

## GT 2016 Saskatchewan Speed Skater Edition

As a kid growing up in Calgary I was always in love with the mountains. In addition I have always had a sense that anything on a bike is better. I dabbled in highway trips with my friends to Castle Mountain, Banff, Red Deer and others. I loved the challenge and being immersed in the beautiful scenery. My first intense experience with a speed skating training camp happened at Castle Mountain roughly 45 years ago.

After I became a teacher my dream was to show my students the beauty of cycling the Rockies. 27 years ago I started a bike club and took groups on mountain bike trips primarily in the Rockies. There are times when I thought that no one else appreciated the beauty of riding a bike in such beautiful place.

13 years ago I rode my first GT. The following year I asked my 12-year-old daughter to ride with me on a tandem. She is now 25 and we have been riding together annually but no longer on a tandem. I can no longer quite keep up to her on the hills. My 12-year-old son joined us last year and rode again with us this year. I am so proud and happy to have this experience with my children and 400 other riders who feel the same way as us.

My current job is the Saskatchewan speed skating provincial coach and this year we brought 29 speed skaters and/or their parents.. Many did not have a road bike one month prior to coming. Most have never ridden in the Rockies. Almost all of the new people had to be convinced that they could indeed make it all the way. They were all coached as to what to expect:

- distinct possibility of severe weather
- long, steep hills,
- rules to follow,
- great food
- unparalleled scenery

I am always so impressed when new young people take on such adventures. The trust that they will be OK and their sense of adventure is something that fuels me to do it over and over. The drive from home was a rainy one and it got colder the next morning as we passed through Banff. Every one of them rode with great enthusiasm regardless of the conditions, and they were tough, especially the second day this year. We had support vehicles with parents who were moved to tears as their son or daughter persevered on the long climbs and in the rain.



I have always marveled at the dedication of the organizers of this event (this year Bud and Brenda). The passion that they have for providing such a large number of people with this experience seems endless. The work of putting on the GT seems to me to be overwhelming. I need Bud and Brenda and the volunteers to know that your efforts are worth it. It is not an insignificant thing to share your great passion for people, for biking and for the beautiful Rockies. Our skaters and my family have benefited from your efforts to host

this inspiring event for the past many years. The work that you do results in precious memories but more than that a legacy of future riders, at home, in the Rockies and elsewhere. On behalf of the Saskatchewan speed skating group, thank you and see you next year!

Tim Comfort  
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