

Skating Through the Pain

A Competitor's Road to the Podium at the ISU Adult Competition

By Nicole Cunningham

Terryl Lee Allen had already booked her flight to Oberstdorf, Germany, when she suffered a serious injury. She feared she might not recover in time to represent the United States at the 2007 International Skating Union (ISU) International Adult Competition. After surgery, physical therapy and an abundance of rest, she not only made the trip, but she had the skate of her life.

Allen, who turns 52 on Oct. 20, was one of 200 skaters from 14 countries who competed at the Ice Dome in Oberstdorf May 24-27. This was the event's third year.

Allen, a middle school counselor and part-time gymnastics coach in Albuquerque, N.M., skated in the Bronze Ladies III event. At the bronze level, skaters are only allowed to perform single jumps, not including the Axel.

In August of 2006, Allen hurt her knee and landed on the operating table. Surgeons repaired chipped cartilage and warned that osteoporosis had taken hold.

She was forced to rest at home during that time, which she said was a jolt

to the usual routine of skating five days a week. "I thought my cats would run away from home and my husband might ask for a divorce," Allen said jokingly.

When Allen returned to the ice, she

was not allowed to jump. "I was hugging the wall," she remembered.

Allen competed at the 2007 U.S. Adult National Championships in Bensenville, Ill., in April. She finished 12th out of 14 in her qualifying round, failing to qualify for the final. "Nationals were good for getting my mental game back," Allen said.

Allen's knee improved in time for her to compete at the international event. Her husband, Jim Lee, splurged on business class seats so she could stretch out on the plane. In Germany, Allen said the ISU and Oberstdorf officials rolled out the red carpet for the adults. At the opening banquet, skaters

received their starting orders by choosing a chocolate dessert. The bottom of each dessert had the skater's starting number.

Although the draw was unique, the competition format was mod-

eled after ISU amateur events. "[That makes] you feel like it's a legitimate adult competition," Allen said.

The event does differ from senior competitions in one key area: It's an



PHOTO COURTESY JIM LEE

Terryl Lee Allen placed third in her event at the ISU Adult Competition.

open event and does not require top placements in a national championship.

Unlike many adult competitions, where the International Judging System (IJS) is used for only the gold and masters levels of competition, IJS was used for all events in Oberstdorf. "It makes me feel that the work I put into my skating is being recognized," Allen said. "Under the 6.0 system, I have always felt that I didn't get technical credit for what I did do."

Allen was thrilled with her performance, especially after landing a Lutz-loop combination for the first time since surgery. In the process, she captured the bronze medal. Allen earned silver at the same event last year. "That was a pretty emotional third-place finish," she said. "I didn't expect to stand on the podium

I thought my cats would run away from home and my husband might ask for a divorce."

— Terry Lee Allen