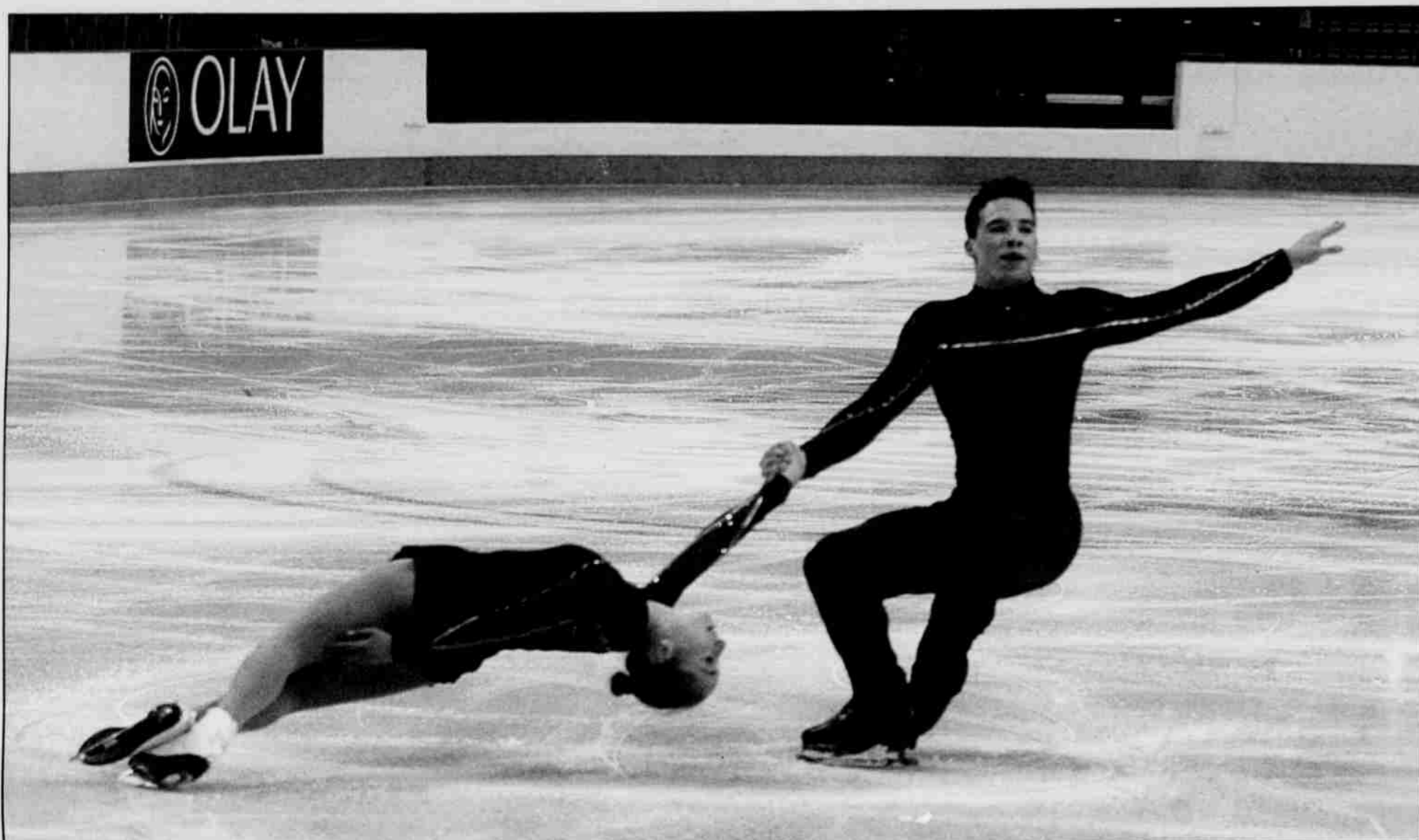


Tribe Welcomes U.S. Figure Skating Championships



Ice Time — Amanda Evora and Mark Ladwig competed in the Eastern Sectional Championship Pairs event at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships at the Rose Garden in Portland, Oregon on Wednesday, January 12. The 2005 Figure Skating Championships is the top amateur event in America. The World Figure Skating Championships will be held in March in Moscow, Russia. At *Smoke Signals'* press time, Michelle Kwan scored three perfect 6.0s on Thursday, January 13 to lead the women's competition.

By Ron Karten

About 17 Grand Ronde Tribal Elders had a great time getting to the 2005 State Farm U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Portland last week.

"We had a lot of fun on the bus," said Tribal Elder Arlene Beck. "Everybody was laughing and talking."

