

## **Specificity in Training**

By Susan Ellis

If you're the average speed skater trying to get ahead, you likely don't have tons of time to train while you either go to school or work. Unless you are a full time skater on a national team, most skaters are lucky to be able to get in one workout per day, six days a week. So when you train, you want to make sure to get the best bang for your buck by being as specific as possible.

Specificity in training relates to:

1. Training the specific muscle groups used in skating
2. Training the specific energy systems used in racing

To train the specific muscle groups used in skating, you must simulate the skating position and motions as closely as possible. While running 10 miles a day, every day, may get you in great aerobic shape and give you a great oxygen delivery system, it really won't increase your ability to skate in basic position, or your speed and power. To do this you must perform exercises that simulate the skating position as closely as possible. This doesn't mean you shouldn't run, though, because running is great for general fitness, which is important to skating as well.

Of course, skating is the most specific exercise you can do for skating. But if you're like most folks, you don't have a whole lot of summer ice time and may be somewhat limited even during the winter.

Activities like inlining (ice specific technique as opposed to inline technique), dryland skating imitations, skating jumps, and slide board are very similar in that the position is the same and the motions are similar. Cycling and rowing are less similar, although they do approach the skating position in certain parts of the stroke, and are excellent for cross training.

To train the specific energy system used in racing, again you must concentrate your training on the same energy systems.

Short track skaters must have the ability to sprint 500's as well as sustain a high pace over 3000m. This means they must have good anaerobic power for the 500, good anaerobic power and capacity for the 1000, good anaerobic capacity for the 1500, and good aerobic power for the 3000. This means they must do an all-round training program, compared to a long tracker who may specialize in either sprint or distance.

All of these specific energy systems can be trained only by doing interval work specifically designed to target a particular energy system. Again, the 10k a day routine won't do much for you here, other than to get you generally fit and give you a great aerobic capacity, a system which plays only a minimal part in actual racing (unless you are doing marathons).

As a general rule, the intervals should run in between 50% less than the total time it takes to do a race to no more than 25% above the time. If you are doing the lesser time intervals, you can do more intervals, but the speed is higher and the rests generally longer in ratio to the work time. If you are doing the longer time intervals, you do fewer intervals, the speed is also lower, and the rest is shorter in ratio to the work time.

This doesn't mean that you jump in to the specific energy system training right away though. In the tip on Summer Training – May 2003 we talked about laying a good foundation for the specific training first.