

go FIGURE

senior skater reminisces about her career on the ice

By Emma Ockerman
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Eight pairs of broken-in skates, two teams, 12 to 15 hours a week, 5 days, for the past 10 years.

All of this for roughly 10 competitions a year, 20 medals and one MVP trophy on North's team her sophomore year.

These are numbers senior Katie Butler, figure skater, defines herself by.

But Butler says the definition itself certainly has its highs and lows.

"One day you can be landing everything, be skating awesome, and your coach will be really happy with you," Butler said. "And the next, you're completely off your game and falling all over the place and getting screamed at."

Making skating a priority sometimes means Butler has to push her social life to the side.

"A lot of my friends are at skating, so I do see most of my friends every day. But I mean, I don't get to go parties on Friday nights," Butler said. "I do skate Fridays after school, and then most Saturdays at 6 a.m. I have practice."

This reality isn't always easy for Butler's friends.

"We see each other on the weekends when she doesn't have competitions or anything, but we don't really get to hang out much other than that. It's mostly at night that we get to see each other, or on Sundays," senior Kirsten Schoensee said.

Butler said figure skating can spell trouble for academic success.

"I have to miss school a lot for competitions and testing, and it makes getting all my homework done harder because I don't get home until six or seven, and I'm exhausted after skating for three hours," Butler said. "I just have to remind myself that if I get bad grades, my mom probably won't let me skate as much, so I have to work hard to get good grades to keep skating."

For Kay Butler, seeing her daughter balance so many priorities breeds anxiety.

"It can be very stressful, she can have a lot on her plate. But she has done a good job accomplishing her goals," Kay said. "There are times where I am concerned that she's not getting enough sleep

because she's up late studying and has early morning practices, but she manages well."

Figure skating can mean Butler misses out on other passions, such as school musicals.

"I have to choose between, 'Do I do the musical?' or 'Do I keep skating?' and they both take up so much time. You can't do both, and I pretty much always choose skating."

Butler said keeping an upbeat

attitude can be difficult.

"In eighth grade, I had a competition that I worked really hard to prepare for, and I felt really good about it. But there was heavy traffic getting there, and I missed just go and and fell like three times. It was horrible."

Sometimes, Butler even considered quitting.

"There was a time freshman year where I was just kind of in a funk with it, and I wasn't doing as well as I had been. I wasn't sure I wanted to do it anymore, but I stuck with it, and I'm glad I did," Butler said.

Ultimately, skating has proved a more than worthwhile undertaking in Butler's life.

"I got out of that funk. And thinking about the experiences I've had since freshman year, it's definitely been a good thing that I stayed with it," Butler said.

Undoubtedly, skating has had its upsides in But-

ler's life. Butler says the friends she's made are for a lifetime, and the feeling of competing is incomparable.

"The feeling when you know that you've done well, and your coach just is so proud of you, that's a good feeling," Butler said.

Butler's positive attitude has helped her persevere through cold mornings on the ice and practices that at times test her limits.

"I just love her demeanor, her sense of her humor. Katie never gives up. She's got a great attitude with skating. She's always happy and never gives me a hard time," Butler's coach, Laura Delbarbra, said. "One year in our competition, at the Shores Autumn Classic, she skated her absolute best and ran off the ice and gave me the biggest hug, and it meant the world to me. It just goes to show that hard work pays off."

According to Delbarbra, attitude can be everything in figure skating.

"The kids practice these things over and over, and sometimes are consistent with jumps, and sometimes they aren't, and sometimes it's just because they aren't believing in themselves. If you believe in yourself, you can make it happen, and if you don't, you can totally sabotage yourself. The cockiest people in any sport can be the best athletes."

Butler said she has pushed herself to be the best she's capable of.

"I just wanted to be good at it so badly that I just didn't stop. I've definitely come a long way, but I still have a long way that I could go," Butler said. "For skating, I actually started pretty late. Most people start at three or four years old. But I have come a long way. I went from not competing at all, to winning gold, and that's the best feeling ever, just to know that you were better than everyone else."

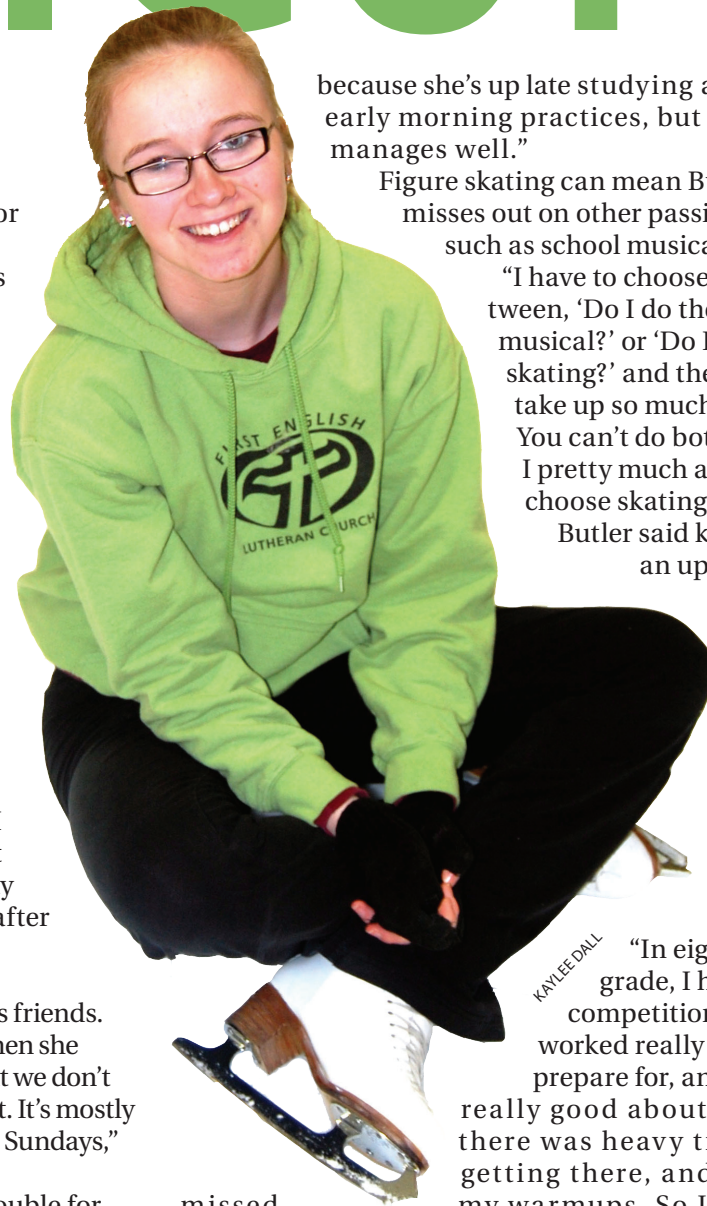
Butler said although skating has had a large impact on her life, she isn't sure about pursuing it in college.

"College is starting a new chapter of my life, so it'd be more of a fresh start if I didn't skate, but I'm not sure I can just let it go that easily," Butler said. "I'd feel really empty. What would I do with all my time?"

And if she doesn't continue at a university level, Butler said she will use the lessons learned from skating throughout her life.

But the one thing she won't miss?

"Those two days a week when I wake up at 5 a.m. to skate."



KAYLEE DALL