



Waunakee Rotary Club

Sept. 3, 2009
Vol. 43 No. 4

Brent Aussprung has been preparing for this year for quite some time.

The 21-year-old speed skater has his sights set on the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, Canada.

He spoke at the Aug. 27 Rotary meeting about his roots in speed skating, the sport itself and what his goals are for the coming year.

After moving to Waunakee in second grade, Brent got his first taste of speed skating when Olympian Casey FitzRandolph visited his third-grade class.

A young Brent was very interested in what the Olympian had to say, and a couple of years later as his interest in hockey waned, he looked toward speed skating. He stumbled upon the Madison Speed Skating Club, learned about its tremendous history and was excited to get a chance to try the sport out.

After growing up playing multiple sports, Brent found one that really stuck.

"Speed skating was the one that hit home for me," he said.

So he began his speed skating career doing both short-track (111-meter oval) and long-track (400-meter oval) skating.

It took several years before Brent was able to start seeing any success, and at first he was dealt a setback. Rounding a turn in short track, he lost his edge and crashed into the wall, fracturing his back in two different places.

The back injury went undiscovered for awhile, but eventually Brent was forced to spend eight months in a "turtle shell" cast while he recovered. The incident was blow to his hopes, Brent said, but through trials and rehabilitation, he became stronger.

In 2005, Brent found his first real nugget of success when he won a national championship.

"Once I got a taste of that, I knew I

wanted more of it, he said.

He followed the national championship up by qualifying for a spot in the 2006 Junior World as representative for the United States.

Later that year, he made it to the U.S. Olympic Trials in both the short and long track, but Brent decided to focus solely on long track. Although he didn't make the Olympic team, it wasn't a surprise at his age (17), Brent said, and he enjoyed himself and had a good experience.

Brent has held the junior record in both the 500- and 1000-meter distances and is a three-time U.S. Junior Sprint Champion. He is the first U.S. junior (under 18) to skate under 36 seconds.

Moving on to the senior level, Brent made the U.S. World Cup team in 2008 and 2009 and was a member of the U.S. World Championship team in 2009. He was a silver medalist at the 2009 U.S. Single Distance Championships in the 500 meter and has won two silver medals at World Cup competitions.

A 2007 graduate of Waunakee High School, Brent attended Carroll College part time for two years before taking this year off to focus on making the US Olympic team this upcoming winter. He plans to resume his schooling at some point, but with the Olympics only coming around once every four years he wanted to have a single focus this year.

Brent also decided to train at home in Wisconsin, where he feels most comfortable, as he pursues his Olympic dream. He has spent much of the summer training in the Madison area and is basing his training out of the Pettit Center in Milwaukee.

What he's gearing up for is the Olympic qualifying process. Brent is looking to earn a spot on the team as a sprinter, focusing on the 500- and 1000-meter long-track races. The next step

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Calendar of Events:

- Sept. 10, Golf Outing
- Sept. 26-27, Wauktoberfest

occurs on familiar ice at the Pettit, as the facility hosts a qualifying event to help select the national team Oct. 21-25.

Other items:

- there are still 4-5 openings for the Sept. 10 golf outing, which will immediately follow the meeting.

- volunteers are needed to guide students at the World Dairy Expo Sept. 30. See Phil Willems if you're interested.

- volunteers also are needed for Wauktoberfest.

- in preparation for the Rotary in Lights display, the bulb replacement process will begin the first week in October. Volunteers are needed.

- Harriet Statz reported on exchange students. Lauren is safely on the ground and with her host family in Brazil, and Bird – whose full name is Supagorn Chantaramanee – is settling in in Waunakee.

Guests: Brent Neevel, guest of Roberta Baumann; Sean Wayne, guest of Bill Tygum; Travis Heiser, guest of Brent Ziegler.

Visiting Rotarians: None.

Birthdays: Sept. 5, Gordy Meicher; Sept. 6, Tom Reis,

Anniversaries: Sept. 8, Ron and Michelle Ballweg; Sept. 9, Linda and Don Olson

Prayers: Sept. 3, Susan Vergeront; Sept. 10, Leonard Allen; Sept. 17, Pat Durden.

Programs: Sept. 3, meeting at Village Park; Sept. 10, classification talks for Susan Hedrick and Amy Fluke.

Greeters: Sept. 3, Phil Willems and Rich Wipperfurth; Sept. 10, Rob Wolfe and Brent Ziegler.

Remember: Sept. 3 meeting is at Village Park at Division and Main Street!