Written by Carol Pomeday
Wednesday, 20 January 2010 15:32

At 14, Katie Lippe, who was a natural at skating as a young child, is a figure skating medalist

Fourteen-year-old figure skater Katie Lippe of Fredonia will compete in her seventh Badger State Games this year and a gold medal is always her goal.

The state games, which have 21 events, will run from Jan. 29 to Feb. 7 in Wausau. The figure-skating competition will be held Feb. 4 to Feb. 7.

Except for the first year, when she was in third grade, Katie has earned a medal at the Badger Games every year, qualifying her for the State Games of America in Colorado Springs.

She competed once in the finals — in 2005 when she won a silver medal. She would like to repeat that experience, but with a gold medal around her neck this time.

“That was really fun,” Katie said. “We walked with the state delegation in the opening ceremonies and carried the Wisconsin banner.”

The Badger games is not her most competitive contest, but it is one of her favorite ones, she said.

“It’s fun seeing my friends again and I like the Olympic atmosphere,” Katie said.

“It’s a family tradition,” her mother Leslie said. “We see the same families each year. It’s competition with a lot of camaraderie.”

Katie competes in numerous events in Wisconsin and other states with the Wisconsin Figure Skating Club based at the Pettit Ice Center in West Allis.

Her most competitive event is the Upper Great Lakes Regional Championship in October, which draws figure skaters from seven states.

Last year’s competition was in St. Paul, Minn. This year, it will be in Hoffman Estates, Ill. She qualified for the regional championships four times.

“I didn’t place well last year. It’s tough competition,” Katie said. “But I was happy with the way I skated.”

After the Badger Games, she will compete in the Wisconsin-Illinois-Michigan event at Wilson Park Recreation Center in Milwaukee.

Then will come the Red, White and Blades Ice Show at the Pettit Ice Center in May. Each coach develops a number for the show.

“Last year, I slid down a rope onto the ice. I was the Cheshire cat in ‘Alice in Wonderland,’” Katie said.

Summer means intense training for the regional championship.

Katie, who has a shelf full of trophies and medals, learned to skate at the Ozaukee Ice Center in Cedarburg when she was 5.

“I took her skating the first time, and within 15 minutes she was better than me,” her mother said.

Katie’s brother Joe, 11, also took ice skating lessons, but he prefers baseball, football and basketball. Neither her mother or father Jim, who is a general contractor, skate, but they support their daughter.

The girl started competing in third grade, practicing at the Pettit Ice Center five days a week for two hours after school. In the summers, she spends entire days at the rink.

“It’s fun being with my friends, going to competitions with them. I like learning new moves,” she said.

“When we skate around by ourselves, we play games, like the jump game. We go through all our jumps until someone falls, then we have to start over. You try to get all your jumps in before someone falls.”

Her goal is to achieve a triple gold rating in three figure-skating disciplines — moves in the field, dance and freestyle. Testing is done through the United States Figure Skating Association.

In October, Katie earned a gold for moves in the field, which used to be called compulsory figures. She is working on achieving golds in dance and free style.

Her favorite event is free style.

Katie works with skating coach Lynn Paulsen and dance coach Lisa Reid, who choreograph routines for her.

She also does performance enhancement and fitness training at the Froedtert Sports Medicine Center in Wauwatosa. The exercises are designed for figure skaters to build strength and stamina.

Katie attended Rosemary Catholic School in Fredonia until sixth grade, when she went to Ozaukee Middle School.

Now a freshman at Ozaukee High, Katie decided to try out for basketball. She is on the junior varsity team, which has practices or games after school, so skating is relegated to Saturdays and Sundays during the basketball season. Katie said she likes to run and may also join the track team.

“It (basketball) was hard in the beginning because I wasn’t at the same level as the other girls, but I’ve improved a lot,” she said.

Katie would like to skate on a college team and be a figure-skating coach.

The University of Wisconsin in Madison has a figure skating club that competes with other collegiate club teams.

Unfortunately, the clubs don’t offer college scholarships, Mrs. Lippe said.

“It used to be that when you got out of high school, you gave up skating because there wasn’t anywhere to compete (if you’re not a world class skater),” she said.

“But more colleges are offering figure skating clubs.”

Katie will be glued to the TV set during the winter Olympic figure skating competitions in Vancouver. The games will run Feb. 12 through Feb. 28.

She will be cheering for Alissa Czisny of Ohio, who has relatives in Wisconsin. Katie saw her skate last year at the Pettit Ice Center.

Photos by Sam Arendt