

Sk8scotland

SPEED NEWS

Scotland 153 – England 136

Solihull 15/2/09

Captain's View

Craig Miller

The Scotland v England competition is one of the few opportunities that we are given in short track to race purely as a team, for a team and that is what we did this year. Everyone worked for each other both on and off the ice, supporting those that needed help be it with checking skates, protecting the track or cheering from the side. Being used to warming up on my own it was a great experience to be skating in a train of 8 good quality skaters all wearing the same suit, after watching the younger 8 warming up in the colours of our 16 strong squad.

The result of first session was unbelievable, giving us a lead of 15 points and really showed what I think is the great strength of the Scottish skaters, we can skate the distance races no problem. Special mention to the young Dundee lads here for it was their first time racing 1000 metres and they still took the points.

Second session took us to the sprints, which made for some interesting racing with the English fighting back but still not being able to beat us. There was the occasional false start from the Scots but once off the line everyone raced well fought for the points and showed we aren't just endurance skaters, taking 1st place in 4 of the 8 races.

Third session saw us extend our lead again in the middle distances with three 1,2s. A variety of tactics were used with some people deciding to sit in then make the jump at the end, others going out fast and holding the lead with the help of their teammates.

Going into the highlight of the night, the relays, we were so far ahead on points that we just needed to finish to win but that wasn't enough for us. Each team went out and raced hard, finishing respectably. Thanks to the guys on my team who fought back each time the English A team overtook us and for letting me try attacking for the last 3 laps, which sadly didn't pay off but I appreciate being given the chance. This was the only session, which we lost but we still made it difficult for them and achieved the points needed to complete our win.

There are many people to thank for the success of this event, first up being Archie and Brian who selected the team and then showed us how to act in a professional manner, with important things such as the pre-race talks in the changing room and race advice, to the little things like no mobiles. It is always useful to have that voice at the barrier warning you when the jumps coming, when you can ease off and whatever else you need so for that and everything else, thanks. Next up are the parents who supported us, got us to the rink, fed us and cheered us on. Also thanks to the officials for running the competition smoothly and to those that helped with the frenzied helmet cover changes.

The biggest thank you of all though goes to my team. Everyone of you raced exceptionally both on and off the ice, being disciplined, being ready for every race, knowing when to fight and when to take the points, helping those who needed it and most of all enjoying it. Everyone had fun and I believe this helped us to do so well. So thank you, I had an awesome time and I appreciate what everyone did to make this such a success, just need to do it again next year.

Coach's View

There are very few things I haven't experienced in our sport, but Sunday night in Solihull was definitely a new experience. After being involved with Scottish Speed Skating for 40 years I finally saw Scotland beat England! Thanks to all 16 skaters for giving me the thrill, the pleasure and the memory. For those of you, who like me, have been involved with speed skating for a few years there's no need to explain the feeling for the rest I am glad you did not have to endure the wait.

As with all successful team performances everyone played their part, and worked for the team, and though it has become custom in these circumstances not to single out individuals I think it's important to recognise our four debutantes in this event Roy, Ben, Andrew and Kristofer and our two maximum point scorers Kathryn & Craig. These six for different reasons were the skating core to our success that the other ten built on with panache and determination.

As I said the result was special but the most satisfying aspect of the night was seeing so many of the things we work on in training coming together in this event, improved technique, strong tactics, good fitness, discipline and a professional attitude. The professional attitude was there for all to see as our team exuded class.

The English will take this defeat hard and will come back stronger next year but I am sure we will continue to work hard and raise our standards, across all our skaters, allowing us a bigger pool of skaters to select from as we go for two in a row!

We should all enjoy this victory but not fall to the fate of many Scottish sports and make beating England the ultimate goal. Scottish Speed Skating should dream and strive to have all of our skaters compete to the highest level of their abilities. Me, I dream of Scottish skaters beating Koreans and Canadians in World and Olympic finals.

Fixtures

Scottish Ladies & Walker Sprint – Irvine February 22nd.

Sunday 8th March- Stirling Pairs

Scottish Quarter Mile – Irvine on March 15th

Saturday 21st March - Last ever event at Stirling Ice rink before it closes.

Archie Marshall

19/2/09