

# skating into Sochi

**O**cala native Joey Mantia currently resides in Salt Lake City, Utah. It's much better suited to his sport of choice: long track ice speed skating. After just three years on the ice, Joey qualified in December for the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, Russia. So what does it take to be a top-tier athlete? According to Joey, it's about hours on the ice, an unyielding work ethic and plenty of food.

BY KATIE MCPHERSON



Joey started in-line skating at an Ocala rink circa 1993.

"When I was a kid I liked to go to the skating rink public sessions. One day, the session ended and I wouldn't get off the floor," Joey recalls. "The speed coach came in and said 'let him stay out there and see how he does.' He talked my dad into letting me skate my first meet a few weeks later."

"He whooped up on 'em in \$20 skates," says Joe Mantia, Joey's father and biggest fan. "Now, 20 years later, he's on the Olympic Team."

Of course, no one becomes an Olympian without putting in the hours. A typical day of training starts bright and early at 7am.

"Warm up is from 8-9am, and then we're on the ice from 9-11am," Joey explains. "Then I get off the ice for recovery and some nutrition. Our second workout is usually around 2 or 3."

Joe says his son has always been an overachiever, and spending six hours a day, five days a week at the oval means Joey burns plenty of fuel.

"As far as nutrition goes, it's most important I get enough calories in me to do the workouts. I like to do shakes with protein



powder, fruits and lately some dextrose to replace what I burn off in muscle use."

When he's not training with the team, Joey pays it forward by training upcoming skaters at educational clinics.

"I was lucky to have a really good coach growing up. She taught me all the fundamentals through her program. I didn't realize until I was skating other practices that other people didn't do that," he says. "I really enjoy teaching kids, and I'm happy I'm in a position to do so."

This Olympian's proudest moment?

"My first individual world title in in-line. When I came across the line first, it was the best feeling ever. I've never really felt the same after winning."

His father answered similarly, but remembered his son's heart even better than his monumental achievement.

"In his very first world competition, he won a gold medal on my birthday. He skated to me with it and said 'Happy Birthday, Dad. I love you,' and put it around my neck."

*"He whooped up on 'em in \$20 skates, now 20 years later, he's on the Olympic Team."*

— JOE MANTIA

## WANT TO SEE JOEY IN ACTION?

The 22nd Olympic Winter Games take place February 7 through 23. Although the Opening Ceremonies are held on February 7, official competition begins on February 6. You can catch the action during primetime on NBC. For a complete rundown of the 2014 Winter Olympic schedule, athletes and more, visit [NBCOlympics.com](http://NBCOlympics.com) or [TeamUSA.org](http://TeamUSA.org).