

Sport Development Committees

Discussion Paper: Competition Framework

THE CHALLENGE

Saskatchewan Speed Skating is reviewing its competition structure and would like to invite our Sport Development Committee members to provide your thoughts and input on this important matter.

The speed skating season has traditionally been viewed in three distinct parts: short track season in the fall (October to mid-December); long track season in the winter (mid-December to mid-February); followed by another short track season in the spring (late-February to March). The meet schedule is largely shaped by availability of ice time, weather and facilities (only three communities have long-track ovals).

Typically, six of the seven clubs host nine competitions throughout the three parts each year, with two (2) one-day meets (Melville and Prince Albert) and six (6) two-day meets. That amounts to 14 days of competition over five months, without considering the growing number of out-of-province meets throughout the season.

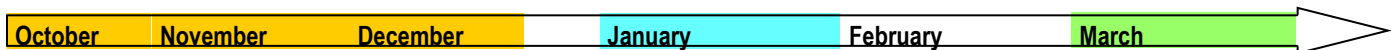
Current In-Province Competitions:

- Saskatoon: two-day ST in October
- Regina: two-day ST in November
- Melville: one-day ST in December
- Saskatoon: two-day LT in January
- Regina: two-day LT in January
- Moose Jaw: two-day LT in January
- Prince Albert: one-day ST in March
- Moose Jaw: two-day ST in March

National Competitions:

- Saskatoon: Canada Cup III in February

Saskatoon Short Track	Regina Short Track	Melville Short Track	Saskatoon Long Track	Regina Long Track	MJ Long Track	Prince Albert Short Track	Moose Jaw Short Track
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IMPACTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Our approach to competition scheduling hasn't changed for several years, despite falling skater numbers, an over-taxed volunteer base and a growing number of out-of-province competitions. One of the impacts of an heavy competition schedule has been training camps have been relegated to the summer and there is very little time for coaches and officials development during the regular season.

The most alarming impact is that some competitions are losing money and may eventually become no longer viable. Saskatoon's short track meet in early spring, for example, was a money-losing venture with just over 70 skaters participating in the two-day competition. Other meets have also struggled to attract both in-province and out-of-province participation.

Another important consideration is that the current structure does not align with the principles of Long Term Participation and Athlete Development (LTPAD), which focuses more skills development and less on competition. Saskatchewan skaters have only a small window to train and develop skills prior to their first competition in the fall (most clubs do not have access to September ice time) and dry land training has not been consistent. The general consensus is that our in-province athletes — especially the young, seasonal skaters — require more time to “ramp up” prior to participating in competitions.

Finally, it takes a significant amount of volunteer time and effort to host an in-province meet, host a national competition or organize a training camp. The number of in-province meets may be over-taxing our volunteers, making it less attractive for clubs to organize a training camp or host a national or regional competition.

Here are some questions to consider when meeting and developing your committee's recommendations:

- 1) What would be the ideal number of in-province meets per season? Consider a number for both short- and long-track meets and how it aligns with LTPAD)
- 2) How do we redesign our competition structure to address the challenges we are currently facing?
- 3) Should we shift to a two-part schedule (long track and short track), reducing or eliminating the short-track competitions in the fall to allow for more developmental opportunities for coaches, skaters and officials?
- 4) Should we create a competition framework, with a defined number of in-province meets, and invite clubs to bid to host specific meets?
- 5) Should we adopt a rotational scheduling structure, where one club would host a major meet one year and another club the next?
- 6) Should we have more one-day mini-meets, as opposed to two-day provincial meets? (Consider how your response aligns with LTPAD)

We are interested in hearing from all committees, so please plan on holding an informal meeting — **either via teleconference or in-person at the Regina Long Track Meet, Jan. 21-22** — and submit your thoughts and ideas to sassa@sasktel.net

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas on this important topic and will consider your recommendations at our next meeting in February.

Sincerely,

Saskatchewan Speed Skating Executive