PROFESSIONAL SKATERS ASSOCIATION

COACHES MANUAL

Dedicated to providing continuing education and accreditation to ice skating professionals in a safe and ethical environment.

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PREFACE

As a skater, you can look back and appreciate the lessons of discipline and the self-confidence skating brought you. Now, as a coach, you have the opportunity to shape a similar experience for others. While there are all different levels of skating-from recreational to elite-there are common elements that form a successful coach at any level. Most importantly, a coach must be informed of what the requirements are for a beginner's test, about which equipment is appropriate, the latest change in competition guidelines, and so on. Keeping informed might mean learning from other coaches, learning from your students, attending seminars or simply reading *PS Magazine* and other resource materials. The PSA can provide you with many resources and access to peers to keep you informed.

Make a habit of continually checking our website: www.skatepsa.com. A calendar of events and information on PSA events is maintained and updated regularly.

The PSA educates coaches at all levels-from recreational to elite. Similarly, this manual is for coaches with a wide range of experiences and goals. The Professional Skaters Association has long recognized the need for a program to aid the new professional coach and the Coaches Manual is one answer to that need.

The first edition of the Coaches Manual was written by Eloise Becker and Sally-Anne Reid and published in 1986. A second edition was completely rewritten by Eloise and contained new material. In 1996 the third edition was updated and greatly expanded by Shirley Hughes and Chris Bothner-By and edited by Carole Shulman. New sport specific sections were added along with training and conditioning exercises. In 2008 the manual received a much needed face lift with additional content provided by Carol Rossignol, Barb Yackel, and Jimmie Santee. The fifth edition, 2016, and this sixth edition, 2018, were edited by Carol Rossignol, Ann Miksch, and Elizabeth Thornton with page layout and design by Amanda Taylor. The progress of this manual is what we have in mind for coaches' education—always growing, always improving.

The Coaches Manual can be stored in a loose-leaf inder so it can be filled with material gathered from your continuing education. Add articles from *PS Magazine* or other publications. Include notes taken at master lessons, seminars and conferences. Make this manual grow into your personal and unique book of coaching ideas. For ease of reading we have referred to the skater as "she" rather than he/she or his/hers.

You are a part of a wonderfully gratifying profession. There will be problems, of course. If you didn't have any problems, you certainly wouldn't know enough to enjoy the good moments and appreciate them fully. When you are working with human beings, you will encounter all kinds of feelings and emotions. You will learn to enjoy the good ones and cope with the bad ones. You will learn to grow as a person, not only in the world of skating but from your experiences in everyday life as well.

In what other profession can you take a bag of bones, flesh, and muscle as loose as a goose, a heart that says "I want to but I can't," and begin molding it into something beautiful? You begin with a person who has feeling, love, happiness, sadness, elation and disappointment and end up with an athlete, a musician, a dancer, a performer, all rolled into one. A skater is like putty in your hands. It will never be easy but if you put your heart and soul into it, promising yourself that you will always learn and grow as a coach and teacher, you will find feelings of pride and rewards far greater than you ever imagined.

You will meet wonderful people from all walks of life. You will be a part of their lives. You will be responsible for the smile of satisfaction that comes over the face of the beginner as the feel of gliding over the ice is realized. The adult who will never become a champion will hold you in high esteem because you, her teacher, have taught her the simple pleasure of balancing on ice skates. You may think you have merely taught her how to skate. But you have done much more than that. The adult quite often uses skating as an outlet; a form of therapy. In the skating rink, the adult finds pleasure in the simplest accomplishments; her problems are left outside of the rink while she is enmeshed in the thrill and challenge of learning to skate. It has given her a place of escape. A whole new world opens up to her as she is able to meet new people and make life-long friends. Physical therapy as well as mental therapy is found in skating. You are responsible for this! How can you ever say that you are "just teaching skating?"

Think of the tiny tot whose tears turn to joy when she finally realizes that slipping and gliding on the ice is fun. The transformation of this little tot from a frightened, tearful child into a potential future skater is a rewarding experience. As you give your knowledge of skating to others, they will give you much more in return.

The wonderful world of the skating professional coach is what you make it!

Part I -
Introduction

CHAPTER ONE

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COACH

Welcome

Congratulations! You are involved in a wonderful and gratifying profession.

"Everyone who takes skating lessons has the right to the finest instruction available. Instructors must give their personal best to each and every student and not make hasty judgment calls as to whether or not a student has natural ability. Coaches have the obligation to improve their knowledge in techniques and never rely on 'this is the way I did it'. Every lesson should be concluded on a positive note. As a result, the student feels a sense of accomplishment."—Donald Bartelson

This should be the goal of every coach. As teachers and coaches we have a tremendous responsibility to promote our sport as a healthy and fun competitive or recreational sport. The skaters in our charge look to us as role models and expect to progress. Arena management expects coaches to provide quality instruction, and to promote their facilities and programs. Parents expect you to act professionally and give them value for their dollar. As a professional coach you can look to a life-long career of fulfillment as you make a difference in someone's life.

Whether you are looking to coach part-time or to earn a living, you owe it to yourself to do the best job that you can. Invest in your development by continuing to educate yourself. Keep an open mind to new ideas and techniques, and share that knowledge you have with others.

Up until now, your skating has been self-centered. Now you are branching out and re-channeling your talent and energy and you will be spreading the joy and thrill of skating to others—a most rewarding experience!

You will now have a great responsibility, as coaching consists of more than just teaching technique. As a coach, you will be teacher, manager, student advisor, parent advisor and more. You will be responsible for guiding your students in their own unique directions. The way in which you teach will forever remain with them, so you must be sure of what good coaching is all about.

Caring for the Student

To be successful, you must care about the way you coach. Make certain that what you are teaching is correct technique. Care enough to put in a lot of time on the ice and off during the learning process. There are times when you must put your ego aside to reach out for advice in order to make sure that what you're doing for a student is the right thing. Do everything you can to guide your student up the ladder and you have a responsibility to direct your student on to someone else if the time comes that you are no longer capable of providing the best for that student.

Personality

A pleasant personality plays an important part in coaching skating. Be able to convey fun and excitement when you teach, along with being compassionate. You will be expected to deal with all kinds of people: students of all ages, skating parents, fellow coaches and officials. Be able to stay calm and pleasant under tense circumstances. You need to be diplomatic and professional at all times. Be able to encourage your student to reach her full potential, being firm when necessary, yet not abrasive.

TIP—If you are going to preach self control to your students, you need to set the example.

Appearance

Neatness counts! Sloppiness is out! Your appearance as a professional coach is more important than you may realize. You are dealing with the public and are on "display" at all times. Your appearance is a reflection of you as a person and also as a teacher. A sloppy appearance implies sloppy technique. If you are neat, you will project care in what you are doing. As a role model, you must set a good example. Your hair should be well-kept and neat. Dress neatly and appropriately in a manner as is becoming a professional.

