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Electric Hockey Skate, The

By EVAN HUGHES

When Tory Weber, a hockey enthusiast from Calgary, went to fetch the paper one frigid day in 1985, the soles of his warm running shoes melted the ice on his steps, sending him tumbling backward. He wondered, “What if I could get this reduced-friction scenario going in the right direction?” Later, while working at a lumberyard, he began devoting free time to the idea of a heated ice-skate blade that would yield a better glide with less effort. The skate he devised finally goes on sale this month.

Weber was still “poor as a church mouse” when, in 2001, he read about the development of a battery small enough to fit inside the molded plastic that holds a hockey skate’s blade. He and a partner, Jeremy Furzer, began running tests and soon found that heated blades, which melt more ice and thus glide on a slightly thicker layer of water, can produce 50 to 75 percent less resistance to motion. “I thought, Gee whiz, if we had a 5 or 10 percent difference we’d be in good shape,” Weber says.

When they made their pitch to large skate manufacturers, the companies liked the idea but said to come back when it was fully commercialized. That happened again and again. Their fortunes improved in 2004, when [Wayne Gretzky](#) signed on as an investor and endorser. Already, several unidentified N.H.L. players are using Thermablades during games as part of a league-approved trial.

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