

Features

Featured Local Events, Groups and People

Fast glides to Regional ice dance championship

JOSEPH MILLER

Staff Reporter

Nathaniel Fast, freshman, first skated because his mother entered him at the age of three into group lessons at the local rink. But soon, he developed an affection for the skates and the ice. He has continued with great success.

Fast ice dances, which is a specific branch in the sport of Figure Skating. It is literally like a couple dancing on the ice. His recent accomplishments in ice dancing include winning the Northwest Regional Championships two years in a row in 2005 and 2006 (making Fast and his partner the best pair in the Northwest area), and a sixth place finish at Junior Nationals last November.

However, this success came at a price for Fast and his partner, Heidi Henderson, a 13-year-old eighth grader. For the six months before both competitions, in order to get enough ice time, Fast woke up at 3:30 a.m. to skate with his partner every weekday except for Friday from 4:30 to 7:30 a.m. He would then race to get to school on time. Fast also woke up early on

the weekends and skated after school on some days. He spent the rest of his time studying for his school work and his driver's permit, eating and sleeping.

the skates, any additional training, competition fees, costs for going to the competitions, the payment for staying at hotels for the competition, and the driving fees to cap it off.

The person who feels the most stress from this may be Fast's mother, Barbara. Barbara puts as much effort as Nathaniel does into his skating. She drives Nathaniel everywhere. She pays for everything, and she feels the mental stress of competition.

"Transportation and the money are the hardest things to deal with. We have to be at the rink really early, or really late, and for a really long time," Barbara said.

But she is still at the rink watching when Nathaniel skates, and is at every competition to support him. Barbara sets up the skating times, the lesson times, and makes sure

Nathaniel receives what he needs in order to be the best skater he can be, and in the end, it is rewarding for her.

Watching him do well and seeing him smile is what she said motivates her to get Nathaniel on the ice.

Then, there is the matter of dealing with comments Fast receives about being a male ice skater. But there are also fans and supporters who look up to Fast for his ice skating. According to Fast, the hardest part about the sport besides the early and long mornings is the drama.

"The drama between skaters, the parents, setting up the skating times, knowing that you're watched all the time by the judges is really tough," Fast said.

In the end, the Fast family is happy to insert all of this effort into the sport; it all pays off.

"It was worth it," Fast said, commenting on the long and strenuous odyssey which led to Regionals and Junior Nationals. "Winning Regionals was awesome."

The season for figure skating's coming to a break ("or more of a calm point," Fast said), so Fast is beginning to have more time to do the other activities he enjoys. On the weekends, Fast likes to practice driving with his mom in parking

lots, in preparation for acquiring his license, and also because he feels the enjoyment and freedom of driving. A secondary sport he also enjoys is basketball, which he makes time to play after and during school with his friends. Fast also loves listening to music (all kinds except for classical), watching TV, playing video games and skateboarding. But skating is at the top of his list.

With his hard-working and dedicated attitude, Fast is skating to his next season of growth and success. For next season, Fast and his partner plan on taking a break from competition to take skating tests required to compete at higher levels. Then they hope to return the season after that in full, competitive force.

"We're going to try to let people think we're gone (for next season), but then come back with rage and fire," Fast said.

Fast also said that going to the Olympics would be cool. After that, Fast has other career choices in mind. He would like to become either a landscape architect or establish his own business in dentistry. Whatever path Fast chooses, he plans to glide through with the same fire and dedication that he puts into skating.



Nathaniel Fast, freshman, performs with his partner Heidi Henderson during a competition in 2005. Fast, who has been skating since he was three, recently won the Northwest Regional Championship for the second time in two years.

Photo courtesy of Nathaniel Fast

Then there were the other difficulties that naturally go along with the sport of figure skating. Not only is it one of the most technically, physically, and mentally difficult sports, it is also one of the most expensive, and it requires vast amounts of time and effort. The costs include the payment for being on the ice, the coaching fees (which can run up to \$30 per half-hour), equipment (decent skates cost roughly around \$800), costumes, sharpening

Idol too fake, going downhill

American Idol

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"The reason why these kinds of people watch this show is because they see ordinary people like themselves all of a sudden be in the center of attention," *Psychology Today* wrote in its studies. All of a sudden, 30 million pairs of eyes were on them, and in a matter of months, they've gained popularity, status and power. They've become superstars, as fake as they may be. And when viewers watch them, they begin to believe that they can achieve such things too.

So what does this show

about our country? Is it that we need deceit and bogus material to be presented in order to fulfill our lives and dreams? That our interest is in the worst of people, and not the best? If this be the truth, then this is morbidly depressing. We put a lot of our efforts into this senseless ridiculousness while 385 million people go hungry in the world (and that's just the beginning). Out of all the issues in the world, in which it takes barely a lift of a finger to fix, we choose to ignore them all for fake entertainment. No wonder America is one of the most hated countries in the world.

SAT classes, tests prepare students

KAITLYN RAGAN

Staff Reporter

No one likes tests. It's something most high school students naturally despise. The Scholastic Assessment Test will be held throughout the spring with various available dates to sign up to take it. This information will be especially helpful to juniors, since many will need the scores from this test to send to colleges in the upcoming fall.

The SAT Reasoning is a requirement when applying to most colleges and universities in the United States.

"If a student wants to, he/she can take the ACT which is also accepted by all colleges and universities," Tom Swearingen, counselor, said. Most students in the Midwestern states take the ACT, whereas those on the east and west coasts normally take the SAT, according to Swearingen. This means that whichever students decide to take, the

scores from one or the other are mandatory for college application.

To sign up for an upcoming SAT date, register on the College Board's web site, www.collegeboard.com. It might be a good idea to take it sooner rather than later because it can be taken more than once in hopes of improving scores.

The PSAT on the other hand, the Preliminary SAT, is available for all high school students to take. All students need to do is sign up at the beginning of the school year, pay a small fee, and show up. It always takes place on the second Saturday in October, and can be great practice for the real thing.

"I believe all college bound students should take the test (PSAT)," Swearingen said. The scores and answer sheets that are mailed show standings compared to other test takers, and can be converted into an estimated SAT score. Anytime throughout the year, the original PSAT test booklets

are available in the office for students to take home and study.

There are also many classes offered in and out of the school for students to get practice and helpful testing tips. Whether they are useful or worth the money is up to the student, but they might be worth looking into.

"Prep classes are listed on our web site, under the 'Guidance' section. Each class is strong and works for students in different ways to prepare for the SAT," Megan Runyon, counselor, said. Prices can range from about \$100 to \$350, and there are various classes that focus on all or just specific subjects of the test.

"A student needs to have conversations with his/her counselor to see if a class would help," Swearingen said. The last test date before the end of this school year is June 2, so be sure to sign up as soon as possible!