

For awhile it looked pretty grim for the residents of Jamaica, Hurricane Gilbert had literally wiped out its crops and put a healthy dent in its tourist industry. But the island country has made a speedy recovery and now, more than ever, is telling vacationers to "Come back to Jamaica." See Page 6D.



Getting 'real' about loops and twirls

By Sharon Dargatz

The closest I ever got to joining the Ice Capades was a tap dancing recital in a neighbor's basement during the second grade.

In crepe paper costumes and paper plate tiaras, we shuffle-kick-kick-shuffled before an audience of squirming siblings and applauding parents, a dozen Shirley Temples in synchronized step.

I was in a suburban tap dancing class because the clunky patent leather shoes and linoleum were easier on weak ankles than steel blades and ice.

My skating debut had ended in disaster a year earlier. While my classmates stroked effortlessly around the glassy surface of the playground, I had wobbled two blocks home in a friend's over-sized skates.

I quit tap dancing before my costume needs expanded from plain paper plate to flashy Chiné, still dreaming of skating stardom.

I outgrew my dance shoes, but grew into a pair of skates. Tightening my laces until I felt like a bound oriental princess, I learned to skate forward, backward and on one foot as a teen.

As I cut jaggedy figure threes into the ice at a neighborhood rink, I could hear the distant voices of ABC Olympic commentators.

"A half-tumble and spin out on the ice in the rump position! She is in rare form for this program tonight, Dick!"

"You know Jim, she may not jump or spin or turn or even stop like other professional skaters, but her choreography is unquestionably creative."

"I REALLY like the way she sparkles on her Chinese tiara catch the light."

"Watch this move — a toe pick stumble, into a flail — arm spin and stomach dive around the hockey players. Brilliant..."

At 34, I have given up dreaming and enrolled in group lessons.

After a dozen half-hour classes, I can do one of those ballerina-spin-jewelry box spins without the mood of Dramamine. I have mastered a wobbly one-foot spin, several graceful turns and a variety of jumps to almost-jumps to my feet-never-leave-the-ice jumps.

It looks easy, but it's hard work, requiring four to six hours of practice a week. And sometimes it's a little scary.

"Adults are cautious, but they can do it. I'm like the rest of them. I'm not ready to break a leg," said Beverly Griffin, a teacher at Livonia's ice arena.

"It takes a lot of determination. Adults are starting to come out of their shells and compete. It seems to be a desire some people have. They watch ice skating and say, 'gosh, I'd like to do that.'"

Griffin was no different.

She longed to figure skate, but didn't start lessons until she was 12. The opportunity came along to join a club, followed by private lessons, competition and a three-year stint with an ice revue.

But Griffin says most adults take up skating because they enjoy the exercise — "It's at the top of the list for burning calories." Or they want to learn a few dazzling moves on the ice. Some simply think skating is fun.

"IT DOESN'T take adults long to learn forward, backward and edges. For freestyle moves, it depends on their ability and whether they care if they fall down."

"A lot of people take private lessons to better their skills. I have some adults here at six in the morning before they go to work," she said. "Most adults will skate a lot during the week. If they work, they'll look for other arenas where they can get ice time."

Adults who have mastered some basic moves can join the Livonia arena's precision skating team.

No freestyle competitions are available for adults, although Joyce Herron, coordinator of adult classes at the Detroit Skating Club in Bloomfield Hills, said the concept is "beginning to take off."

"Once adults see that they can compete and not feel embarrassed, they'll participate," she said. "But you've got to offer them the opportunity."

The Ice Skating Institute of America, a group dedicated to recreational skating, held its first international competition this year. Herron hopes it will encourage more adult competitors.

That's what Clea Jarmon of Royal Oak is aiming for.

Jarmon heads for the Birmingham Ice Arena during lunch breaks from her job as a physical therapist at William Beaumont Hospital.

At 29, she has tackled her first eight-week session of group classes, with an eye toward mastering a "routine with technicality."

"I want so badly to be able to skate elegantly, to be able to do all of this fun stuff," she admitted. "When there's a skating show on TV you can't pull me away."

AFTER A semester of classes, Jarmon is perfecting her one-foot spin and several jumps.

"I pick up on things quickly, but I don't get it down perfectly. I have to work on it. I have a fear of falling, so I don't get a lot of height to my jumps," she said. "But my advice to adults is don't be afraid. Get out there and try. You may fall down, but you can get back up and try again."

Karen Van Elslander, 19, of Warren, did just that.

"I tried skating when I was a kid, but couldn't even stand up. I was 18 when I put on skates again. I was surprised. I could skate forward and backward," she said.

After about 15 sessions in the rink, she tried executing a few fancy moves, slipped on a crack in the ice and broke her leg.

"I started skating again in July. I just love it. I can't believe I can some of these moves."

Van Elslander, a Wayne State University accounting major, spends about six hours on the ice every week.



DOUGLAS E. SUSALLA

Neil Mitchell and Donna Graber of Troy enjoy the outdoor ice skating at Sylvan Glenn in Troy.

including a half-hour group lesson.

When she began skating again last summer, she upgraded her skates from off-the-shelf to professional models.

