

Long-time skating coach retiring from Port Credit

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Special

*Peel Bio.
Dec 25/96
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Port Credit Figure Skating Club rolled out the red carpet for the man they call "Mr. D.," Thursday night.

The club's long-time coach, one-time Canadian Olympic medalist, and Mississauga Sports Hall of Fame member Wally Distelmeyer was honored with a center-ice ceremony at Port Credit Memorial Arena, to mark his retirement in September.

Over the past 43 years here, he was the mentor to Canadian champions and recreational alike.

From the stands, Lisa Johnson mother of two, noted that Distelmeyer had coached her sister (Magy Salmoni) 10 years before herself, and recently taught her young son Andrew in the CanSkate program.

"He was fabulous," Johnson says. "He taught you all the (figure skating) skills, but he also taught you all the life skills. I can remember being in lessons, and he'd be correcting my grammar."

Accompanied by his wife Bette, (Canada's first female gold test skating judge), Mr. D. was presented with a special club jacket, a clock with an inscribed plaque and a bouquet of roses, by the senior and junior skaters.

"I had no idea they were going to do this for Bette and myself. It was very kind of our friends to come out and see us tonight," says Distelmeyer, a past president of the Professional Skating Association of Canada.

The Kitchener native, proved to be a natural figure skater.

He placed second in the Canadian junior pairs in 1941, a year after beginning to skate competitively; and in the 1940's he would help put Canada on the international map, along with Barbara Ann Scott, and Suzanne Morrow.

The Mississauga father of two (and grandfather of four) won three Canadian championships in pairs (with Joyce Perkins in 1946, and Morrow in 1947 and '48), and claimed the North American title with Morrow in 1947.

The following year, the duet won the bronze medal at the second modern winter Olympic Games in St. Moritz, Switzerland, and the world championships in Davos — becoming the first pair to "drop" the death spiral in international



Staff photo by Chris Horobin

Wally Distelmeyer was recently honored by members of the Port Credit Figure Skating Club during a retirement party after 43 years of coaching.

competition, a move in which the lady's head almost brushed the ice.

At the 1948 Canadian championships, Distelmeyer was the first competitor to ever win five out of the six disciplines.

He and his wife have been big contributors to the development of figure skating in Mississauga, and across Canada. A Master level coach, Distelmeyer has also worked at clubs in Vancouver, Regina, Niagara Falls, Oshawa, Buffalo and Toronto (at the Toronto Cricket and Skating Club, and the Granite Club) — and at Mississauga's Credit Valley Club.

He came to Port Credit in 1953, and has guided such national champions as Karen Preston (senior ladies, 1990 and '92), Tracey Wainman (senior ladies, 1977), and Nancy Buys (junior ladies, 1976).

"He encouraged me to pursue figure skating competitively," Preston said after her 1992 title. "He had a huge influence on me, and without him I doubt I'd have taken up the sport seriously."

Elsewhere, he coached such Canadian figure skating heroes as Don Jackson.

The Distelmeyers will continue to run their summer skating school in Niagara Falls.