

Hope has need for speed

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Community Sports
By Samantha Maciag

Bruce Hope has a need for speed.

Every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday this winter you could find the 48-year-old man training with the Regina Speed Skating Club.

Hope grew up in New Zealand. He married his wife, a Canadian, and came to Canada 16 years ago. Together the two of them have two boys, aged 13 and 11.

"We felt we wanted them to learn to skate, but we didn't know anything about hockey, not being brought up with it. Figure skating didn't seem to appeal, so we put them into learn-to-skate programs) and stuff like that," said Hope.

"One of our friends started speed skating and said, 'This is fun, you should try this.' So, we put (the kids) in and they've been doing it for six or seven years now."

While growing up in New Zealand, Hope played sports like rugby, but didn't find anything in Canada that really appealed to him. A few years after his kids started skating, Hope decided to strap on some blades of his own after some encouragement from a friend. Hope had only been on skates once or twice before.

"I said, 'Well, I can't skate.' And he said, 'So?' And so I thought, 'Oh, well, maybe I should give this skating a try.' And so I did," said Hope.

Three different groups train with Regina Speed Skating. Hope and his oldest son train in group three, the fastest group, and his youngest son is in group two. Group one is for the youngest participants.

Now wrapping up his fourth season, Hope now competes in Masters competitions for speed skaters over the age of 30.

"I'm enjoying the heck out of it, it's just fabulous," he said.

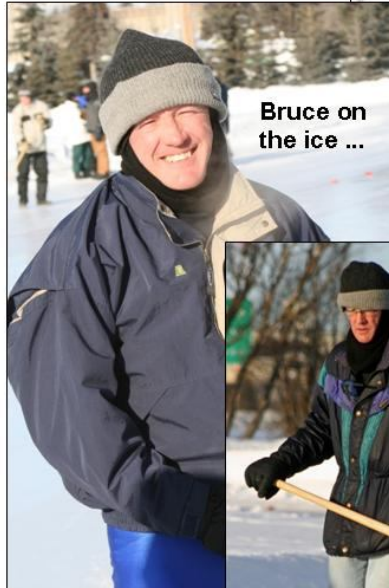
A mechanical engineer by training, Hope is the vice president of Yara Belle Plaine Incorporated (formerly SaskFerco).

"You've got to have a life outside of work too, and speed skating is fabulous. It's a great sport. It's kind of under-rated. Not many people really know about it," Hope said. "It's great, it's low-impact, it's a real good workout and it's quite social. Everyone is really quite friendly to one another, even in competition with other clubs or provinces."

The Regina Speed Skating Club uses the Wheat City Kinsmen arena to train indoors and makes use of the 400-metre outdoor oval track at Mount Pleasant for training outdoors. "It's the best-kept secret in Regina. Hardly anybody knows about the oval, it is the best outdoor ice you're going to find anywhere around," said Mickey Kupchyk, spokesperson for the Regina Speed Skating Club.

Use of the oval is free and open to the public, even when the speed skaters are training there.

The season starts for Hope in September and is complete by the end of March. Now, as the weather is getting warmer, he takes the blades off his boots, puts on wheels and keeps skating on the roads of Regina.



Bruce on the ice ...



Bruce repairing the ice ...



Bruce representing Yara at the Canadian L-T Championship.