

Young skater claims Junior Olympic gold

By Mike Harrison

At this year's Junior Olympics held just outside of Chicago, a hometown hero of sorts skated away to a gold medal in the juvenile division.

Evan Lysacek, a fifth-grader at Springbrook Elementary School in Naperville, was crowned the U.S. National Juvenile Men's Champion on April 12, only two-and-half years after his first time skating and still before his 11th birthday.

The juvenile division is designated as ages 12 and under. However, Lysacek was skating against boys that were nearly three years older than him due to the way the rules work. Altogether, the juvenile division was comprised of 18 boys, all regional winners from across the country.

"A lot of the kids skated well in the practices and warm-ups, and didn't do too well when they skated in the program," said Lysacek. "I was kind of nervous when I didn't have enough time to warm up. I didn't land all my jumps perfectly in the warm-up, but I knew that I had to focus and concentrate."

"Once we got to the practices, and I was able to see some of the other skaters in his event, I felt that if he skated and had a good, solid program that he should be up in the top third, and if he skated his absolute best, it depended how the other boys skated, but I felt

that he had the opportunity to shoot for a medal," said Candy Brown Burek, Lysacek's private coach. "This was an outstanding opportunity for him to have national exposure, and his responsibility was to be prepared, stay focused, skate the cleanest program that he possibly could, and put himself in the running for the future up-and-comers."

In his program, Lysacek was able to pull off the clean program that his coach had hoped for, and was rewarded with a gold medal. "I think that was the best I could have ever done," said Lysacek. "I felt like, 'Wow! I've accomplished anything I've ever wanted to accomplish.' I didn't know I would get this far."

Lysacek qualified for the Junior Olympics by winning the regional competition in October of last year. Since then, a lot of work went into perfecting and polishing his routine. "First, we were increasing the difficulty of the jump and spin content of the program, and we were working a great deal on his consistency for skating clean programs, and we were working on the jumps that we will also hope to have for the intermediate level," said Brown Burek.

The intermediate level of competition is the next step up for Lysacek, where there is no age limit. He could easily find himself skating against 16- and 17-year-olds in this last step before the

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To Dr. Weil.
Thanks for the New Feet.
Sincerely,
Evan Lysacek

EVAN LYSACEK

(SUN photo by Pat Van Doren)

Evan Lysacek sports his Junior Olympic gold medal while practicing last week at All Seasons Ice Arena in Naperville.

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novice level of the National Championships, according to Brown Burek. In addition to the higher level of competition, the intermediate level also introduces a second program, so each skater must skate a short two-minute program as well as a long two-and-half-minute program.

"My goals that I've set are to get my double axle and at least three of my triples by next year,"

Lysacek said. "I think I'll do pretty well, because I have most of the jumps that I need, and the artistic will just come with experience."

This fall, in addition to trying to win the intermediate regional competition to qualify for the national intermediate competition, Lysacek will be attending the U.S. Olympic Training Camp. "It's a wonderful opportunity for the children to have a chance to go out to the Olympic Training Center and

have some of the connections to the U.S. Figure Skating Association," said Brown Burek.

"There's a lot ahead of me, and I have a lot behind me, too," said Lysacek.

With respect to Lysacek's prospects as a member of the U.S. Olympic figure skating team, Brown-Burek seems to think that he has a legitimate shot at being a contender.

"I feel that he is off to a fabu-

lous start, and with continued hard work, I think he's got a very good opportunity to work up the ladder to achieve a spot on the world and Olympic team," she said. "Again, there's a lot of patience, and a lot of time that goes into this. It's not an overnight thing. You spend a number of years working and training for that end goal."