Selecting Your Specialty

As a student, you chose your specialty—free skating, dance, synchro, or pairs and directed all of your energy toward that phase of skating. As you become a professional coach, new opportunities will open up for you to consider. Although you will undoubtedly coach the area of skating in which you excelled, you may be expected to coach in other areas as well.

It will be important for you to think about the type of coaching that will be best suited for you, taking into consideration your goals and life style. After reviewing the available choices, you will be better prepared to evaluate a job and confidently present yourself in an interview.

The Recreational Instructor

The recreational instructor will have more or less steady hours, weekend coaching, lots of beginners, and group lessons. If you do not want to take your work home, this is the job for you. You can get a great deal of satisfaction out of motivating the beginner and watching the results develop. You can get a lot of pleasure out of seeing joy on the face of the skater as skating skills are being mastered. However, if recreational coaching is all you want, then you must be ready to guide that skater(s) on to another coach when the basics are learned, so that the skater may have the opportunity to go on to testing or competitive skating.

Recreational coaching is the cornerstone in the process of building and maintaining your own business. Group lessons and beginner lessons are where your future figure skaters are born. As you teach group and beginner lessons, you will find skaters with exceptional interest and you will be able to guide them into private lessons, thereby building a business for yourself. There is nothing more rewarding than cultivating your own skater from beginner level to championship quality. However, you must keep in mind that of all the young skaters you initially start, many will seek other activities as they grow older and you will always need to add to your clientele. Recreational coaching can be your means toward building and maintaining your business.

The recreational instructor is perhaps the most important factor in the development of the skater—beginner or potential champion. A pleasant personality, lots of enthusiasm, a great deal of patience, plus good teaching skills makes this professional coach greatly valued by rink management and the skating school.

The Competitive Singles or Pairs Coach

If you plan to coach competitive skaters, your schedule will be demanding. This is not the job to have if you don't plan to take your work home. You will be involved with much more than teaching.

As a competitive coach, you will be expected to coach the early morning hours and club sessions that may be scheduled at dinner-time or in the evening. You will also spend hours building your own clientele by teaching group lessons and working on public sessions. This takes careful scheduling of your time in order for you to have the energy to coach at the end of a day that begins at 5:00 a.m. You will be expected to accompany your skaters to most test sessions and competitions, sometimes traveling long distances at inconvenient times.

In addition to teaching your lessons, it will be up to you to choose music and cut it; to choreograph programs; to plan your students' schedules of practice, lessons and off-ice training; to recommend equipment, the scheduling of tests, and which competitions to enter. Keep in mind that parents are paying the bills for whatever you recommend, so you must be wise in your decisions.

There will be times when you will have to set up meetings with parents or the skater in order to counsel them. You will sometimes be faced with difficult situations at test sessions or competitions and you must be able to handle them

in an adult and dignified manner. You should be in control of yourself at all times. It is necessary to encourage your skater in order to develop her maximum potential.

In return for this extra effort, you will feel great pride in the success of your skaters, your students.

The Dance Coach

Coaching ice dancing involves you as a skater much more than singles or pairs coaching, although the interaction with the skater and parents and your responsibilities on and off the ice are very similar. It will be important for you to maintain your own high standard of skating. Since you will be expected to partner your skaters, you will always be in the public eye. You must know and be able to teach both the men's and ladies' steps for all the compulsory dances. You will be expected to take skaters through tests and will need the proper skating attire. You will probably want to supplement your income by coaching adults as well as competitors. This can sometimes mean holding people up throughout the lesson. This is not easy work! The dance coach should expect to teach late evening hours as well as mornings.

The Synchronized Skating Coach

The synchronized skating coach has the distinct responsibility of coaching a large group of skaters to work together as a unit to perform intricate elements such as blocks, circles, lines, wheels and intersections. As a team coach you must possess technical skill as well as patience and reliability. With such a large group of individuals you must be prepared to meet both the mental and physical needs of each skater. You are responsible for the selection of the team, music and costumes, the scheduling of practice, choreography, competition selection and supervision of training. You are also charged with the tasks of keeping the team focused, of finding the strengths of individuals and using them to strengthen the team and of keeping the team excited. You must use the resources available to help you become a better coach. Because the team is your responsibility and rescheduling is a nightmare you can never cancel practice. If the team is there you must be there!

Appointing a team manager/coordinator will help ease some of the coach's responsibilities. The team manager is a volunteer parent who "manages" off-ice duties such as filling out forms, organizing the roster and acting as liaison between the local organizing committee and the coach. The coach must be free to coach.

RECREATIONAL INSTRUCTOR	• Regular hours • Lots of beginners • Group lessons • Weekend coaching • Little work outside the rink	
COMPETITIVE SINGLES, PAIRS OR DANCE COACH	• Recreational + • Early a.m. and/or late evening hours • Homework—music, etc. • Test sessions • Choreography	• Planning training schedules • Counseling skater and parents • Competitions • Partnering students' tests • Off-ice Training
SYNCHRONIZED COACH	• Recreational + • Late evening hours • Irregular fund-raising • Test sessions • Competitions—travel	• Planning schedules • Parental involvement • Homework—music, costumes, etc. • Choreography

Preparation for the Job

What Are Your Goals?

The following list of questions may serve to guide you as you consider your own goals with respect to coaching:

- What aspect of skating do you wish to be most involved with: strictly recreational and group lessons or test and competitive skaters?
- For what do you think you are best suited?
- How much time do you plan to put into this job? Full time? Part time?
- Do you expect to take your work home with you?
- Are you planning to work weekends? Evenings? Early mornings?
- How far away from the rink do you live? Would you be able to return home during free hours or would you have to remain at the rink until you were finished at the end of the day?
- Are you willing to help out in the office?
- Are you willing to relocate? Or drive to other rinks?
- Wherever you begin, are you willing to learn and grow as a coach?

If your thoughts are now clear about the type of job you want, it is time to write your resume and prepare for interviews.

Writing a Resume

The French word résumé means summary and refers to a fact sheet that identifies, describes and lists the qualifications of a person in terms of experience and education. While you will never obtain a position solely on a resume, it may well be the key to obtaining an interview and eventually the job. Your resume should be well-organized, concise, clearly formatted and comprehensive. There are many resources to help create a resume. Many computer programs enable you to format a resume, as well as free templates offered online. "Google" resume templates and find a variety of styles, many available free of charge. After preparing a resume, consider asking friends or associates to review and comment on it. There are also resume services available if you feel more comfortable with professional assistance.

