

Giovanni Caboto Rink Diaries: Excerpts from the 07/08 Season

Friday Dec 21, 2007

7:45pm A sign on the door says the rink building is closed weekdays 9am to 3pm. People who want to skate during that time period have to change outside. The ice on the pleasure-skating side is in good shape except for one rough patch. There are twelve people on the leisure pad and eight people on the hockey side. The hockey players are various ages. There are a couple of middle-aged men, some



Only two people on the pleasure-skating side

teens and a few younger boys. Every player except for one teenager is wearing a helmet and visor. Most of the pleasure skaters are teenagers but there is a pair of older men as well. There is also a father with his young daughter. He says he lives in the area and used the rink last year. He says the rink does get busy especially during the Christmas holidays. He thinks the rink is quiet now because the skating season has just started. He sometimes takes his daughter to Dufferin Grove rink but he likes Giovanni Caboto better because it's not as busy. For the first fifteen minutes of this rink visit there are two rink guards on the pleasure pad. They tell a group of teenagers to take a puck off the ice. The guards leave the ice at 8 and are still gone at the end of the visit at 9.

Saturday December 22, 2007

2:45pm There are two people in the changeroom taking off their skates. A woman is asking a city staffer about the skating schedule. The schedule says the rink will be closed on Christmas and Boxing Day. The staff person is asked whether the gate will be open allowing people to skate unsupervised on those days. The staffer doesn't

know. The staffer is asked about the rink's helmet policy. Helmets with straps are mandatory for shinny players. Visors and face guards are optional. The helmet rule is posted at the bottom of the sign listing all rink regulations. There are a dozen shinny players. They are all wearing helmets. A game is in progress. The pleasure-skating rink is empty except for two rink guards. The guards say the rink has been quiet all day. They say that so far that day there haven't been more than seven people on the pleasure-skating side. They attribute this to the Christmas holidays as well as to weather reports forecasting rain. The ice is in very good shape. The guards say it was cleaned at the start of the day.

Monday January 14, 2008

4:30pm There were 5 shinny players on the hockey side all wearing helmets and another one waiting on the bench for his father to bring his helmet. One player said that the ice had been flooded around noon. The pleasure-skating side was empty. Staff were locked away in the staff office watching television. When I was leaving the shinny player who was waiting for his helmet had just received it but opted not to wear it anyway.

Wednesday January 16, 2008

At 9.30pm the building was unlocked but there was no sign of any staff. There were 17 players on the hockey side, only two with helmets on, and three younger kids on the pleasure-skating side, also with hockey sticks. Plus there was a woman sitting at the side on a bench, looking cold and bored, perhaps the mother of the younger kids.



Shinny hockey

Tuesday January 22, 2008

8.30 pm: The zamboni driver is just coming off the ice, which looks good. The hockey side has two kids in helmets and one adult without. The pleasure-skating side is empty. Both of the women's toilets are blocked, one with paper towels and the other with a whole roll of toilet paper. Otherwise the place is clean, and the broken lights have been replaced in the corridor. But it's empty. Later on a youth at Wallace Rink says he lives right beside JJP and he used to go there all the time. He remembers that lots of skaters were there when he was a kid, but now he and his friends don't go there anymore, because of the helmets and too many rules. They go to Wallace and to Campbell, he says, since they're both full of skaters and the game is good there.

Wallace Rink Diaries: Excerpts 07/08 Season

Sunday December 30, 2007

Still no sun, but the Sunday campfire was on and there were a lot of people at the rink. The snack bar made \$143 just off hot dogs and hot chocolate at the fire, mini-pizzas and cookies and drinks inside. The small posse of goofs was there too, throwing checker pieces and doing other little "crimes" that we have to take seriously. ("If I see you throwing checkers ONE TIME, you're out for a week!") But at the same time there was a very friendly feeling out on the rink. When the 12 and under time came, there were at least 20 kids on the ice, all of the right age group. The older kids still argue a bit about the younger kids getting their own time, but they're definitely getting the idea. Later on the rink staff tried to ask the zamboni driver to not flood the pleasure-skating ice because it's getting too thick (with all that rain). But he shouted to her that he couldn't get near enough to hear her clearly because she has a cold and he says he doesn't want to catch it. So he flooded the ice anyway.



Wallace Sundays



Saturday afternoon at the rink

Tuesday January 1, 2008

The big snow from the night before stayed on until early this afternoon, then the crew cleaned it off, the rink was skateable by 4 pm.

Thursday January 3, 2008

A new zamboni driver drove over the rubber mats and sucked a piece into the augur. It had to be taken away for repair.

Friday January 4, 2008

Wallace Rink has been busy every day, inside the change room as well as outside. Today it was like a nice movie -- the change room full of kids eating cookies and mini pizzas, behaviour very good despite the crowds. The younger kids' shinny program worked well, with a local hockey/baseball star to run some drills as well as letting

them play. Chris Amaral has a baseball scholarship to an American university, so he gets a lot of respect. The fellow who does so many drugs and was in prison for robbery, came back again, glaring at people. But he didn't stay long.

Saturday January 12, 2008

There was a birthday party campfire by the side of the rink and as usual lots of people got to join in. That's the neighbourly way it's supposed to work. One of the skaters was talking about the recent New Year's Eve skate at the rink. She said she enjoyed it so much and so did her friends. One of them told her, "if only I had stayed at the rink, I would have missed all the trouble I got in later!" That's a good thing to remember about rinks, maybe. You can fall down on the ice and break your wrist, but there are worse things beckoning at bars and such places.

Wednesday January 16, 2008

10.00pm Full-on shinny game. Kids playing checkers inside, despite it being a school night.

Friday January 18, 2008

8 pm Nobody was on the pleasure-skating side, then all of a sudden there were 20 people. One of the fathers pushed his little daughter around the rink on a chair, too fast. Hard to know what to say, since they both seemed to enjoy it and probably half the other people who were skating out there are his cousins, and so they're not bothered.

Inside, kids were s-l-o-w-l-y taking off their skates, kibbitzing around, just comfortable. Sometimes they're pretty silly, but there seems to be a lot of good will here. The regularly Friday evening DJ music event has stopped, since not many kids came to it. Also the big need for youth control seems to have vapourized at this point. They skate, they play chess, they act respectful.

Friday January 25, 2008

After school all the little kids from the Wallace CC program come down to skate. The rink staff give them free skate rental and free hot chocolate. The place buzzes with their talk and their shenanigans. Meantime the youth are playing chess, and arguing over the moves. They call Sandy (rink staff) over to give a verdict on the right rules of chess.

Outside, up the stairs and around the corner, is the informal "weed zone." No smoking within sight of the little kids, is the rule that the smokers seem to agree is just a foundation of civilization.



Checker game between periods of shinny hockey