

Salé - Pelletier: married, divorced, friends

BY BRENDA BRANSWELL, THE GAZETTE NOVEMBER 18, 2012



Salt Lake City, Feb. 9, 2002 - Canadian figure skaters David Pelletier and Jamie Salé skate during their performance in the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Photograph by: Grant Black, Postmedia News file photo

MONTREAL — For a long time, David Pelletier would hear about the judging scandal at the Salt Lake City Olympics almost every day.

“Nobody talks about the performance,” Pelletier said with a laugh. “It’s always how they felt about the entire event.”

Fans and pundits cried foul after Jamie Salé and Pelletier skated a seemingly flawless performance in the free skate of the figure-skating pairs competition, but placed second behind their Russian rivals,

Elena Berezhnaya and Anton Sikharulidze. The fuss grew when the French judge said she was pressured to vote for the Russian pair, then later retracted her statement.

Salé and Pelletier were awarded duplicate gold medals at the 2002 Games and the judging controversy made them household names, landing them on the The Tonight Show with Jay Leno and the cover of Time magazine.

Ten years later, they're back in the spotlight, honoured for their figure-skating careers that included three national pairs titles and a gold medal at the world championships in 2001.

They were inducted into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame last month and on Monday night they'll receive the same honour in Montreal from the Quebec Sports Hall of Fame.

Much has changed in their lives since they skated their signature long program to the theme from the movie Love Story at the Olympics.

They married in 2005, had a son and then divorced in 2010. In June, Salé married retired National Hockey League player and Hockey Night in Canada commentator Craig Simpson.

"I think Dave and I are really, really good friends now. It was a tough few years," Salé said last week in a telephone interview.

"It is weird for a lot of people. Most people kind of go, 'I don't know how you guys do it.' And I go well, probably because of the fact that we skated together, that helps. But it's not our way to be miserable and vindictive."

In fact, Pelletier will be spending Christmas with them, said Salé, who called him part of their family "and it's wonderful."

"It's really healthy. I know it's different for people, but we like it this way. And (it's) best for Jesse, right?" she said of her and Pelletier's 5-year-old son.

Pelletier said Salé is still his best friend and they talk three or four times a day.

"Through all of this, Jamie and I, we've been through a lot together so we learned how to work together," Pelletier said, adding their son doesn't have to pay for their shortcomings.

Pelletier, 37, is a native of Sayabec, Que. He and Salé trained for three years in Montreal when they started skating together. They last performed in May at an event in Korea.

"After that we agreed we were just going to slowly fade away," Pelletier said.

"If there is a show down the road that's interesting to us and we're going to have fun with it and the offer is good, we'll do it."

But for now, they have no plans to go back on the ice.

Pelletier teaches a bit of figure skating, but is mainly training in Edmonton to become a power skating coach.

Salé and Simpson, with whom she won the CBC's Battle of the Blades reality show competition in 2009, are partners in a wine business. She's working as a marketing manager.

"I never would have dreamt that I would be selling wine. But it's a lot of fun for me," said Salé, 35.

"I'm not a real salesman either. But I think what I bring to the table for the company is my personality and the connections that I have with people."

In the years following the 2002 Olympics, a new judging system was implemented in figure skating.

"The system itself is judged better because now everything is quantified," Pelletier said.

"There is still a subjective side, but a lot less than it used to be. So at least now if you are going to do something like a special lift there is something black and white on paper that says that's worth that many points. And so that's helpful. It's very not fan-friendly, but it's skater-friendly, for sure."

Salé acknowledged the benefit of having things quantified, but said she's glad she isn't competing under the current system, which she finds a bit confining.

The athletes try to build points, so they are doing extra things before and after their elements that in her opinion take away from what she calls the free style of skating and looking effortless.

"Like nothing looks really effortless anymore. It looks difficult," she said.

"We could all tell a story when we skated. It's so hard to do that today. They try still, but again it's with all the extra things that they want to do to build points it's a little clouded."

She and Pelletier ultimately became more popular because of the story from the Olympics, Salé said, recalling how they appeared on talk shows and got flown on Jay Leno's private jet to appear on his NBC television program.

"It was crazy the experiences that we had and we wouldn't have had that if we would have won outright — we know that," she said.

"So we thought, you know what, let's just fly with this and let's have fun with it and we did. And we made a great living doing it, obviously, and I think it helped both the Russians and us with our pro career."

They were given a lemon and made lemonade with it, but never with the idea they'd get rich out of it, Pelletier said.

"We just went through it, day by day, and all of a sudden, my God. I walk into a store I'm on the cover of Time, Newsweek, Chicago Tribune, L.A. Times," he said. "I didn't ask for that — it just happened to us."

Others being inducted into the Quebec Sports Hall of Fame during a dinner ceremony Monday night at Hôtel Delta Centre-Ville are Jacques Villeneuve (auto racing), Rhona and Rhoda Wurtele (alpine skiing), Éric Lucas (boxing), Luc Robitaille (hockey) and Ronald Corey (builder).

bbranswell@montrealgazette.com

Twitter: [bbranswell](https://twitter.com/bbranswell)

© Copyright (c) The Montreal Gazette

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)



Salt Lake City, Feb. 9, 2002 - Canadian figure skaters David Pelletier and Jamie Salé skate during their performance in the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Photograph by: Grant Black, Postmedia News file photo