Never overstate your experience or qualifications. List job experience and education in reverse chronological order. Give references if requested. Your resume would normally include the following types of information:

- Name, address, telephone number
- Highest tests passed (U.S. Figure Skating, Skate Canada, ISI, ISU, other)
- Competitive experience with highest title first (list only the most important)
- Amateur training, clinics (including when, where, with whom)
- Amateur or professional shows and exhibitions
- Coaching experience (highest level skater you have coached)
- Coaching education (seminars, workshops, coaches' clinics, courses, apprenticeships, etc.)
- Outside interests—if they pertain to skating /coaching, certifications held
- Other education (college, high school, music, dance)
- Highest ranking level
- Highest ratings by discipline

When your resume is prepared you must decide where to send it. Seek the help of friends and associates. Be sure that it reaches the hands of someone who is in a position to offer a job. Some of the sources that you should consider in determining where to send the resume include local ice rinks, lists of clubs in the U.S. Figure Skating Directory, lists of rinks in the ISI Directory, advertisements in SKATING, The Professional Skater magazines, and other publications.

Use a brief cover letter with each resume. This is your chance to personalize and focus your communication regarding a specific opportunity. Note your most relevant qualifications and explain your interest in the position and why you would be suitable for the job.

Remember, the resume will always be an important tool in furthering your career. Even after you have the job, keep your resume up to date. Consider updating it on an annual basis. It helps you to be prepared for the next

opportunity and also gives you a benchmark to ask what you have done to increase your experience and nurture your professional growth.

Interviewing Effectively

Once you have been contacted and invited to an interview begin by reviewing your resume and list all the questions which you might be asked. Find out as much as you can about the position and the person(s) who may be interviewing you.

What to expect from an interview

Many employers are aware that employing somebody on the basis of one or two short interviews can be a risk if they do not ask the "right" questions in an interview. That's why "behavioral" interviewing has become very popular with many managers.

What is behavioral interviewing?

It is a style of interview that forces you to answer questions that demonstrate your competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) by giving specific examples from your past experiences. The focus of the interview is less about what you can or could do, and more about what you have done in specific situations in the past.

Prior to the interview, the interviewer will define the competencies for the position, and will then develop a series of questions that allow him/her to find out if you have those competencies. Behavioral interviewing is based on the assumption that your past performance (in previous roles) is an excellent predictor of your future performance.

What sort of questions should you expect?

If your interviewer decides to conduct a behavioral interview, you can expect questions that will focus clearly on how you handled situations in the past, such as:

- Give me an example of how you have …
- Tell me about a situation where you …
- How did you deal with a situation in your past role where you had conflict with …

How should you prepare for a behavioral interview?

You can best prepare by taking the following steps:

- Look closely at the position you are applying for. Look at the job description. What specific skills is the skating director or manager looking for?
- Analyze your past work experience and background. Match the skills that you have with those the employers are looking for. Don't forget competencies that you have developed outside of the work environment (e.g., leadership or organizational skills through not-for-profit activities).
- Now identify specific examples/situations that demonstrate those skills. You need to be able to explain an entire situation—tell a story to show how you actually used a particular competency. It pays to illustrate the level of involvement you had in resolving a situation, and to quantify the results. If there are situations where you applied a competency but things didn't work out, use them as examples and explain what went wrong. What did you do to resolve it?
- Try the PAR approach to answering questions. State the problem (P) you faced. Outline the action (A) you took to resolve the problem. And then explain the results (R) you achieved.

How to conduct your interview

- Be honest. As with your resume, you are selling yourself. If you represent yourself as anything other than what you are, it most likely will blow up in your face somewhere down the line. The skating world is a small community, and sooner or later someone will know your background.
- Image. As with any interview, if you present a neat, clean image, you will leave a good first impression.
- Attitude. You will want to display an energetic, positive attitude during your interview. Be confident but not cocky. Smug attitudes will turn an interviewer right off.

- Listen. Don't be so eager to sell yourself that you forget to listen to what the interviewer is saying to you. You will be judged on how well you can communicate with others and if an employer feels that you don't listen you won't get the job.
- Be on time. Nothing will get you off to a worse start than being late. Right off the bat you show a lack of responsibility.
- Smile. It can't hurt.

Some of the questions which you might expect to be asked include:

- How many years have you been skating?
- Why do you want to coach?
- What are your schedule restrictions?
- What level of coaching experience do you have?
- Why did you leave your previous job?
- Will you bring your own students?
- What levels will you coach (adults, tots, etc.)?
- Are you prepared to make a commitment to stay for a specified period?
- Do you intend to continue your professional education?
- Will you participate in community events, advertising, etc.?

TIP: Personal questions (marital status, children) are inappropriate and do not need to be answered.

It is important that you interact with your interviewer in a pro-active manner. Use the interview as an opportunity to learn more about the job being offered. You should prepare a list of questions which you want to ask during the interview. The following list may provide some examples:

- Will you be an employee or an independent contractor?
- Employee: What would be the base salary? How often would you be paid? Would taxes be withheld?
- Contractor: What would be your commission and how would you be paid?
- Who will be your direct supervisor (rink manager, skating director, or club)?
- What are the payment policies for private lessons, group lessons?
- Are there commissions? How much is paid? How often are they paid? When are they due? On which lessons?
- Is liability insurance required? Provided? How is it obtained?
- What kind? What level? What is the cost? (Liability insurance is available through the PSA).
- Are you required to join the PSA, ISI or U.S. Figure Skating?
- Will you be expected to be rated by the PSA?
- What are the policies with regard to setting fees for private lessons?
- What is the policy with regard to coaching at other rinks? Are there any limitations or restrictions?
- Are there rink/club policies regarding private lessons? Can you coach anyone who asks?
- Are there set policies/formats for group lessons? Are there tests at the end of each session? U.S. Figure Skating, ISI or other?
- Will you be asked to provide administrative support? How much? Are you paid?
- Will you be expected to cover certain sessions as the Professional Coach on duty?
- Will you be expected to oversee tests, judge basic skills competitions, ISI competitions?
- Will you be expected to volunteer time for stroking classes or club/rink shows?
- Is there a coaches' room? Is there a dress code?

Interview Summary

You may be informed at the interview's closing that you have been accepted for the job or the employer may contact you at a later date. If you haven't heard about your acceptance within two weeks, you may call to check on the status of the position. This shows you are sincerely interested. If at the end of the interview you are no longer interested in the position, be honest. Express your appreciation for the interview.

First Impressions

You got the job! Congratulations! After you get the job you need to make special preparations for the first few days. It really is true that first impressions last a long time and there are things that you can do to ensure that the first impressions you make are good ones:

- Be on time and look professional. Many people at the rink will see you before they meet you. Present a good image to everyone.
- Work hard at meeting the many groups at a typical ice rink including the other coaches, management, ice maintenance staff, office staff and skate shop staff. Remember names; write them down if that helps.
- Familiarize yourself with the entire rink schedule, take a brochure home and study it. Know the sessions and the prices, even for those areas which you do not coach or instruct.
- Learn the rules of the rink: What is permitted on public sessions, who you can instruct and at what level. Determine all the details of group lessons, including levels, prices, group sizes, etc.
- Identify the clubs at your rink and when their sessions meet. Do you need special permission to coach on these sessions? Who can authorize you?
- Find out when and if tests are given and the name and phone number of the test chairman.
- You are not expected to know everything when you first arrive. It's the best time to ask questions and learn everything you can about your situation. Make it an exciting, challenging experience not a threatening one.

