

Park City FSC coaches (l-r) Erika Roberts, Trina Erhard, Tiffany McNeil, Joanne Rupinskas, Chris Obzansky, Lili LaMar, Shannon Bennett, Kinsley Johnson, Haley Smith, Giselle Gorder, Stephanie Bass (not pictured Angie Fishler)



PHOTO BY DEBORAH HICKEY

# A WIN-WIN SOLUTION

## TEAM COACHING BENEFITS SKATERS AND COACHES IN PARK CITY, UTAH

by JOANNE VASSALLO JAMROSZ

The figure skating program at the Park City Ice Arena and the Figure Skating Club of Park City in Utah have an all-encompassing, multi-faceted program that includes a beginner through advanced skating academy, freestyle and private sessions, group lessons and on- and off-ice specialty classes.

Yet as with many skating programs, it faced a familiar problem: limited ice time.

“Because our arena shares ice time with so many different sports, including curling, sled hockey, adult and youth hockey, broomball and figure skating, we were forced to get creative with our limited ice time,” Park City primary coach Haley Smith said.

Enter the team-coaching concept.

“We implemented a structure that offered multiple coaches with specific specialties and expanded off-ice programming,” Smith said. “In the last five years, the program has grown to 12 coaches with specialties in moves in the field, jumps, spins, ice dance, choreography and ballet. Our coaches all sat down together to develop a team charter to keep the team accountable. It keeps us honest and true to our philosophy, creating happy, well-adjusted and very talented athletes.”

The team-coaching concept is similar to a company business model.

“The athletes are able to work with multiple coaches who specialize in various disciplines, while the athlete’s primary coach manages each



Members of the FSC of Park City

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athlete’s development,” Smith said. “The primary coach is the face of the program and represents the athlete at competition, testing and so on and works with the athlete and family on long-term planning and goal setting. Through the detailed planning process, the primary coach determines the team members or secondary coaches who will work with the athletes during their skating development.”

Secondary coaches are experts in moves in the field, spins, ice dance, jump techniques, choreography, sports psychology, off-ice conditioning and ballet.

Primary coach Shannon Bennett was trained in this fashion and knows the benefits.

“As a skater I was lucky to train in various settings and programs, which allowed me to bring the best experiences to the table,” Bennett said. “As a young developing skater I trained in a traditional setting where athlete development may have been stunted due to overworking a coach or stretching him or her too thin. Training in Colorado Springs as a developed athlete, having the

opportunity to work with multiple coaches, was a healthy environment. It was also much more enjoyable for me.”

Skating director Erika Roberts is able to ensure that there is ample communication and synergy between the club and rink programs and that the athletes are provided with a multitude of opportunities to grow and develop in the sport.

In addition to weekly freestyle and group lessons, the club offers an introduction to figure skating program, with a bridge from the figure skating academy to the figure skating club. It also offers a competitive synchronized skating program, “Park City Icing,” and recently hired two ice dance coaches with plans of growing a competitive ice dance program within the Figure Skating Club of Park City.

Park City coaches are quick to give the team-coaching concept their stamp of approval.

Joanne Rupinskas is a secondary coach in moves in the field, ballet and on-ice movement and expression.

“Perhaps the nicest aspect of team coaching is that it builds a bond among the coaching staff,” Rupinskas said. “After working at several rinks where turf wars were rampant, it is so refreshing to have that aspect of coaching diminished, if not eradicated.”

The program also benefits the skaters, who are more adaptable after working with multiple coaches from an early age.

“They are open to new ideas and concepts, always willing to try something new and different,” Smith said. “We work together on behalf of our athletes, trying to match them with the coaches best suited for their unique needs. The coaches have greater job satisfaction and a lower burnout rate as well.”