



Sandie Dubas strikes a skater's pose as she prepares for the Midwestern figure skating championships to be held next month in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Skater hopes dedication will pay off

Her life revolves around the rink

By Tom Baer
staff writer

Serious figure skaters — and Farmington Hills' Sandie Dubas is about as serious as they come — usually purchase their skates in two parts, blades and boots.

The best blades come from England. The upper parts, or boots, are made in San Francisco and can't be bought any closer than suburban Cleveland. At about \$500 for the required two pair, skates are one of the skater's lesser expenses.

'My legs — my thighs, especially — burn after a workout. It's a lot of hard work. . . at least five hours on the ice and an hour of ballet off the ice.'

That's one thing about serious figure skating. It can be expensive. Very expensive. And there's another thing: It takes dedication and years of hard work for any hope of success.

Sandie Dubas, a pretty 16-year-old whose everyday life has been inextricably entwined with competitive figure skating since age 8, hopes that those years of hard work and sacrifice will pay off next month when she takes to the ice in Colorado Springs, Colo., for the Midwestern Sectional competition sanctioned by the U.S. Figure Skating Association.

The hazel-eyed, auburn-haired Sandie earned a place in the Midwesterners by winning the Senior Ladies Eastern Great Lakes Championship this past fall in Midland.

Should Sandie finish in the top three at the Midwesterns, she'll advance to the National Regionals in Pittsburgh in early February. Success at that level would elevate her to the World Competition in Helsinki, Finland, in March.

World competition is considered to be on par with that in the Olympics.

MEANWHILE, SANDIE'S father, Walter, is more than happy to provide moral support — and pay the bills.

"I love her and she loves me," said Walter Dubas, a widower with Sandie as his only child. "We really are a team."

"I don't think you could do all this if you had more than one child. You'd have to give the one who did it so much attention that the others'd feel neglected."

Dubas' "attention" starts at 4 a.m. five days a week when he arises to drive Sandie to the National Academy of Skating, some 35 miles away by way of I-475 in Brownstown Township, before heading for his job as a supervisor in the graphics department at General Motors.

Sandie's life revolves around the National Academy of Skating, a former ice hockey rink. Special tutors even teach her high school courses there.

By 8 a.m., she's on the ice, practicing her figure 8s and freestyle programs involving the jumps and spins familiar to those who've watched the Olympics on television. The workouts can be grueling.

"My legs — my thighs, especially — burn after a workout," Sandie said. "It's lots of hard work. . . at least five hours on the ice and an hour of ballet off the ice."

Sandie takes an hour-long skating lesson every day from coach Diana Ronayne, and then there are the high school courses — as a junior she's taking geometry, chemistry and composition, among others — in the afternoon.

"Our school is in a room about the size of a locker room," Sandie said. "We have two teachers."

"I get out of school about a quarter of four. My dad can't pick me up until around five, so usually I do some homework. But since the (Midwestern) competition is so close, I've been taking more freestyle practice."

This training regimen goes on all year except for two-week breaks at either end of the school season.

SANDIE, WHO has more than 30 skating medals to her credit, recently

gained "senior" status by passing what is known in the figure skating world as the "eighth test."

'... we're somehow different from everyone else. We're all dedicated to this one thing. The skating rink is where a lot of us live.'

"The rate of failure for the eighth test is very high, but Sandie passed it the first time she took it," said her proud father.

Sandie would be the first to admit that there are ups and downs to life as a figure skater.

One of the good things is the lasting friendships formed with other dedicated skaters. "Everyone in the skating world is . . . well, we're somehow dif-

ferent from everyone else," Sandie said. "We're all dedicated to this one thing. The skating rink is where a lot of us live."

But that life has a few frustrations. "There are some days when you go through your (freestyle) program and you just don't land anything (without falling). When you have those days, you feel like giving it all up."

And the training routine requires a few sacrifices. Sandie's life is far from that of an average suburban teenager. "I've always had to go to bed early and get up early," she said, "so I've missed going to parties and stuff."

"But I've never done stuff like that, so I guess I don't really miss it."

How far can Sandie go in the current competition?

"Maybe to the Nationals," guessed the skater.

"Well, her father disagrees," said a more confident voice.

Greenhills nips Christian, 60-58

Mark Moyad, Ann Arbor Greenhills' talented basketball player, found more than one way to beat Southfield Christian in the finals of the fifth-annual Christmas Tournament Saturday afternoon.

Moyad, who was named the tournament's most valuable player, sank a foul shot with just 16 seconds to play to ice Greenhills' 60-58 victory. He scored 15 of his team's 27 first-half points on his way to a 23-point performance.

"He's a complete ballplayer," said Christian coach Dave Selis. "We checked him a lot closer in the second half, but then he killed us with his excellent passes."

Mark Dougherty and John Renken were on the receiving end of those passes. Both finished with 10 points, and Renken pulled down 14 rebounds to help

Greenhills rule the boards, 28-14.

Christian's Doug Dietzman, a 6-foot-11 junior who is playing his first season of varsity basketball, led all scorers with 24 points. Dietzman lofted a desperation half-court shot which fell short at the final buzzer.

Chris Seavey added 15 points, and Dan Severn had 11 for the Southfield squad, which sports a 2-1 record this season.

Christian held a 35-27 halftime lead but was out-pointed, 19-4, in the third quarter. The victory put the Ann Arbor squad at 4-1.

In the tournament semifinals, Southfield Christian beat Southfield Manoglin, 84-25, as Seavey collected 14 points and 11 rebounds. Greenhills put down Clawson Zion Christian, 46-32, on the strength of Moyad's 15-point performance.

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