The First Day

Be there early!
Look professional!
Be attentive and friendly!

There are lots of questions that should be answered before you begin to coach. There are people you should meet and rules to learn. Be prepared with a notebook in hand as you go to the rink the first day. After meeting people, jot down their names and positions so that you will easily remember them. As questions are answered, write down the information so that you will be able to refer to it when necessary.

Feelings of a New Coach

Making the decision to turn professional and putting on a coach's jacket is an announcement to all that may not give you quite the superior feeling that you have been anticipating. Instead, you may feel quite the opposite as you step on the ice for the first time as a coach. A good coach is the result of years of experience. You are just starting.

You will feel all kinds of emotions as you begin coaching. "Are the other professional coaches watching? Am I doing this right? What is the parent thinking? To me it's easy—why can't this kid perform as I tell her? I know everyone's watching me and if this skater doesn't do it right everyone will think I don't know what I'm doing. I know how to do it and I know how to tell her how to do it—then why isn't she doing it? Boy, I sure don't feel the glamour of this profession right now. I wonder if I ever will."

When you are the new professional coach on staff, you may wonder why some of the other coaches on staff are a little chilly toward you. They may have some uncomfortable feelings too. They may be wondering if you are going to be a threat to them. Are people going to like you better? Are your qualifications higher than theirs? Of course they haven't had a chance to get to know you yet. When they do they will come to realize that you are an ethical professional and a very nice person. They don't know this yet and they won't until you have been there for a while and they've had the chance to see you in action.

Maybe you don't have high qualifications and you've been hired to do group instruction or low-level free skate. There you are on a free skate session, teaching a new student, and on the moves rink next to you is a coach who has

been teaching for 25 years and was a world champion. You want to whisper because you're not sure that you're telling your student what "he" would say. If you never felt inadequate before, you do now.

You feel pretty proud of your accomplishments as a skater. You think of yourself as "on top; the best." But it's been a long time since you've done a waltz jump. Now you are teaching it and somehow you feel differently as you try desperately to get this skater to understand. Oh, where are those wonderful feelings of superiority that are supposed to be built into a coach's jacket?

Maybe you have a student with a real skating mother, who tries to tell you how to teach, what to teach, and when to teach it; who pressures you to put her daughter in for a test when you know it's the wrong thing to do. This mother never likes the music you choose or the choreography you've spent so much time on. She blames you if her daughter doesn't win the competition. She doesn't like it when you tell her anything but wonderful things about her little darling. You go home and can't sleep at night, wondering how to handle this one.

Now you are coaching a group of tiny tots. There are six in the class. Five are crying. They're falling all over the place, they want their mommies. The mothers are standing by, watching, expecting to see some actual ice skating in the first lesson. You only have two hands, your back is breaking, your mind is searching desperately for a solution and you still have twenty-five minutes left of the lesson. For a fleeting moment you think "Why am I doing this?" These are just some of the things you may encounter as a new coach—the list goes on and on. However, the benefits of teaching skating far outweigh the problems you may experience in the beginning of your career. This is a good time to apprentice with a master coach. Learn how to handle these various situations. Educate yourself. You will grow as a professional and reap the rewards of an experienced coach.

Getting Acquainted

Get acquainted with the people with whom you will be working and with the rink facility. Remember, you must be able to guide your students, so you should be well-informed yourself. If your employer doesn't have time to introduce you, do it yourself.

Coaching Staff

Be friendly! A good working relationship between the professional coaches on the staff sets up a fine example for the skaters to follow. If you get along well with your fellow coaches, the entire atmosphere is much more conducive to coaching a fun sport such as skating. Your relationship with your peers will in most instances last much longer than you will coach most students.

Management

There are many people employed in a rink and you will have to deal with each one from time to time. Be friendly and introduce yourself. The first person to get to know is the manager. Ask to have a few minutes to talk with him/her. Find out what will be expected of you and leave the manager with the impression that you are a pleasant, friendly person who will undoubtedly be an asset to the rink. The bottom line is that you can't be successful without the rink, and the rink can't be successful without you.

Engineers

Engineers are responsible for maintaining the ice—a friendly hello and an occasional compliment on the ice conditions will do wonders for keeping a good relationship with them. As professionals, we sometimes need little favors such as putting out cones, etc. Engineers are happy to help if we have shown some appreciation for them in the past.

Cashiers

Cashiers are the first people that our skaters encounter as they enter the rink for public sessions. If you have made yourself known to them, they may remember you when someone asks about lessons or a good professional coach.

Pro Shop

Every coach should become acquainted with the proprietor of the skate shop! Go into the shop at a time when it is not busy and ask to be shown what equipment is available and the prices. You don't have to remember exact prices on everything but a general price range for boots and blades is something you should make a mental note of. Find out

if the shop carries used skates or reconstructed skates. Who does the fitting? Who does the sharpening? It will be up to you to guide your students to the skate shop in your rink, so you should have a general idea of what is available.

Schedules

The scheduling of ice time varies from rink to rink. Find out what the schedule is in your rink. Take a brochure home with you and study it. You will have to have this information at your fingertips if people approach you during public sessions or call on the phone. A coach who says "I don't know" when asked about sessions or group lessons does not sound very knowledgeable. Get to know sessions and prices! Familiarize yourself with the schedule for public sessions, free skate, dance, club sessions, group lessons and special classes such as on-ice stroking or off-ice ballet. Do your homework; know it all!

TIP: Keep public skating and free skating schedules in your coach's jacket. They are great to hand out to parents and skaters.

Rules of the Rink

Rules vary from rink to rink. Learn what your rink expects. Review the rules and add to them if warranted. Never make any changes, however, without consulting management.

Public Sessions

Are skaters allowed to skate backwards or do simple free skate? If so, you may be able to teach low-level free skate on public sessions. Will there be a designated area for you to teach in? Some rinks cone off a section at the end; others cone off the middle. Will you be allowed to teach ice dancing on a public session? Use good judgment when coaching during public sessions—for example, it would be dangerous to teach camel spins on a crowded day.

Group Lessons

Find out all the information on group lessons. Get a brochure and study it. Know age levels, skating levels, prices, number of weeks and starting dates. Are badges given at the end of each group set? What is the passing standard for the groups? How many are in a group? What is the policy for tots who are just beginning? Is a starter lesson required before they join the group? Are group lessons given during public sessions or is there a designated time for groups only? If you are to give a group lesson during a public session, are you responsible for putting the cones on the ice or is that up to the guard? Are you required to save some time after the group in order to speak to parents who may have questions? Are you allowed to teach private lessons right up to the time that your group starts or are you expected to be available prior to groups to help out if people have questions about their skates, etc.? Will you be expected to take attendance? Will you be responsible for preparing your clipboard or will it be done for you?

