Ask Mr. Edge

Adult skaters face unique problems

This month I was going to give you a glimpse into what’s new in equipment, but I was sidetracked when an adult skater strolled through my doors.

She mentioned some problems that she frequently encounters while skating. After listening to her, I realized I’ve never taken the time to analyze the needs of the adult skater, and how those needs differ from those of the younger, more agile skater.

Reality check: skating isn’t quite like riding a bicycle. Bikes go in straight lines and make wide turns. Skaters don’t.

Let’s start with how good a skater we think we are compared to how our coach or other people see us. Now, couple that with thoughts of youthfulness dancing in our heads…could this be an accident waiting to happen?

With that in mind, what are the needs of the adult skater who is 40 years and older?

Skate safely

1. Stretch before skating. No matter what your age, there are exercises one can do to limber up.
2. Don’t do too much at one time. What you were able to do as a young skater, you can no longer do without feeling it in some way, shape or form. In other words, skate in moderation.
3. Know when enough is enough. When your body starts talking back to you, i.e. lower back pain, take a break, sit down and have a cup of java. It’s OK to relax, take your time and talk to other skaters. Remember, this is quality time for you, so enjoy.
4. Don’t spend weeks or months trying to perfect a certain element. Be content with your ability to do it and move on. I’m not saying you shouldn’t strive for perfection, but listen to what your body is telling you and try to separate it from your ego.

Allow me to share with you an example of what it might be like when your ego decides to take on the rest of your body.

Ego: I can’t wait to get out on the ice today.

Body: Do I really have to go skating? I was out way too late last night.

Ego: Mind over matter, that’s all. I’m going to do that sit spin.

Body: Remember pal, your lower back is in no shape to be bending up and down. If you’re not careful, I’m going to put you in the hospital.

Ego: My shoulder feels fine today. A bit stiff, but fine. All I need to do is get out there and flail those arms around to loosen up that shoulder joint.

Body: Wouldn’t listen to me, would you? Now take that to the doctor. Better yet, take two aspirin and call him in the morning.

Ego: My skates fit fine. Let’s get up and go!

Fifteen minutes later…

Body: What is that burning and cramping in my feet? I’m sure it’s nothing. It’ll go away in a bit.

Later that evening…

Body: Hey, ego, I thought you said my skates fit fine? Now look at me – sitting here soaking them in this hot tub of water. I have better things to do than sit around soaking.

I think you get the point.

If you are still competing, you have all the more reason to heed the above illustration. Don’t feel like you have to push yourself so hard that nothing else matters. Remember, most of us do have to get up the next morning and earn a living. The last thing we need is an injury that would prevent us from doing so.

Equipment needs

Q: How come I no longer fit into my skates? They worked so well for me 10 years ago.

A: Well, folks, the sands of time have shifted in more ways than one…deal with it. Adults who skated when they were young have the worst feet I’ve seen. Here are some tips on how deal with them.

1. Pay special attention to getting the proper size boot for your feet. You’re not going to grow out of them any too soon, so spend a few extra dollars and go custom, if for no other reason than to get some extra bells and whistles that will make the boot easier to break in and a bit more comfortable. Sometimes it helps to have an extra quarter size added to give you just that little bit of extra wiggle room for your toes.

2. Don’t get over-booted. I almost always see this with adults, who need their boots to bend much easier. Wearing a nice, soft, supple boot works best.

3. Fit of the boot. Without a proper fit, your dogs will be barking at you every time you’re finished skating. Be sure to wear a thin, lightweight sock when being fitted for new boots. Proper fit and support go hand in hand.

4. Blades. No need for those extra large toe picks. Small-to-medium-sized picks will be just fine unless you’re still able to pop off a few doubles. Just remember to buy a quality freestyle blade that will make jumping and spinning much easier for you. For some extra added stability, you may want to put on a blade that goes end to end on your boots. Doing this, however, will make your spins a bit more difficult.

If you’re new to skating, you may simply just want to buy an entry-level skate, knowing that within a year you’ll be upgrading to a much more expensive boot and blade.

Till next time,

Mr. Edge

If I can be of any assistance, I expect to be stopping by the U.S. Adult Championships in Bensenville, Ill. Catch me at the Harlick booth.