



PEI Speed Skating Coach wins National Honour

June 20, 2011, Charlottetown – Phil Byrne of Charlottetown received national recognition over the weekend for his work as a short track speed skating coach in PEI. Byrne was honoured at a gala event on Saturday night during Speed Skating Canada’s Annual General meeting in Calgary.

The national speed skating body handed out several awards to its top athletes and coaches, including the Coaching Excellence Award which went to Byrne in recognition of his significant dedication to the sport and to PEI’s skaters.

Speaking after the event, Byrne commented, “This is really a shock, but I am very honoured to be recognized in this way and proud to be involved in speed skating. We have great kids at all levels of our programs in PEI and it’s such fun to work with them and see them grow as skaters and as people.”

Byrne has been with the growing PEI short-track club for nearly a decade and has been head coach since 2006. He also coached PEI’s short-track team members to best ever finishes at the 2011 Canada Winter Games in Halifax.

“Phil is a huge asset to our sport. He is phenomenal with all of the kids – from those learning to skate right up to our top skaters who’ve won national championships,” said Wendy Francis, President of Speed Skate PEI. “He puts in an amazing amount of time to help our skaters and our sport thrive here on PEI - it is heartening to see him recognized nationally.”



Phil Byrne (right) the Head Coach of Speed Skate PEI was recipient of a national Coaching Excellence Award at Speed Skating Canada’s 2011 Annual Meeting in Calgary. Presenting the award on behalf of Speed Skating Canada is Peter Steele.

Among national team athletes honoured at the event were Charles Hamelin and Marianne St. Gelais, 2010 Olympic Medalists and multiple World Cup medal winners, who were named top male and female short track skaters. On the long-track side, Lucas Makowsky and Christine Nesbitt, also 2010 Olympic medalists were recognized as top skaters. Nesbitt and St. Gelais in particular dominated the recent world cup season with near undefeated records in their specialty distances.