Griffin and Herron say good equipment can make the difference between a mediocre and good skater.

"It has to fit well and be well-sharpened," Griffin said. "Skates should fit like a leather glove. You don't have to pay \$500 for a pair, but you'll probably pay \$100 or more."

ADULTS TEND to buy oversized skates. But correctly fitted boots generally run one size or more smaller than street shoes. Boots should fit snugly with tight or thin socks. Blades are purchased separately.

The padded, stiff boots are a must for properly executing jumps with ease.

"Adults who are 30 to 40 years old can learn to jump," Herron stressed. "They wouldn't join an ice show — you have to have stamina coming out of your ears for that — but they can learn to jump."

Darn.

I knew the U.S. Olympic Team was out, but I was hoping for a spot in some travelling ice extravaganza.

There's more to ice skating than lessons

Practice makes perfect.

That's especially true when it comes to figure skating.

Half-hour weekly lessons can give adults the how-to's of spinning and jumping, but don't allow enough time for mastering the moves.

That's when open skating periods come in handy.

Adult sessions are 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Eddie Edgar Arena, 33841 Lyndon, Livonia; 11 a.m. to 12:50 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Redford Arena, 12400 Beech-Daly; 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9:10-10:30 p.m. Sundays at the Birmingham Ice Arena, 2300 East Lincoln; and 9:30-10 p.m. Wednesdays at the Beech Woods Arena, 22200 Beech, Southfield.

Oak Park's Ice Arena, 13950 Oak Park Blvd., also offers a late-night adult session from 10:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Fridays.

Here's a schedule of half-hour adult classes:

- Birmingham — Classes cost \$45 for eight weeks, beginning Jan. 23.
- Detroit Skating Club — Sessions cost \$35. Registration began Jan. 9.
- Garden City — Classes cost \$17.50 for eight weeks, beginning Feb. 20, at the rink, located on Cherry Hill just east of Merriman.
- Livonia — Classes cost \$18 for eight weeks beginning Jan. 30.
- Plymouth — Classes cost \$22 for eight weeks, beginning Jan. 23, at the rink, located in the municipal cultural center.
- Redford — A seven-week session costs \$25. Current session began Jan. 17.
- Southfield — Classes cost \$20 for a five-week session.
- Westland — Adult classes cost \$26 for seven weeks. Classes began Jan. 7 at the rink, 6210 Wildwood.



Warp Factor



"Better not — last time I was here they broke off my antenna."

Chilly challenge: Outdoor skating

Skate outdoors? In the cold? On a homemade rink or frozen pond?

"It's great," said Beverly Griffin, a teacher at Livonia's ice arena. "I grew up on outdoor ice, and there are few of them left. Outdoor skating is absolutely marvelous."

But there are drawbacks to outdoor skating, too.

Skaters can take some pretty nasty falls, if they glide into cracks or icy bumps on a natural surface. And because rough ice can nick or ice blades, skate sharpening is a must after use on an outdoor rink.

Most figure skaters who enjoy the sport outdoors keep two pairs of skates, wearing the best equipment indoors.

"This generation doesn't know much about outdoor skating. But those who do love it," Griffin said. "When my kids were young, we made a backyard ice rink every year. We put out flood lights, skated and had a great time. Then we'd come inside and have hot chocolate and marshmallows near the fireplace."

If you're longing for a similar experience, fill the thermos, don ear muffs and mittens and head for these outdoor rinks when the weather becomes snowy and cold:

- BIRMINGHAM — Some residents head for Quanton Lake when the temperature drops. The city doesn't clean snow off the lake or maintain it as a rink, but skaters can shove it clear themselves when the ice is safe. The lake is just north of Maple west of Southfield Road.
- BLOOMFIELD HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT — The district will flood two areas in its outdoor education center for skating this year. One will be available to hockey players and the other for figure and leisure skaters. Both will be open only to district residents.
- CANTON TOWNSHIP — The township will flood an area at Flodin Park on Salt between Sheldon and Lilley.
- FARMINGTON HILLS — Skaters use Heritage Park in Farmington Road between 10 and 11 Mile roads.
- LIVONIA — The city maintains rinks at Algonquin Park, Henry Hall and Lyndon; Dooley Park, Lyndon and Harrison; Kingsbury Park, Levan and Westbrook; and Sheldon Park, Plymouth and Loveland.
- HURON-CLINTON METRO-PARKS — Skaters can cut a fancy figure into the ice on Stony Lake in Stony Creek Park, in Washington.
- Kent Lake in Milford and the Huron River at Lower Huron Metro park in Belleville.
- PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP — Skaters head to Wilson Lake at Hines Drive and Northville roads.
- ROCHESTER AND ROCHESTER HILLS — Skaters use the pond adjacent to Rochester City Hall, on Woodward north of Walton, or the lake in Trelina Spencer Park on John R. north of M-59, in Rochester Hills.
- TROY — Sylvan Lake on Rochester road south of Square Lake road will become a rink.
- WEST BLOOMFIELD — Skaters use the natural pond at the civic center on Walnut Lake Road just west of Orchard Lake Road, or they head for Dodge Park No. 4 on the northern edge of Cass Lake.