Take time to learn about the "system" before you begin teaching groups. The system may vary from rink to rink, so it will be important for you to get this information clarified. Usually, the Skating Director will be glad to answer your questions if you ask to set aside a convenient time for discussion. Also, you may be asked to "assist" or stand in on some group lessons (usually without pay) in order to learn the procedure before actually teaching a group by yourself.

Moves in the Field

Are there special sessions set up for moves in the field? Are they integrated with other types of skating? Is there a special layout or schedule for moves in the field? When can you give lessons on moves in the field? Are lessons group; private; both?

Free Skating

Are you allowed to carry a music player around on a crowded session while you choreograph or follow your student around through her program? What is the rule for teaching dance on a free skating session? Do you have the authority to ask a skater to leave the ice because of inappropriate behavior?

Music

What is the acceptable procedure for use of the rink recorder on a free skating session? Find out from the other professionals beforehand so you will not cause confusion at the music stand during a session.

Special Programs and Lessons

What is available to the skater aside from group lessons? Are there starter lessons available, and if so, who gives them and how much do they cost? Is there a policy for semiprivate lessons? What is the length of the average private lesson? What special programs are offered and for what level? Are there stroking sessions, spin and jump classes, choreography classes or dance classes? Are there any off-ice classes such as ballet, jazz or trampoline? Find out about them. Learn what they entail and the price.

Clubs

If there is a U.S. Figure Skating club and/or an ISI program at your rink, find out when the sessions meet. Be able to describe the program and each advantage to your skaters. Learn enough to direct your students to the program that is best suited for that student. Know where to get information on joining or who can be contacted.

Tests

Are U.S. Figure Skating or ISI tests held in your rink, and if so, when are they? Who is the test chairman? Be sure to get the chairman's phone number.

TIP: Your Basic 1—2—3 Approach

1. *It's Your Business—Whether or not you work for a rink or yourself, you are entrepreneurial. Don't let your skaters' development just happen; work at it. Know a little about whom you teach. Strengthen your relationship with your students, parents and co-workers. Review your duties and responsibilities with your employer and skaters.*
2. *Plan, Plan, Plan—Outline a program for successes. Know your students and parents, have a plan for your skaters and classes, have a plan for yourself. Every session should have a short, mid- and long-term goal.*
3. *Take Responsibility—Don't walk away, communicate with your student and parent. Make yourself visible and approachable. This will give you a better appearance to all (parent, skater and employer). If you don't pass a child from a class level, there will be disappointment. You're expected to have an understandable reason to back your decision.*

Beginning To Coach

Getting Your Own Students

In the beginning you may be given lessons by the skating director but eventually you will have to get students yourself. For some of you, getting new students will be easy: if you have an outgoing personality and are naturally friendly toward people, if you have the desire to share your love of the sport, if you are willing to give a little of yourself above and beyond the time for which you are being paid. On the other hand, if you are shy or reserved, you may have to watch other professional coaches and learn to deal with people.

Ethical Solicitation, Marketing, and Promotion

The PSA Board of Governors voted to amend the by-laws as of October 29, 2014, specifically the Code of Ethics rules two and three.

The rationale for the changes was in response to concerns raised by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regarding the provision in PSA's former Code of Ethics that stated:

No member shall in any case solicit pupils of another member, directly or indirectly, or through third parties.

The FTC alleged that this provision in the Code of Ethics violated the Federal Trade Commission Act because it inhibited economic competition among coaches.

The goal of the new rules is to increase competition between coaches, reduce fees for skaters, improve the quality of services, and to encourage innovation.

To achieve these objectives, all coaches are encouraged to market and promote themselves directly to potential clients. Pursuant to our agreement with the Federal Trade Commission, restrictions that had previously prohibited

a coach from soliciting the student of another coach are no longer in effect. Coaches can promote their background and credentials as they see fit, subject, of course, to the requirement that such marketing and promotion may not be misleading, as is discussed in greater detail below.

For example, coaches may choose to market themselves through information which can be posted in a public space at the rink, a dasher board banner, advertised in a flyer or competition program, or promoted in a newspaper. Flyers, business cards, apparel, direct mail, and mass e-mail are all excellent ways to promote your business to a wide audience. Coaches may take the opportunity to have a professional presence on social media, such as blogging, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, or a website, being mindful of how they communicate specifically with minor children in regards to a literal or implied impression of abuse, bullying, or sexual misconduct. Many coaches say they market themselves through their work. Their student's accomplishments are their "advertisement." That, unequivocally, is a great way to promote oneself.

The key to a successful marketing plan is strategic planning. Your plan should identify the tactics you will employ to gain new clients. Your plan should describe your business; a philosophy of your coaching style and technique, services performed, and other details related to the skating business.

More importantly, coaches must research their specific market to help profile their potential customers. Gathering information on the demographics of your area such as economic indicators, social trends, and population statistics will help you understand your target audience. Identify their needs and plan accordingly.

As an example, an introductory private lesson can be given free of charge or at a discounted rate. This allows the coach to evaluate the skater, begin a relationship with the family, and identify talent. It also allows the coach to communicate their vision of short and long term goals for the skater to the parents. In certain situations, discounted lesson fees may be required to allow the skater to participate.

Recruiting students in an ethical manner says a good deal about a coach's integrity and promotes a professional image to prospective clients.

//// *Code of Ethics Rule #2: No member shall represent themselves using false or deceptive statements intended to mislead.*

Making statements about the comparative desirability of offered coaching services or claiming or implying unusual, unique, or one-of-a-kind coaching abilities is acceptable as long as it is not misleading.

However, misrepresenting your credentials or experience is not acceptable and will be considered a breach of Rule #2 of the PSA Code of Ethics. The Federal Trade Commission Act, Section Five: Unfair or Deceptive Acts or Practices, states advertisements in the U.S. must be truthful, not deceptive or unfair. The FTC defines deceitful statements as those that are likely to mislead consumers under normal circumstances and that are likely to affect consumers' decisions.

The FTC defines unfair advertisements as those that are likely to cause substantial, unavoidable injury, unless the injury is outweighed by the provable benefits. According to Section 5 of the FTC Act, "Substantial injury usually involves monetary harm," but can also come in many other forms. Specifically the FTC writes, "Injury exists if consumers would have chosen differently but for the deception."

According to the FTC Policy Statement on Deception written in October of 1983, practices that have been found misleading or deceptive in specific cases include false oral or written representations, or failure to perform promised services. The FTC also considers claims or omissions "material" if they significantly impact health or safety in which a consumer could be reasonably concerned.

