



# Snohomish County, Washington StoryLine

July 2008

*Seattle's Playground - Located just 12 miles north of downtown Seattle*

## Olympic Hopefuls to Train & Compete in Snohomish County, Washington

Though the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia is still twenty months away, thousands of athletes – from ice skaters to skiers to hockey players – are training and preparing for their chances to win Olympic glory. Snohomish County, located on that golden road to the Olympics, will become home to these aspiring champions in the months leading up to the Games.

Coming in October to the city of Everett is Skate America, the first event in the International Skating Union Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series, and a vital competition for athletes looking to make their country's Olympic teams in ladies, men and pairs figure skating and ice dancing.

At this elite competition, reigning U.S. champions and skaters will join athletes from seventeen other countries including Canada, Britain, France, Russia, Japan, Korea and China October 24-26 at the Comcast Arena at Everett Events Center to vie for honors. Skate America will be televised live on NBC Sports.

Take a look at a few of the most competitive and promising of skaters appearing at Skate America:

### ◆ Ladies

#### Rachael Flatt



A veteran of 21 competitions since 2002, Rachael has finished first or second in fifteen matches including the 2008 World Junior championship. Her success continues off the ice where she earned a 4.0 grade point average throughout junior high and is now taking college-level courses at her high school. With plenty of time to decide upon a post-skating career, Rachael is most interested in veterinary medicine, equine surgery or sports medicine.

Rachael started skating at age four when she and her dad went shopping for a gift for her grandfather. Instead, they came home with skating lessons for her. Since then, she skates with heart, as symbolized by the gold heart necklace and earrings she wears. Her parents gave them to her for passing her gold senior skating tests.

This is Rachael's first Skate America competition.

#### Kimie Meissner



As the reigning Skate America champion, Kimie is known for her fierce determination and focus. After placing sixth at the 2006 Winter Olympic Games, she suffered a ruptured eardrum on the flight home. She battled dizziness leading up to and during the World Championships held a scant two weeks later. Despite losing her balance during the program, she brought home the gold.

Off the ice, Kimie became involved with the "Cool Kids Campaign" at Johns Hopkins and University of Maryland hospitals soon after her close friend died from cancer. When she hangs up her skates, she plans to continue helping people by becoming a physical therapist, specializing in sports medicine. Currently, she attends University of Delaware.

#### Mirai Nagasu



After eleven competitions beginning in 2003, Mirai melted the ice to win the 2008 U.S. Championships, a victory she says is the biggest life-defining moment of her skating life. And perhaps Skate America will be her next big moment as this is her first senior Grand Prix season event.

How many young people can say they enjoy – even thrive – on hard work? Mirai does as her growing success proves. She hopes to one day meet Japanese "Stars On Ice" skater Mao Asada and learn the triple Axel from her. In addition to skating, the young athlete loves ballet, a passion that plays a very important role in her skating choreography.

Mirai is an honor roll student in Foothills Middle School in California and winner of the Superintendent's Art Award.

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◆ **Men**

Skate America will be the scene of a fierce rematch – reigning U.S. Champion Evan Lysacek and three-time U.S. Champion Johnny Weir tied scores at the 2008 U.S. Championships in January. Lysacek took the title based on winning the free skate portion of the competition.

**Evan Lysacek**



The athletic Lysacek placed fourth in the 2006 Winter Olympics, second in both the 2006 and 2007 Skate America events, and first in the 2008 Japan Open. His choreographers are four-time World Champion and four-time Canadian champion Kurt Browning and Lori Nichol, former choreographer for seven-time U.S. Champion Michelle Kwan.

**Johnny Weir**



The showman Weir's accomplishments include fifth place in the 2006 Winter Olympics, first place in both the 2007 Cup of Russia and Cup of China, and third place in the 2008 World Championship behind France's Brian Joubert and winner Jeffrey Buttle from Canada. This will be his first Skate America.

◆ **Pairs**

**Rockne Brubaker & Keana McLaughlin**



Imagine a little boy, who wanted to become a skater, then changed his mind, but had to take the lessons anyway because his mother couldn't get a refund? That's how Rockne started on his road to success.

Keana follows in her mother's skating shoes with an intensity and passion found in champions. Her love of music, dance and fashion comes together in pairs skating.

Since 2006, this pairs team have placed first or second in every competition including the 2007 World Junior Championships and the 2007 NHK Trophy, an international, senior-level, invitation-only figure skating competition. This is the pairs first Skate America competition.

◆ **Ice Dancing**

**Tanith Belbin & Ben Agosto**



Skate America is "home" to these dynamic 2008 U.S. Champions – four times the duo has won the event in seven appearances. Their ice dancing achievements include bringing home the silver in the 2006 Winter Olympics, the first time a U.S. team medaled in this event in 30 years!

Tanith had five dance partners before teaming up with Ben 1998. Currently, she is a "Good Morning America" correspondent with plans to continue her journalism career when her skating days are over. She would most like to meet CNN's Anderson Cooper to discuss journalism.

When not on the ice, Ben plays blues and Flamenco guitar with aspirations for a career in music. He has done several voice-overs including one for a video game.

The duo performs in Smucker's Stars On Ice and were regular cast members of Champions On Ice.

**For more information, contact Linda Beecher. Contact information below.**