

Couple plans to skate through wedding day

Competing in winter triathlon will be just the warmup

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Rodney Al and fiancée Megan Rogers are both competing in Sunday's winter triathlon at Hawrelak Park. Then they're going to get married.

Photograph by: Chris Schwarz , The Journal

Have you ever competed in a triathlon? Did you do it on your wedding day?

Rodney Al, 36, and Megan Rogers, 31, will tie the knot Sunday, but not before racing -as a team -in the Silver Skate Festival and Winter Celebration 25 kilometre triathlon at Hawrelak Park.

"It was Megan's idea," said Al.

This winter style triathlon opens with a 10 kilometre skate, is followed by 10 kilometres of crosscountry skiing and ends with a five kilometre run. The couple, whose romance began more than two years ago over a photocopier at the City of Edmonton parks office, has trained since September and Al doesn't expect them to be too exhausted when they recite their vows in front of friends and family.

"It's going to make for a whirlwind wedding day," said Al, who participated in the event three years ago.

"We're trying to mark a commitment to each other to stay active for our marriage and the fun part of the triathlon is it's designed as a fun, participatory event."

Fifteen friends and family on four other teams will also be competing in the triathlon against the soon-to-be newlyweds. Some are ultra competitive while others are just going to be out there to enjoy the camaraderie.

"We're very supportive of the everybody wins philosophy," Rogers said.

On their honeymoon the couple will also run a 10-kilometre road race which is part of the annual Cyprus Marathon.

But the triathlon wasn't the only family-oriented event at the Silver Skate.

The weekend-long festival, which started in 1991, is open to people of all ages and includes snow sculpting, snowshoeing, face painting, musical performances and a heritage village on-site.

Despite the frigid weather Erin Di Loreto, the assistant festival producer, is hopeful that people continue to flock to the event and be part of the festivities.

"It's about community and it's about winter and enjoying it," Di Loreto said. "We're not bears. We don't hibernate when it's cold outside."

After learning Al and Rogers were doing the triathlon on their wedding day Di Loreto arranged for the couple to wear unique identification on the course.

"We made them tags that say bride and groom," Di Loreto said.

Rogers said returning to the festival to celebrate her anniversary each year will be special.

"Edmonton is a winter city and the festival is a wonderful way to celebrate winter," Rogers said.

The festival lasts until Monday. Organizers are encouraging people to take transit to and from Hawrelak Park.

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