> "Every skater has the right to believe his coach is the best and should not be interfered with by a high-pressure, fast-talking, snake oil salesman who promises stardom but by his own action, lacks the very qualities needed to develop championship caliber skaters."
>
> *—Bob Mock, Former President, PSA*

Coaches should take extra care when promoting themselves to children, and refrain from using psychological tactics to encourage demand. The FTC places special emphasis on truth-in-advertising laws when applied to children. Again, the FTC Policy Statement on Deception reports, "False, misleading, and deceptive advertising claims beamed at children tend to exploit unfairly a consumer group unqualified by age or experience to anticipate or appreciate the possibility that representations may be exaggerated or untrue. "

Another important responsibility is to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all skaters. Coaches should be respectful of any disruption in the workplace that may put a skater's safety in jeopardy.

//// ***Code of Ethics Rule #3: In order to protect the safety and development of students, no member shall engage in any in person solicitation of a student while the student is actively engaged in a lesson or while "performing".***

"Performing" means skating or preparing to skate in an event at an arena in a test, competition, or exhibition, and includes meeting with coaches, locker room time, practice skating, and warmup skating.

Additionally, for U.S. Figure Skating registered coaches, SafeSport policies must be followed in order to provide a safe environment for its members that are free of abuse and harassment. While the PSA wishes to encourage the open recruitment of skaters, our members must understand the limitations required to protect minors.

The SafeSport Program Handbook is available for download on the U.S. Figure Skating website.

~ *TIP: Secrets of Success*

- *Develop good communications*
- *Be friendly and positive*
- *Show enthusiasm*

Guidelines for Supportive Parents

Few youth sports programs are successful without the support of parents. Below are a few guidelines which coaches can share with concerned parents as they strive to be supportive of their young athletes without being pushy.

Supportive Parents Focus on Mastering Sport Skills and Strategies Rather Than Competitive Ranking:

Sport mastery focuses on performance which can be controlled by the athlete while competitive ranking focuses primarily on winning and losing, an outcome which is frequently outside the athlete's control. An overemphasis on competitive rank and an under-emphasis on sport mastery is a primary cause of the dramatic dropout rate from competitive sports by 12- to 18-year-olds.

Supportive Parents Decrease the Pressure to Win:

Supportive parents realize that sport creates its own pressure to succeed. Additional pressure from the parent is likely to be counter-productive, particularly in the long run. Supportive parents avoid making the outcome of a game bigger than life. As a game or a competition becomes blown out of proportion, a youngster's self-esteem can become tied to winning or losing. A child should not feel less valuable.

Supportive Parents Believe That Sport's Primary Value is the Opportunity for Self—Development:

The probability of achieving lasting fame and glory via sport is low. Many outstanding athletes never achieve professional status but their sports experiences have allowed them to develop lifelong values and self-respect.

Supportive Parents Understand the Risks:

Competition places the athlete on center stage. Anytime you attempt to succeed publicly, you risk failing where others can judge you. In the long run, competing is willingness to chance failure. Giving your best is what athletics is all about.

Supportive Parents Communicate Their True Concerns Directly with the Coach:

A positive working relationship is based upon clearly communicated, mutual goals among parents, coaches and athletes. While a parent cannot control the behavior of a coach, they can communicate with the coach on a regular basis about the overall development of their child.

Supportive Parents Understand and Respect the Differences Between Parental Roles and Coaches Roles:

Both parents and coaches need to understand their different roles in supporting the young athlete. While parents are ultimately responsible for their child's development, once they have chosen a coach, they must leave the coaching to the coach. Even though supportive parents often play sports with their child, they avoid coaching "over the shoulder" of the coach and or publicly questioning the coach's decisions.

Supportive Parents Control Negative Emotions and Think Positively:

Few athletes wish to perform poorly. A negative reaction to poor performance only adds to an athlete's pressures. Supportive parents realize that even the athlete who "chokes" is trying to succeed. In fact, part of the problem with many athletes is that they are trying too hard to succeed. Criticizing such athletes does little to enhance their performances.

Supportive Parents Avoid the Use of Fear:

The use of punishment and withdrawal of love can pressure kids to perform better. Unfortunately, such strategies tend to trade short-term performance gains for long-term emotional risks to the youngster's health and well-being. Supportive parents recognize that a love for sport is rarely fostered by fear of the consequences of failure.

Supportive Parents Avoid Criticizing:

Nagging parents often confuse support with constantly reminding the children that they need to practice more, condition more, concentrate more, etc. Overly involved parents frequently lose their objectivity. They are unable to provide critical emotional support which children often need before and during highly competitive contests.

Supportive Parents Recognize and Understand Expressions of Insecurity:

Youngsters who express high anxiety, more often than not, have parents who are insensitive to their symptoms. When children are nervous, uncertain, or feeling pressure, insensitive parents may trivialize the child's fears or see such concerns as signs of weakness. Supportive parents realize that such expressions are normal and are a call for emotional support.

Supportive Parents Avoid the Use of Guilt:

"We've done so much for you," or "The family's given so much for you, the least you could do is to take advantage of what we've provided for you" are typical remarks of unsupportive parents. They use guilt to manipulate the child to perform the way the parents desire.

Supportive Parents Show Empathy for the Young Athlete:

Empathy is an understanding of what the child is feeling and an awareness of the pressures and demands that the sport places on the athlete. Empathy is not sympathy or agreement necessarily but rather a true understanding that the task is difficult. A sympathetic response to an expression of doubt by the athlete might be "Perhaps you're right. Perhaps it is too difficult. Maybe you shouldn't compete today." Empathy on the other hand, might be expressed by a supportive parent as "Yes, it will probably be a tough competition today. C'mon, let's help you get ready."

CHAPTER TWO

COACHING CODE OF ETHICS

Ethical Responsibilities

Ethics

Ethics, as defined in Webster's New World Dictionary: *"The system or code of morals of a particular group or profession; conforming to the standards of conduct of a given profession."*

Defining ethical behavior for a skating professional is clear-cut in some instances and vague in others. Remember, if a sticky situation occurs, don't just react; think first. If you are unsure how to handle it, seek advice from a more experienced coach or the PSA.

Being ethical is more than just a moral issue. No one wants to work in an environment where the air is constantly filled with tension. You are coaching a fun sport. You will certainly teach and coach better in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. This can only occur when the coaches are kind to each other and ethical in their behavior. Be friendly, cooperative, and ethical; your rewards will be far greater.

PSA Code of Ethics

The following Code of Ethics shall govern the conduct of members of the Professional Skaters Association. Any complaint concerning any breach thereof shall be considered by the Committee of Professional Standards according to the procedures that are adopted from time to time by the Board of Governors of the Professional Skaters Association. Disciplinary action for an ethics rule violation includes private or public admonition, suspension, expulsion, or permanent expulsion from membership of the Professional Skaters Association.

