

February 7, 2005

I've built a backyard rink for 5 years now using the plans from Family Fun magazine. Here are some comments based on my experience that you may benefit from –

- Don't trust a string level when assessing how flat your backyard is. I found that the ground contour and slope is very different from the grass' surface and string level doesn't test this well.
- I don't follow their suggested assembly sequence. I lay out the rink, run string to mark two perpendicular sides, position the corner boards and only then do I pound in the metal stakes. I continue to add boards along one side and nail them together with the small vertical pieces of wood. Only when the side boards are in position, do I hammer in the stakes. Because of all the rocks around here, I often have to re-position the stakes to get them fully seated.
- I recommend that you only use 36 inch stakes too. They're not much more expensive than the 24 inch ones and the extra side support is good. (When I purchased these ~ 4 years ago the 36 inch stakes were less than \$3 each).
- I try to build the rink 'box' over the Thanksgiving holiday, preferably when the ground is frozen. If it's warm and muddy, I'll wait till it's colder. If you build the box when it's warm, don't put the liner down until it's cold.
- The 40 x 100 foot construction plastic recommended in the article is cheap but not durable. One entire season was a washout because of a bad seam in this plastic.
- I recommend using a liner from www.nicerink.com. They're somewhat expensive but they're good folks and their web site is fun.
- My rink is 33 x 63 feet and I use a 40 x 70 foot liner.
- You'll need to reinforce the corners. I use steel strapping and galvanized screws.
- I've included a few photos from several years ago too. The darker photo was taken late at night under flood lights that I position in the trees.

I really enjoy building this each year, my sons and their friends love it and its fun to share with folks like you.

Good luck and let's hope for lots of cold weather.

Greg

