

# Consistent update of rental skates pleases skaters, reduces liability

By Jan Mowle

It's inevitable that rink operators eventually will have some rental skates in poor shape and will need to either repair or replace them. Fitting skate purchases into the center's budget may seem daunting, though there are options for payment. Whether it's done on a rotating basis or as an all-out new buy, keeping rental skates in tip-top shape will please customers and will reduce the rink's liability.

A skating center's rental skates wear out over different periods of time, depending on how much they are used on a regular basis. Larger rinks whose rentals are loaned out daily to many levels of skaters will go through their rental skates much quicker than a smaller center that doesn't have open skating every day of the week.



**Walt Hedrick, owner-operator of Forum Roller World, Grand Prairie, Texas, knows how to rent – and sell – skates.**

before finally settling on \$3 a pair.

"I settled on the \$3 because of the economic situation across the country and especially in this area," Hall said. "Our county has one of the highest home foreclosure rates in the United States with about 2,000 occurring each week."

Hall said he has received positive feedback from skaters about his new rentals.

"I've even had parents skating around telling me what a good upgrade they are and that it's about time I replaced them," Hall chuckled.

"The kids love them because they're laced as high as they can go with 'J' hooks like artistic skates," he added. "The skates hook from side to side so the kids don't have to struggle getting the laces through the eye holes. It's much easier for them."

Hall has definitely seen a return on his financial invest-

ment, too.

"We are [making] more on skate rental than what our payment is for the skates each month," he said. "Our skate rentals have also gone up about two percent."

"It is a smart investment if you have a good population of skaters and if your rink can handle these tough economic times," Hall added. "It won't get more people coming in to the center, but it will keep them coming back. The skaters get fewer blisters and are more comfortable in the better, newer skates."

"In addition, having the newer skates makes our skate rental room look better," Hall said. "They definitely don't break as easily and are very easy to repair."

## Replace more often

Less than a year ago, Dominic Cangelosi, owner of Moonlight Rollerway in Glendale, Calif., spent \$17,000 on 200 pair of quad skates. While this might sound outrageous, Cangelosi pointed out that he split this with two other area roller rinks.

"I wanted the special high leather boots in a minimum quantity," he said.

Cangelosi has open skating every day at his rink and holds large parties on a regular basis as well. He said the amount of turnover from public skating sessions determines how often rental skates need to be replaced or repaired.

For his rink, he went with the Riedell high leather boots and Sure-Grip mounted the plates and wheels on the skates. He rotates new skates in as old pairs become worn. On some skates, he can just replace the plates and wheels, while others he must just throw away.

"If you replace rental skates on a rotating basis, it's not as big of a drain on a center's budget," he said. "Each pair costs more than \$100, especially with the leather boots."

"The rink's liability goes down too," he added, "because you don't have defective skates or boots."

Cangelosi worked out a payment plan with Sure-Grip where he paid \$3,000-\$5,000 a month, and the rental skates are already paid off. He raised his skate rental rate from \$3.25 to \$3.50. He said he was able to recoup his costs very quickly with the large number of skaters that come through his doors.

He added that it is very important to pay attention to how often different sizes of skates are used. He has 800 pairs of rental skates on the shelf, but said the bigger sizes of skates get pretty beat up. He has quite a few adult skaters.

"Rental skates are an important part of our business and our income," Cangelosi concluded, "so it's crucial to maintain them."

## Operator viewpoint

*From Walt Hedrick, owner and operator of Forum Roller World in Grand Prairie, TX, and owner of Used Rental Skates (www.usedrentalskates.com)*

My thoughts on skates have changed since getting in the sales end of rentals. I have learned that rentals are one of three things that your rink is judged on that makes or breaks it as far as repeat business.

People won't return if the music is bad, skating floor has problems and if a bad rental experience happens. I recently replaced my entire rack of skates. This was the first time in 32 years, and the rentals are all the same. Man, does my rental rack look GOOD!

To pay for the skates I went up on rental price to \$3 and no one said a word. I feel it's important to have rentals that you would skate on yourself and ones that when you hand them out you can look the customer in the eye!!

My inlines are the same as before so now they can choose old inlines or new quads for the same price. Speed rentals in my rink are slow due to the inline craze, but some rinks are doing well with speed rentals - they now call them Jam rentals.

As part of maintenance, we spray with Lysol after every use!

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