1. Members of the Professional Skaters Association (hereafter referred to as "Members"), shall at all times exercise the greatest care and discretion in their relationships with other members, athletes, and act in a manner which avoids verbal, mental, emotional, physical, or sexual misconduct of any athlete, coach, parent, or official as defined in the current U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Handbook.
2. No Member shall represent themselves using false or deceptive statements intended to mislead.
3. In order to protect the safety and development of athletes, no Member shall engage in any in-person solicitation of an athlete while the athlete is actively engaged in a lesson or while "performing." "Performing" means skating or preparing to skate in an event at an arena in a test, competition, or exhibition, and includes meeting with coaches, locker room time, practice skating, and warmup skating.
4. Members shall at all times be mindful that they have the responsibility to influence athletes to act ethically, with dignity, and with high moral conduct. No Member shall act in any manner inconsistent with a high standard of ethical and moral conduct.
5. Members shall be advocates for drug-free sport and take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol, or tobacco abuse by athletes.
6. Members shall not engage in, nor knowingly permit, any athlete with whom they are charged with the responsibility of coaching, to engage in any offense in violation of federal, state, or local law, or laws of a foreign government.
7. Members shall at all times avoid conflicts of interest which can be considered to exist at any time, when the actions of the Member for his or herself or on behalf of an athlete would involve the obtaining of an improper advantage.
8. Members shall not engage in, nor knowingly permit, any athlete with whom they are charged with the responsibility of coaching to engage in any offense in violation of the U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport policies, including willfully tolerating misconduct of an athlete(s), coach(s), official, and/or volunteer.

Tenets of Professionalism

The purpose of these tenets of professionalism is to provide a framework of conduct above and beyond the minimum standards provided by the Code of Ethics as set forth in the bylaws of the Professional Skaters Association.

The Professional Skaters Association is aware that applicable rules of ethics covering professional responsibility generally provide only minimum standards of acceptable conduct. The Professional Skaters Association and its membership aspire to the highest ideals of professionalism and acknowledge that the following tenets of professional conduct should be followed in the performance of professional services provided to those with whom we have contact.

1. As coaches of skating, we will conduct ourselves in a manner which demonstrates respect for the rules under which our skaters compete and that we will preserve with decorum and integrity of the testing program and competition.
2. Professional Skaters Association recognizes that professional courtesy is consistent with the role of the coach. As members of the Professional Skaters Association, coaches will be civil and courteous to all with whom we come in contact and will endeavor to maintain a collegial relationship with other coaches.
3 As skating coaches, we acknowledge that from time to time the students with whom we work may wish to leave us as the coach and seek coaching elsewhere. We acknowledge that we will cooperate with other coaches when conflicts arise and will be willing to make such changes on behalf of the students as will complement the further performance and progress of that student.
4. When competitions or testing situations arise, we agree to keep our students and the parents of those students well informed and involve them in the decision making that affects their interest while at the same time avoiding emotional attachment to our students and their activities both in skating and out of skating which might impair our ability to render professional service.
5. As professionals, and as members of the Professional Skaters Association, we will honor our promises and our commitments, whether oral or in writing, and strive to build a reputation for dignity, honesty and integrity in the skating profession.
6. As professionals, and members of the Professional Skaters Association, we will not make groundless accusations of impropriety or attribute bad motives to other coaches in bad faith or without good cause.
7. As professionals, and as members of the Professional Skaters Association, we will not engage in any course of conduct designed to harass another coach, skating organization official, another skater or the parent of another skater.
8. As professionals, and as members of the Professional Skaters Association, we will strive to expand our knowledge of skating and to achieve and maintain proficiency in our area of expertise.
9. We will never allow race, gender, religion, age or other suspect classifications of persons to improperly motivate our actions.
10. At all times and in all things when dealing with the skating public, officials and other members of the coaching profession, we will adhere to the proposition that our practices shall be governed by the principals of honesty and integrity.

> "As a coach, you are one of the most influential persons in a child's life. As a coach, you've got to help young people become all they were created to be. Your job is to produce good athletes, but more importantly, good people." — *Jack Donohue, Basketball coach, Coaches' Corner*

Grievance Procedures

In 1953, the Board of Governors established the Grievance Committee. The Professional Skaters Association's grievance procedure is a critical function. It is of primary importance to the public and to the members of the PSA that cases involving claims of unethical conduct properly filed against a member of the PSA receive prompt consideration and review and be disposed of with fairness and justice (See By-laws Article III.16.). The current Grievance Procedures can be found on the PSA website.

CHAPTER THREE

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Professional Practices

While your exact situation will vary, accepting a position as a skating professional coach is normally the equivalent of acquiring a new business. You are the owner, the boss! You have a great deal of freedom but you also have total responsibility and accountability. You must establish standards, practices and long-term goals which will make your business a success. This chapter deals with the business side of our profession and provides guidelines to help you in this exciting endeavor.

Administration/Fees/Accounting

Accurate records are essential for your new business. You need to develop a system which helps you plan what you intend to do and reflects that plan in daily/weekly/monthly schedules. Ideally the same system will maintain records of what you actually did, by event, student, fee, etc. Not only do you need to know when your lessons are scheduled, but you will need accurate records for many purposes, including taxes. If you are in a situation where you bill students or even if the rink invoices your students, it is to your advantage to have a concise bookkeeping system. Being organized can help you be on top of any dispute which may arise because you have earned your money and are entitled to receive it.

How you maintain these records and which format you use are matters of personal preference. There are many personal computer based programs and mobile apps which can use your daily records to automate the entire billing process. Whether you use a computer program or an appointment book and three column accounting paper to do your bookkeeping, there are many specific events which need to be scheduled and recorded when accomplished:

- Lessons (time, name, location)
- Payments (yes/no)
- Cancellations
- Group sessions
- Test dates (scheduled/taken, pass/fail)
- Competition dates (names, events, placement)
- Coaches meetings, seminars, etc.
- Other professional services (programs, equipment, sharpening)

Records of your travel, activities and accomplishments are critical. They form the basis for billing, recording student activity and progress and providing a professional basis to communicate with students and parents as well as resolve any conflicts. When you record lessons completed, you may want to keep brief notes on lesson length, content and progress.

Billing and collecting fees is not the highlight of this profession but it is something you must do if you want to stay in the profession! The first cardinal rule is to ensure that you have communicated, in writing, all potential professional charges to your students, such as:

- Lessons charges
- Test charges
- Competition charges
- Music editing, off ice training, skate sharpening or any additional charges

If the students and parents understand your fee structure, know all costs to expect and have confidence that you treat students equitably, most problems in this area can be avoided.

SAMPLE: Professional Coaching Charges (effective 1/1/18)

Lesson Charges:

15 minute private	$15.00
30 minute private	$30.00
15 minute semi-private	$7.50 each skater

Skate Sharpening:

Custom sharpening for FS, D	$15.00
Regular sharpening	$10.00

Tests:

Charge will be the same as a 15 minute private lesson

Competitions:

All expenses incurred will be divided among those skaters attending the competition. A professional charge (Gate Fee) of $50.00 per skater will be in addition.

