is \$6 per person.

Those enjoying the fast-paced action of the Cold Ducks might also consider attending the hockey games of the semi-pro Eugene Blues, whose season runs into early April. Bahls said that for a town of Eugene's size, the Blues' "quality of hockey play is excellent."

"The Eugene Blues play what's called limited check, which is basically no heavy hits, although it happens all the time," Bahls said with a laugh.

Student and senior ticket prices to Blues hockey matches are \$2, and the general public pays \$4.

Lane County Ice offers a variety of price packages for people interested in skating during public sessions. There are season passes, which cover the 1993 calendar year, or a "Dollar Season Pass," which allows the holder to skate for \$1 during any public session. Another option is Family Night, where a family of up to five people pay only \$5 admission to any Tuesday evening public session. Skate rentals are \$2. For information, call 687-4423.

But you don't have to pay anything if you just want to watch and enjoy the fun during public sessions. Lane County Ice has seating capacity for almost 4,000, so there's plenty of room to kick back, relax, enjoy an evening off from work or studies and watch people take part in what is quickly becoming a traditional winter-time activity in Eugene.

—Jim Forst



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