



Zakrajsek Continues His Passion for Life-Long Learning

Many know Tom Zakrajsek for the successful development and accomplishments of elite skaters including Max Aaron, Mirai Nagasu, Vincent Zhou, Rachael Flatt, Ryan Bradley and Jeremy Abbott. He also has a strong desire to give back to skating by sharing his knowledge. With an advanced degree in Sports Medicine, Tom applies the nuances of that education to his own athletes' Periodization and training. In July 2014, he blogged on Facebook about the details and strategies for the successful use of Periodization. Tom has now turned his joy for learning into a newly launched website where he shares skating and life lessons for all. www.coachtomz.com

Tom has a life-long passion for learning and is always seeking new ways to enhance his skaters' successes on the ice and in life. In August Tom arranged for 30 skaters, parents and coaches on his team to participate in a communication skills program called I-SPEAK Your Language taught by Merry Neitlich of the Coach's Edge. The skaters had great fun interacting with each other while learning their primary communication style and also how to more effectively communicate with those who have different styles than their own.

The skaters left the training with an understanding that strong communication skills will not only help their progress on the ice but also apply to every facet of life both in the rink and outside of it. "It was cool to learn about the other skaters and coaches learning styles. I learned how to improve my own personal communication as well," said Luke West, national competitor.

Tom and team coach Becky Calvin even demonstrated a hilarious roll play of a skater giving up on a program run-through after a fall. The skaters broke into groups of the four communication styles and provided examples of how a coach might talk with a skater in their own style preference to help overcome this type of problem. The skaters' joy was infectious. (You can learn more about the four styles here at www.coachsedge.biz)

Zakrajsek said, "In addition to learning valuable life lessons and improving their communication skills there was a natural team building camaraderie that happened during the training. Days later my skaters were still talking about what they learned and sharing stories of how they successfully applied this knowledge into their lives. We all had a great time. We can all definitively learn something new and unique to help our athletes succeed."

As an Adult National four-time gold medalist, Merry Neitlich is a consultant by profession. She works with coaches and business professionals to improve communication skills including landing effective learning theory on the ice.

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