The group was among hundreds of Grand Ronde Tribal members given free passes to the championships thanks to a \$200,000 contribution from the Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino that made the Tribe the sole Local Presenting Sponsor.

As a result, Tribal Chairwoman Cheryl Kennedy welcomed some

5,000 fans "to the homelands of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde." Also as a result, Tribal Elder and former Tribal Chair Kathryn Harrison gave a stirring invocation as a local drum group, Three Drum Singers, performed the flag song to start and then went into the American Indian Movement (AIM) song, an honor song. The group has performed both songs many times, said Blair Hess, one of the group's lead singers. And finally, the Tribal Color Guard and three members of the Tribal Youth Royalty posted the colors before the games began.

But it was not a good time for everybody getting to the Rose Garden that night. The taxicab bringing

star skater Angela Nikodinov, her family and coach to the championships was involved in a crash fatal to the skater's mother.

At the Rose Garden, Tribal Elders and members had seats both on the floor and in a reserved suite upstairs. Kennedy sat with Portland Mayor Tom Potter and his wife down at rink level.

Harrison reported meetings with ice skating glitterati.

When Bill Cloran, Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee asked Harrison if there was anything they could do for her, she said she would like to meet Michelle Kwan. Cloran was unable to make that happen, but then, coinciden-

tally, at an elevator by the parking garage, Harrison ran into Kwan, who was not yet dressed for skating and without any makeup on, and though the two exchanged glances and smiles, it was not until after the meeting that she learned that her dream had come true.

She also reported meeting such skating greats as Peggy Fleming, Dick Buttons and Pete Carruthers. "Everybody was so wonderful," she said.

"Too bad we can't come every night for this," said Tribal Elder Cherie Butler. "I watch it on TV all the time."

Grand Ronde participants in the pre-event were all grateful.



"It's a real honor," said Steve Rife upstairs in the suite reserved for Tribal members.

"They bring us up here and treat us like royalty," said Veteran Norris Merrill.

"It was a great honor to be here," said Tribal member Dietrich Peters, who was a lead singer with the drum group.

"Nervous, scared, excited, thrilled," is how Tribal member Norman Peters described it.

"Everytime we perform," said Hess, it gives us a chance to regain the excitement we had when we first started. When you get out and see the people's responses, it means a lot."

This night was "extra special" for Hess, who will formally enlist in the Army in two weeks. I'm leaving in a month," he said, "as a candidate to be a helicopter pilot."

He'll start out at Fort Rucker, Alabama, he said, and this will likely be the last time for awhile that he plays with the group.

Tribal Tourism Project Coordinator Elaine LaBonte, who coordinated the Tribe's participation in the event, received a lot of praise for the job she did.

"She coordinated everything, and for the Elders, the bus stopped so they didn't have to walk at all," said Harrison.

"For me," said LaBonte, "when

Cheryl welcomed people to the homeland of the Grand Ronde, that's what stood out more than anything. It just gives you a sense of pride."

The Honor Guard included Tribal member Steve Rife, who carried the Eagle staff, Norris Merrill, the U.S. flag, Soren McCallister, the Oregon flag, Wayne Chulik (Tlinget), the POW-MIA flag and Tribal member Ron Rife, the Grand Ronde flag.

Long time Honor Guard leader and Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte fell ill at the last minute and could not attend.

In addition, Royalty accompanied the Honor Guard. They included Tribal members Amanda Provost,

Senior Princess; Leland Butler, Young Warrior and Halona Butler, Junior Princess.

The drum group included Blair Hess, Matthew Ruff (Siletz), Crystal Chulik (Tlinget), Rose Peters (Shoshone) along with Tribal members Caressa Hess, Chad Peters, Nacoma Martin, Dietrich Peters, Chris Martin, Twyla Ferdig and Norman Peters.

And as pleased as Tribal members were with the Skating association, the Skating association was just that excited about the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

"You don't get anybody more local," said Cloran, "and you don't get anybody better." ■



Taking The Lead — The Grand Ronde Honor Guard attended the U.S. Figure Skating Championships and opened the event by posting the colors. Pictured here is Veteran Norris Merrill (left), and Tribal Veteran Steve Rife.



Tribal Youth — Grand Ronde Royalty walked with the Honor Guard while the posting of the colors at the US Figure Skating Championships. Pictured here is, (from left), Amanda Provost, Leland "Brother" Butler and Halona Butler.

Photos by Toby McClary



Athletic — Marcy Hinzmann and Aaron Parchem competed in the Midwestern Sectional Championship Pairs event, the second part of the events that took place on Wednesday, January 12.

