

Backyard ice rink is a great source of fun, satisfaction

Mark Mager is a father who's experienced the joys of flooding his backyard to make a number of ice rinks. The York Region resident offers the following advice for those thinking of doing the same.

As I started the construction of our annual backyard skating rink, I thought it was time to share my techniques so that other unsuspecting souls can benefit from the successes and failures of my experience. (Right off the bat I should tell you that I've never ruined my lawn in

any way making an ice rink...but I'm not guaranteeing anything.)

I don't know why I do it year after year. Every spring I promise it's the last time. It's too much work. Period.

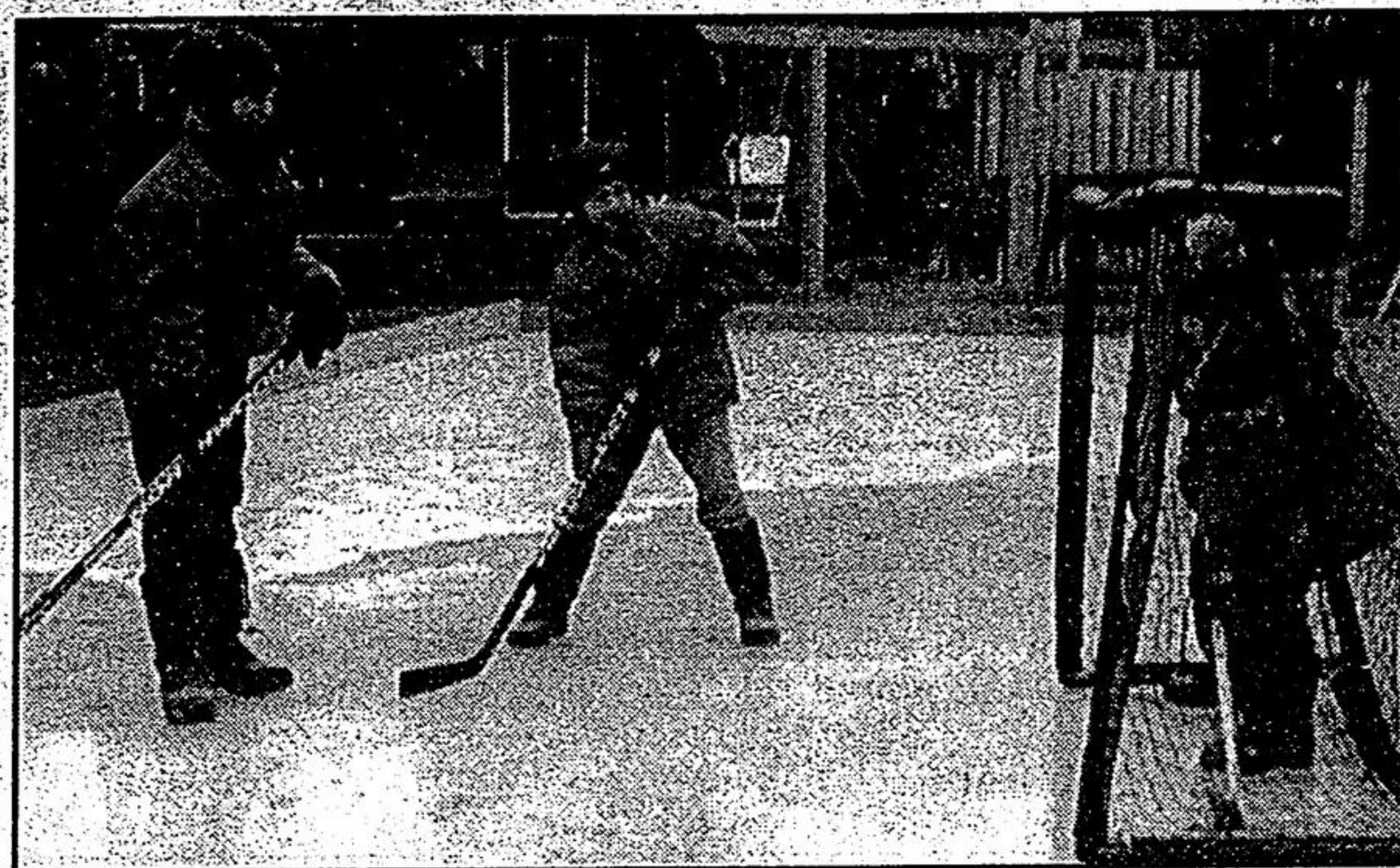
I probably do it because when it works it's great. Whether it's a family hockey game under flood-

lights in the evening or a birthday party on a sunny Sunday afternoon it can't be beat.

Over the years I've made 10 or more rinks. I've tried all sorts of methods and this method I'll describe seems to work best.

