

**EXPERIENCE—BRYAN KUBOTA, WESTON, FLA.  
BRYAN—GOTTA CATCH THE GOLD!  
BY JENNIFER KUBOTA, WESTON, FLA.**

**Bryan Kubota, 6, breaks records and wins two gold medals in national competitions for in-line speed skating and roller hockey.**

My brother, Bryan, speed skates and plays hockey with his teams, which seems like a lot for the average 6-year-old. However, Bryan does it with ease. Not only does he participate in these activities, but he also chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo everyday. His daily efforts eventually led him to the Nationals for both speed skating and hockey.

Ever since his first speed skating competition in April 1999 in Tampa, Fla., Bryan has been chanting and looking forward to the Nationals. Since September 1999, he has won all the competitions that he attended. He became the South Florida overall champion in both his division, the Tiny Tot Division (6 and under), and one division above, the Primary Division (8 and under). Moreover, in the Southern Regional competition, held at the end of June 2000, he won first place in his division and competed in the National Championship. This was a big event for Bryan and a chance to fulfill his dream.

Right after the Regionals and one month before the Nationals, Bryan started to learn gongyo. My grandmother taught him a passage from Nichiren Daishonin: “Praying as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood, or to obtain water from parched ground” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 441). By understanding the meaning of the passage and memorizing it, Bryan was able to gain confidence and renew his determination to win. So, every morning and evening, he recited the passage in Japanese, along with part A of gongyo and chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. He also started to practice speed skating on ice every morning along with his usual in-line speed skating practice at night. In this way, he wanted to win and prove his best to his family and coach (as well as his many fans and friends). Our family chanted day and night during the last few days before the Speed Skating Nationals in Lincoln, Neb.

On July 31 and Aug. 1, 2000, the battle for the gold raged on in Lincoln. Bryan was entered to compete in two competitions: The Tiny Tot Boys Individual 100-meter and 200-meter sprints and the 1,200 meter Primary Two-Person Relay. My grandmother, father and I chanted for Bryan’s success at home. Every few hours or so, we would receive a call from my mother, who was in Nebraska with my brother. We all waited with eager anticipation for the results.

After many hours of chanting, I received the call that made me sigh with relief. Bryan had won the gold medal in the Individual Race and set a new national record for the 200-meter race!

My mother later told me that many skaters and coaches congratulated Bryan, saying that he was “something special.” Bryan’s coach, Bob Manning, who has trained him since he was 4, was proud of him, calling Bryan his “main man.” Before the Nationals, Bob said that in Bryan’s division, the taller skaters have more of an advantage because of the long strides they take. And sure enough, there was a skater who was really tall in each race.

In the 100-meter Sprint Final, Bryan jumped before the sound of the pistol and had to start four feet back, but with his quick feet and his good form, he came in first. The 200-meter Sprint Final was next. A taller skater got a head start, but again, Bryan was able to

easily pass him at right after the 100-meter run that resulted in setting the new national record in the Tiny Tots division.

But it wasn't over yet. The next day he was to compete in the relay with his teammate in the Primary Division. Most of the skaters in the final relay were 8 years old. Bryan was the only 6-year-old. It was tough competing against the older skaters; they were all taller and much bigger than Bryan. His teammate got a good start in the beginning of the relay, but during the race she tagged Bryan a little too hard and knocked him down. It was a bad fall, but Bryan did not give up; his strong will and determination allowed him to bounce back up and continue skating with all his might. He managed to whisk away the bronze medal.

Now that he had accomplished one of his major goals, Bryan had one more to go. He had an In-line roller hockey national tournament two weeks away. Since he had been concentrating on speed skating, he hardly practiced any of his hockey skills. He started to train and work on his puck handling and goal shooting. For the next two weeks, he trained with my mother, no matter how hot or humid the weather was in South Florida. He would return home sweating and gasping, but I admired his strenuous efforts.

The big American In-line Roller Hockey Series 2K Nationals Tournament day had arrived on Aug. 11, 2000, in Estero, Fla. This was the first year that the tournament was opened to players under 7 years old. It was a three-day tournament with seven teams from three states. Bryan was one of the key players on the team. He said that, "Every time I took a shot at the goal, I would chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo in my heart to score." His efforts helped his team, the Wppo Thunder, to win a total of six games and take first place, winning the gold medal.

After winning the championship final, there was the All-Star game. Because of his good hockey skills, he was chosen to play on the All-Star team. During that game, he scored a hat trick (three goals) and led his All-Star team to a victory. Soon after the tournament, he was featured in a local community newspaper story titled "Weston's Kubota gets hat trick in AIRHS All-Star game."

These events helped me to understand that anyone with a solid determination, great effort and chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo can accomplish anything, even someone as little as my brother. Through his success in speed skating and hockey, I think Bryan showed the greatness of this Buddhism, as a disciple of SGI President Ikeda, to many people in the United States last summer. I'm sure that eventually my brother will tell everyone that the reason why he has so much talent is because he chants a lot. The year 2000 was significant for Bryan, marking a boost in his efforts and determination toward the 21st century.

I'm sure Bryan will continue to develop and succeed toward his great mission. Stay tuned.