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## **Local Synchronized Skating Team Gets Gold, Silver in Weekend Tournament**

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The Southern CT Synchronized Skating team (SCSS) hosted a record number of 76 teams this weekend for the 17th Annual Terry Connors Open.

The Sprites part of the team (its youngest members) came in first place in their category; Shimmers finished second place in theirs. The Shadows (the more advanced, older members) came in fifth. Based in Stamford, the team has members from area towns, including Darien.

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— *an announcement from the Southern Connecticut Synchronized Skating Team*

Skaters, coaches, officials, and parents traveled from as far away as Virginia, Washington D.C., Pennsylvania, Delaware, Massachusetts; Albany, N.Y. and Maine.

### **Sprites**

The SCSS Sprites, a Synchro Skills Level 2 line, won gold on Saturday with their confident performance to Motown classic, "Ain't Too Proud to Beg" by The Temptations.

This level typically incorporates elements such as blocks, crossovers in a circle, 3-turns, lunges, and two intersecting lines. Sprites skater Anastasia Ladyka, a 5th grader at Roxbury Elementary School in Stamford, expressed how practice makes perfect, "Gina (Gina Valenzano-Gomez, SCSS Head Coach) kept telling us to fix our mistakes and it really paid off."

### **Shimmers**

The SCSS Shimmers, a pre-juvenile line, which includes Jahnvi Orr of Darien, won silver with their audience-clapping performance to the country music hit "Mud" by the Road Hammers. Their program demonstrates mastery with blocks, wheels, traveling circles, brackets, 3-turns, mohawks, and pair elements.

Stamford resident Chloe Gerace, 10, clearly articulated, "We worked hard to come together as a team and skated as one."

### **Shadows**

Facing stiff competition in a group of 10 Open Juvenile teams, the SCSS Shadows came in a disappointing 5th place with their upbeat performance to Jessica Simpson's "Swing with Me Baby."

Their routine showcases intricate footwork and advanced synchronized skating elements such as no-hold step sequences, spins, pair moves, intersecting and pivoting lines.

"While it wasn't a perfect performance, our presentation really came together today with each of us showing great energy, smiling, making eye contact, and having a really good time," said Michelle Han, 17, a senior at Darien High School. "We're off to a good start and will only get better."

**More Competitors**

Over the last five years, the number of participating teams grew from 64 teams in 2012 to 76 teams this year.

“The record number of participating teams point to the growing popularity of the sport. We love to see many familiar teams returning each year and watch how their clubs have grown over the years. We always have a sprinkling of new teams that join us on some type of rotating basis, especially the teams that travel a distance,” said Cathy Kolbasiuk, the event chairperson.

The weekend-long event is fully hosted by the team’s parent volunteers, sanctioned by the U.S.F.S.A, and draws 17 nationally ranked competition judges. Each leveled team consists of 8 to 20 skaters who perform a program together and is judged on required elements, speed, challenging step sequences, and precision, as well as for style and artistic expression.

The variety and difficulty of elements require that each team member is a highly skilled individual skater.

This year’s team is comprised of 42 skaters from Stamford, Greenwich, Westport, Darien, Norwalk, New Canaan, Southport, and White Plains, N.Y. For more information about the SCSS team, visit [the Terry COnnors Rink website](#) or [the team's Facebook page](#).