First, it's an easy way to get an ice base started and second, even if there's a thaw in January or February, the plastic liner holds all the water, like a bathtub, for refreezing.

Our rink is 18-feet wide



The Mager children, Zoe, Andrea and Jamie, make good use of their backyard rink made by dad Mark.

Photo/CHERYL JOHNSON



IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

PROTECT YOUR CAR FROM THE WINTER ELEMENTS

OIL SPRAY SPECIAL

\$60⁰⁰

Reg. \$99⁰⁰

AUTO TINT & ACCESSORIES

11 Heritage Rd., Markham

905-471-7555

DRIPLESS OIL

- will not make a mess on your driveway
- stops all rusting action from eating your car
- works on new, used and even rusty cars

Limited Time Offer with Coupon

RELIEF FOR TIRED WORKING MEN

WINTER CHECK-UP & OIL & FILTER CHANGE

Includes up to 5 litres of 5w30 oil & oil filter, and a complete inspection of brake system, exhaust system, shock absorbers, steering, suspension, all belts & fluid levels and rotate tires.

39.95

ENGINE TUNE-UP & CHARGING SYSTEM CHECK INCLUDES


- Replace Spark Plugs
- Check Air Filter & Fuel Filter
- Electronic Engine Control Diag.
- Engine Shampoo
- Clean Battery Terminals
- Load Test Battery
- Check Alternator Output
- Road Test
- Check Starter Current Draw

4 Cyl. '84 - 6 Cyl. '99 - 8 Cyl. '104 - Vans & Aerostars, Extra. Platinum Plugs Extra.

FOUR WHEEL ALIGNMENT SERVICE INCLUDES

- Inspect all Front End, Steering & Suspension Components
- Inspect Tires & Adjust Pressure
- Adjust Caster, Camber & Toe as Necessary
- Road Test

69.95



SERVICE DEPT. OPEN SATURDAYS

by 45-feet long. The backyard is not level so the low corner of the rink is about eight inches deeper than the high corner.

This fact becomes very significant when you realize that you have to build eight solid inches of ice in one corner before you get total coverage. For those really low spots on the rink, you can level it up with leaves and then put the plastic on top.

Now to start.

Use two-inch by 10-inch planks around the perimeter. Use long planks and fasten them together, end to end, connecting them with an 18-inch-long piece of wood screwed to the outside and form your rectangular rink. I do this usually in late November. I don't want to be working in foul or snowy weather.

Once this is done, you can admire your handiwork. It really looks like you've got something. That's the heavy work and it's best to sequentially mark the ends of the boards so assembly will be easier next year.

The next step is to put in the plastic liner.

You can buy rolls of polyvinyl in 20-foot by 100-foot or 24-foot by 100-foot rolls in four or six millimetre thickness. Shop around by phone. There are usually large price differences.

I spread out the plastic across my rink.

I cut off the piece from the roll, leaving a few feet extra in length and width for stapling the plastic to the wooden perimeter boards.

This next step is a matter of preference.

Some people lay the plastic on the ground, bring it up the insides of the boards, over the top and staple the plastic to the outside of the boards. The advantage is it holds water well initially without bulging outside the boards.

But I choose to lay down the plastic, pull it carefully under the boards, pull it tightly up the outside of the boards and staple it neatly to the outside of the boards. I just like the look of the wood and the ice and the sound of the puck on the boards.

If the plastic bulges at the low end where the water and

ice get thick, I use a half-inch piece of plywood and some stakes to shore up the plastic and prevent it from giving way.

Once again, this only happens when your yard is not level.

It's important to clear the ground under the plastic of sticks or debris to prevent punctures (duct tape will repair damage). Don't walk on the plastic in your shoes.

Before stapling the edges of the plastic to the boards, fold the plastic, so you are stapling through most layers.

You're done, almost.

Now for the fun stuff. Flooding. Making ice.

Everyone has theories on making ice. My only suggestions are:

1: Don't start too early before the ground is thoroughly frozen or the ice will melt from underneath and

2. Build your ice slowly, a few inches at a time. Resist the temptation of laying it on too thick or it won't freeze underneath.

3. Drain the hose completely each time or bring it into a warm area after each flooding.

Of course when it's snapping cold you can do whatever you want. It freezes as you pour.

Out at night, under the stars, the water vapor rises.

Everyone inside thinks what a hero you are. It's amazing how many household chores you can get out of this way. It takes many evenings to keep the ice groomed.

And when the parties come around you'll always find people who'll want to talk technique and technology of the ice rink.

I just heard of a guy whose children put advertising on the boards.

Come springtime when the rink starts to disintegrate and the work of dismantling it begins and there are glaciers sitting on your lawn, you might feel like a rink-making expert or you might feel like that'll be the last rink you'll ever make.

But come next winter when the cold air comes blowing in you'll put out the boards, and for some strange reason, it'll start all over again.

Good luck.