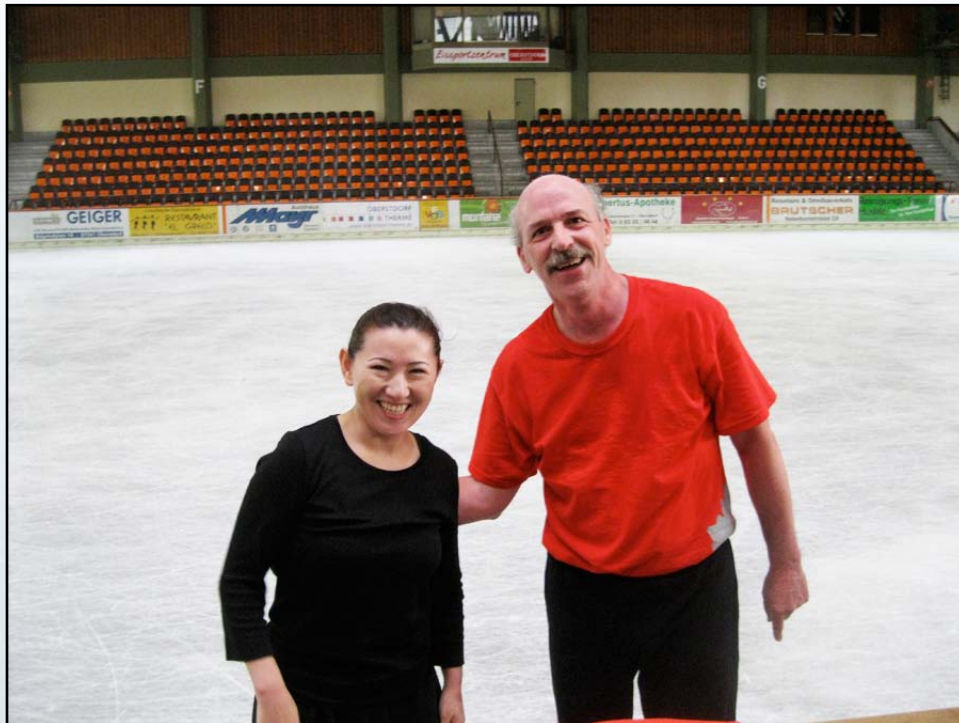


This is really the point. Despite all the absolutely enthralling moments that the competition provides, the best part of the ISU Adult Figure Skating Competition remains the unique opportunity it provides skaters from every skill level and every discipline to share the sport with each other. Each year we return, we see familiar faces from France, Germany, Australia, Estonia, Japan and Russia. We share ideas and commiserate about ice time, training, and technique. We give each other feedback about why a jump isn't rotating or whether the sit spin is really low enough to count. We encourage each other and celebrate each improvement. We are able to follow skaters like Elena (Russia) and Jorge (Brazil/America) from the disappointment of one year, through to the near perfection of the next. Each year we are joined by a few new, truly special skaters - like Hanna (Finland) and Margarita (Russia), who both arrived this year with an obvious and compelling presence on the ice. What might they be able to accomplish next year?

By the end of the week, we find ourselves cheering as much for those who have shared our practice ice as we do for our fellow Canadians. We are cheered by new friends who share our same passion. By the end of the week it matters less about where we have finished, and where we are from, than about how much we have all benefitted from skating together.

It was no surprise to me that the day after the 2011 competition had closed, and despite the fact that I was already hours away from Oberstdorf, in the town of Garmish-Partenkirchen, I was able to walk into the Olympic Arena there, and bump into Rolf (Germany), one of my fellow competitors. Although he was busy qualifying as a roller-skating coach, he was happy to spend a few moments with another adult skater to talk about the relationship between roller-skating and figure skating in Europe. It was fascinating, and the kind of connection that happens when skaters become colleagues at the ISU Adult Figure Skating Competition.



Midori Ito with Donald Murray