

## **Everett Herald - Top-tier ice skaters could compete in Everett**

By [Jeff Switzer](#) Herald Writer

EVERETT -- A big-time ice skating competition appears to be headed to town next year, and it could bring with it the attention of the world just two years before the Vancouver Olympics.

An announcement was expected today that Everett will host Skate America, a three-day Olympic-style international figure skating competition, complete with gold, silver and bronze medals. Up to 60 athletes from 15 countries might perform, bringing media and tourists with millions of dollars to Snohomish County.

For Everett, it would be the largest single sporting event ever. More details are expected at a press conference today. Those who knew for sure weren't saying much. Today "could be a very good day for skating in the Pacific Northwest, but we'll have to wait and see," said Steve Baker, co-owner of Production Sports, a Mountlake Terrace company working to bring Skate America to Everett. "We want as many people as possible to come to the press conference."

Baker, director of Seattle Skating Club, was invited by U.S. Figure Skating this summer to apply to host the Skate America competition. Baker is a former skater who competed for Great Britain in international events in the 1970s and 1980s. His wife, Sharon, skated for Great Britain in the 1988 Olympics, and their son, Jean-Luc, is the current under-16 ice dance champion. U.S. Figure Skating officials said a decision is pending about who will host Skate America. "We're making a decision this week potentially with our board and have no announcement as of yet," Bob Dunlop, senior director of events for U.S. Figure Skating, said Monday. Last month, Dunlop said, Everett was "a very promising location" to host the event.

NBC has a four-year deal to broadcast the Skate America competition, Dunlop said. This year's event is Oct. 26 in Reading, Pa. Organizers said the event could cover three days and bring about 40,000 spectators who could spend \$2.5 million in the county. For that reason, Snohomish County agreed to put up \$100,000 in hotel taxes to pay for marketing, so long as U.S. Figure Skating approves Everett for the event. "It's a

wonderful opportunity for this county, and will bring high visibility for the community, and bring a lot of money into the community," County Council chairman Dave Gossett said. "And, people will get to enjoy going and seeing top-notch skating."

The press conference line-up includes County Executive Aaron Reardon; Gossett; Baker and Laura Lee, who are co-presidents of Production Sports; events center general manager Kim Bedier; and leaders from the Tulalip Tribes. The tribes are expecting to complete their new hotel by next October, in time for Skate America's annual competition. Comcast Arena at Everett Events Center has 8,300 seats for hockey, but it can be expanded to 10,000 seats.

Skate America features competition in women's and men's singles, pairs and ice dancing. It is considered the kickoff event for the international skating season, Dunlop said. Past champions include: Michelle Kwan, a five-time World and nine-time U.S. champion; 1992 Olympic champion Kristi Yamaguchi; 1984 Olympic champion Scott Hamilton; 2002 Olympic bronze medalist Timothy Goebel; and 2002 Olympic pairs champions Jamie Sale and David Pelletier of Canada.