



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

ALL TOGETHER: The Texas Chilly Peppers synchronized skating team members after capturing the Ice Skating Institute's Synchronized Championships title. Front row, left to right, are captain Christy Greenleaf, Jennifer Hampton, Jennifer Martel, Leslie Wood (Carrollton) and Alyssa Pearson; back row, left to right, Laura Kangiser (Carrollton), coach April Gross, Vanessa Enloe, Deborah Medearis (Carrollton), Kim Husfelt (Carrollton), Melissa McReynolds and Ashley Brown.

Carrollton athletes excel as synchronized skaters

By LAURA KANGISER

The Texas Chilly Peppers synchronized skating team brought home the gold medal from the Ice Skating Institute's Synchronized Championships, held in Bensenville, Ill., April 7-9.

The Texas Chilly Peppers is an adult synchronized skating team that represents the Stars Figure Skating Club of Texas. The team consists of skaters ages 25 to 45 who live throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth area, including four from Carrollton. The Peppers are also a national-level competitive team with U.S. Figure Skating, the official governing body for the sport of figure skating in the United States, and the only such adult team in Texas.

Synchronized skating is the fastest-growing discipline of figure skating. Teams consist of 12 to 20 athletes skating in unison and moving as one flowing unit at high speeds. Originally known as precision skating, it combines the classical beauty and elegance of freestyle skating with the excite-



IN UNISON: The Texas Chilly Peppers synchronized skating team on the ice.

ment of a team sport. The individual skaters must be competent at a variety of skating skills, including footwork, jumps, spins and ice presence. The team performs a program set to music, with required formations including circles, lines, blocks, wheels and in-

tersections.

The sport began 50 years ago when Richard Porter organized the first team in Michigan, named the Hockettes, who performed their routines during the intermission of ice hockey games. Today, synchronized skating includes all

age levels, from beginner or preliminary teams with skaters as young as 5 all the way through adult masters teams, many of whom are well into their 70s.

Adult precision and synchronized skating teams have been in the Dallas area for more than 20 years and have won numerous regional and national titles throughout the years. Most of the past teams were combined and formed what was then known as the Dazzlers, then became Team Elite and, finally, changed the team name to the Texas Chilly Peppers. The new team name happened by chance when, one day during a practice, a couple of team members were looking at some color samples for fabric choices for a skating garment. One of the colors was "chile pepper red," and they thought it would be a unique name for the team but with a spelling change to "chilly." Thus, the name Texas Chilly Peppers was established.

Over the years, the various teams have been featured in local ice shows and television programs. In particular, the Peppers

performed in an exhibition number during the 2003 State Farm U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Dallas, where Michelle Kwan won her seventh career U.S. ladies title. The team also performed during Bank of America Celebration of Gold held in Dallas in 2001. The show featured past Olympic gold medalists such as Brian Boitano, Tara Lipinski, Oksana Baiul, Illia Kulik and Victor Petrenko.

The team is now making plans for the 2006-07 season and welcomes new members. The team practices one evening a week at the Dr Pepper StarCenter in Frisco. Those interested in trying out for the team who are experienced skaters age 25 or older may e-mail tcpeppers@gmail.com or visit texaschillypeppers.com for complete details on skating requirements, practices and competitions.

Laura Kangiser is a member of the Texas Chilly Peppers synchronized skating team and a resident of Carrollton.