

What to Expect at a Short Track Speed Skating Meet

The KW Sertoma Speed Skating Club encourages all members to participate in competitions, otherwise known as 'meets'. We believe competitions are a fun and educational aspect of speed skating. Competitions allow members to meet and race with skaters from across their region, and sometimes across the province. Meets also allow skaters to put their practice drills to use and apply what they've learned to a racing situation.

If you are a parent or skater new to racing, this information will be valuable to keep. Remember for your first few meets to ask lots of questions and seek out other parents in the club for guidance. We are all here to help!

What to take to a meet

There are both equipment and additional items you should bring to all meets.

Mandatory Equipment

- Skates with guards
- Knee pads
- Shin guards
- Cut resistant gloves
- Safety glasses with strap
- Certified racing helmet
- Helmet cover with assigned number
- Bib style neck guard
- Shin and ankle Kevlar protection
- Club suit (rentals provided by the club)

Additional Items

- Extra skating clothes for skaters that fall (they will likely get wet)
- Blankets for sitting on and using to keep warm
- Items to keep skaters busy between races (e.g. homework, books)
- A note pad or smart phone to record your skater times and accomplishments
- Camera or video camera (NO flashes in the arena please as skaters WILL get distracted and accidents can occur)
- A small cooler filled with nutritious and appropriate snacks and lunches
- Clean towel for drying blades
- Blade socks

Foods to bring

- Proteins
- Whole grains
- Fruit (no citrus)
- Veggies
- Carbohydrates
- Fluids (water is best)
- Homemade snacks (e.g. muffins, breads)

Foods to avoid

- Citrus fruit
- Junk food (e.g. chips, pop, candy)
- Concession stand fast food (e.g. French fries, hamburgers, hot dogs, pizza)

If you are not sure of a particular food, ask your coach before you bring it to the meet.

Skaters will have a lunch hour assigned, but they should be eating soon after racing, and far enough ahead of the next race so their food has time to digest. Grazing is better than waiting for a full meal. Always hydrate immediately after a race.

Parents please note you will not have time to leave the arena once racing starts, so make sure you prepare and pack food and items prior to arriving at the rink!

What to expect when you arrive

1. Plan to arrive 30 minutes before warmups start. A safe arrival time is 7:30am if you don't know what group your skater is in prior to the meet start.
2. Follow the posted signs to the change rooms – our change room will have either KW or Kitchener Waterloo posted on the door. Look for fellow KW Cobras and coaches to guide you if you need help.
3. Change rooms are shared among clubs, so find the KW Cobra coaches in the change room.
4. Say hello to the coach and let them know you are present.
5. Confirm either by the coach or on the posted race sheets outside of the change room what group your skater is in. Schedules are posted around the change room area outside.
6. Confirm the warmup group your skater is in.
7. **Listen carefully to the coach.** They will tell you where they want to meet your skater after each race. Sometimes it's at the edge of the coach's box after a race, sometimes the change room at a designated time.
8. Leave skate bags and equipment in the change room. Coolers and other items should be kept at your seats to keep food colder and save space in the change room.
9. Please be quick to get skates on and off for warm up – this is the busiest time of the meet with the maximum number of skaters in the change room at once. It's really important to be calm and prepared so skaters have a great start to the day.
10. Grab a schedule for the day if you can find one!

What to expect for warmup

1. Skaters get 10 minutes of warmup time on the ice in their designated racing groups. It's really important to get the warmup in before racing to make sure skaters are loose and confident on the ice they will be racing on.
2. Skaters should be ready a few minutes early prior to warmup. They must have helmet covers on and all equipment in order to be allowed on the ice.
3. If skaters are practicing starts, remind them ahead of time for warmup they need to do this in the centre of the rink and not at a start line.
4. After warmup, be sure to put skate guards back on to walk to the change room. Once in the change room, dry the blades and store skates with blade socks instead.
5. Skaters also need to warmup on land before each race. Practicing starts, running, doing stairs are all good examples of dry land warmup. Do active warmups before racing rather than stretches. Get muscles doing what they will do in a race!

What to do to prepare for racing

Race structure

Races occur in order of groups as they are posted on the walls. Each race is a specific distance, and for each distance the groups are divided further into 'heats'. The racing schedules on the walls are important to get familiar with.

Follow the series number posted on the electronic scoreboard and be aware of the series number your skater will race in next. This is really important in case the scoreboard is behind or fails for some reason. Late skaters will not be allowed on the ice and the skater would be disqualified.

Give yourself enough time to get your skater ready. This keeps both your skater and yourself from feeling stressed before the race.

Points

In short track speed skating, points are earned in final races (not the heats). The heats determine the final grouping a skater will race: A, B, C or D. Primary, or 'A' finals, award the highest number of points, then 'B' and so on. Ask a coach or experienced parent how this works. A skaters accumulated total points from all distances raced determines overall placing for the meet.

Personal Best (PBs)

A skaters primary goal at a meet is to earn 'PBs' or 'personal best' times. A personal best time is earned when a skater races a distance faster than he or she has ever raced that distance before. Regardless of how they place in a race, the PBs are the goals worth really celebrating!

What to expect at race time

Before races, skaters are called into a specific area by the Clerk of the Course. This area is called a 'heat box' where they are organized into their racing groups.

The Clerk will want them there at least 20 minutes before their race time to make sure they are in order of racing. They will be checked for equipment and will **not** be allowed on the ice if they are missing anything. This would be a forfeit of the race as the skater would be disqualified for improper equipment. It is the parents' job to make sure skaters have all mandatory equipment on and ready to race.

Once your skater is in the heat box area, find a place to watch the race. Parents are not allowed in the heat box OR the Clerk of the Course area.

Have fun racers! This is your time to use the techniques you've learned and compete with other skaters on the ice. Listen for your coaches while you skate – they are giving you information to help you perform your best in the race. Go for personal bests, skate hard and turn left! And smile at the end of your races – you did it!!!

What to expect after a race

1. Put on skate guards to walk to the change room.
2. Dry blades thoroughly with a clean towel and put on your blade socks.
3. Knock snow or dirt out of the guards.
4. Have skaters talk to coaches after each race in the designated format discussed before warmups. This talk is valuable to recap how the race went and get coaching suggestions for the next race. Please make sure your skater has time to debrief with the coach.
5. Questions about race results must go through your coach. Parents and skaters are NOT allowed to challenge referees or enter the recorder's office. Only coaches can interact with these groups. Violation of this rule in format of aggressive or hostile interaction could mean removal of the skater and parent from the rink.
6. At the end of a meet, medals are awarded for the top 3 placements in each group. Your coach will advise you if your skater is eligible for an award so you know where the medal ceremony is being held at the end of the meet.