The above example shows parents that there are no hidden costs and they can always refer to this in advance if necessary. When charged for a competition, for example, they will know that a bill from their professional coach for his or her time will be included.

The ideal approach is to have a billing system in which you bill on a regular basis (weekly, monthly) with a standard format that should include:

- Previous balance if any
- Payments (include check #)
- Current charges (event, date, type of lesson)
- Date due

This system should be maintained for all of your students, even those who prefer to pay as each lesson is given or on some other pre-agreed basis. Your chances of being paid promptly are greater if your statements look professional.

This system works reasonably well but every system needs to be adapted for each coach's needs. Again, it is very important to present yourself in a business-like manner. Money conflicts can be very uncomfortable but if you have good records, most conflicts can be resolved much easier.

When you are traveling on a skating business trip (competition, seminar), it is often very difficult to keep track of all your expenses. Receipts tend to find their way into back pockets or hidden recesses within a purse. Grabbing an envelope from the desk drawer of your hotel and carrying it with you is a simple, last minute trick to placing all your receipts in one spot as you mark on the outside of the envelope the date and expense, or take a picture with your phone.

If you are more organized, you might prepare envelopes at home by using the sample form illustrated. Copy this form onto a plain envelope and stick several into your pocket, suitcase or purse before you leave home. Pull it out as needed and be sure to place receipts inside while jotting down pertinent information on the outside of the envelope.

TRAVELING EXPENSE AND ENTERTAINMENT RECORD							
From: / /	To: / /	Location:		Date:			
EXPENSES	**MON**	**TUES**	**WED**	**THUR**	**FRI**	**SAT**	**SUN**
Travel Expenses:							
Airlines/Train							
Baggage/Shipping							
Bus/Cab							
Breakfast							
Lunch							
Dinner							
Hotel							
Car Mileage							
TOTAL							

Delinquent bills are a problem which arises in every coach's career. While most people pay in a timely fashion or unintentionally forget an occasional payment, there will be the one who intentionally delays payments, gets behind and hopes that you will lose track. As noted above, you should make clear, in writing, when you expect bills to be paid. It is important to let students know that you expect to be paid promptly for your services. If a payment is overdue, it is important to convey your concern to the individual, promptly and in writing. If someone is behind one month in their payment, it will become even more difficult and contentious if they fall behind two or three months.

Good record keeping may appear tedious but a system which you understand and maintain will actually free you from uncertainty and controversy in the administrative side of your business and help you be that innovative, creative coach you want to be! Seriously consider using a computer to help you in this area. Information processing capability doubles every 18 months while the cost is cut by 50 percent. Software programs are available and you can afford them. Sound records are a foundation for a successful business.

Professional Coaching Fees

The Professional Skaters Association is frequently asked for guidance regarding professional coaching fees. The request is a reasonable one but very difficult to answer since there are many variables. The following provides some focus when deciding on how to set fees:

- Geographical Area—The cost of living, availability of rinks, accessibility and market.
- Clientele—Average income, number of patrons and goal orientation of rinks, patrons and staff.
- Experience—A professional in skating is no different than any other employee. Years of experience do warrant higher salaries.
- Background—The training of a skating coach is similar to that of a college graduate. The "status" of the educational institution (or rink), the reputation of the facility and staff and the length of the training program, are influencing factors in determining fees.
- Credentials/Titles—Amateur test and competition records should be considered along with regional, national and international rankings.
- Student Achievement—This is an undisputable test of a coach's worth. Coaches who consistently produce champions and who are able to get the best from each of their students are worth their weight in gold!
- PSA Accreditation and Ratings—A PSA accredited coach is certified for basic skills and knowledge. A PSA rated coach has experience and proven skills to earn registered, certified, senior and master degrees of proficiency.
- Benefits—Important considerations for a coach who is seeking employment are salary guarantees, insurance, unemployment benefits, pension plans and clerical support.

Collection of Fees

Collecting Cash

It always feels good to have money in your pocket! That's the good part about working for a rink that allows you to collect cash for your lessons. However, unless every student pays prior to the lesson, which is usually not the case, it is easy to lose track of who paid and who didn't.

Occasionally a child will be dropped off at the rink and the parent will have forgotten to give him a check or cash. You give the lesson because you have it scheduled and don't want to disappoint the child. Later, you have to call the parent and try to collect your fee. Or, perhaps, the lesson was given during a public session and you had many other students to teach; it's easy to forget that one of them didn't pay. You will learn to keep very accurate records in order to support your collection case. Get into the habit of writing down every lesson payment as soon as you come off the ice.

Delinquent Bills

This problem comes up sometime in each professional coach's career. You will find that most people pay when they are supposed to and the ones who forget usually do so unintentionally. However, there is always a chance that you will have to deal with the exception—the family who intentionally forgets, hoping that you will lose track and they will get away with it.

Tips for Improving Collections

The need to collect amounts due is a fact of life for every small business person. More often than not, this occurs without any issue. You bill the skater and the skater pays the bill in full and in a timely manner. Sometimes, however, this is not what happens. What then? You provide a valuable service and you are entitled to be paid for your time and effort. Here are a few tips that may help you to avoid collections issues and to resolve such issues more efficiently and effectively when they do arise.

1. Determine creditworthiness. There is a reason why a bank would check your credit score before making a loan. History may provide some guide as to what you can expect in the future. Before agreeing to take on a new skater, you may wish to determine whether the skater have a track record of payment (or nonpayment) with another coach. Of course, there might be many reasons why a coach hasn't been paid, so this likely would not be the only thing you consider when deciding to coach a skater, but it might be one factor to think about.
2. Establish expectations. Mutually establishing expectations at the beginning of the relationship can be critical. Make sure that the skater and his or her parents know what you charge, when you expect payments, and any other terms of the relationship that are important. It may be appropriate for these expectations to be reflected in a written contract. If the skater is a minor, the contract will need to be signed by the skater's parents.
3. Keep good records. Accurate, regularly maintained records reflecting lesson times, amounts and dates billed, and amounts and dates of payments received will keep you to avoid a lot of headaches. The rink management can help you with this; they will typically know who is on the ice.
4. Bill regularly. Get into a practice of sending out your bills on a regular schedule. A bill that is not sent will not get paid. A bill for a lesson that was given four months ago will often be more difficult to collect.
5. Keep an eye on the balance. Take action before a balance get too high. The bigger the bill is, and the longer it is past due, the less likely it is that you will be able to collect in full.
6. Communicate. If your bills are not being paid, don't be hesitate to have a conversation with the skater's parents. What is the reason for the non-payment? Is there any dissatisfaction with your service? You may be surprised at how often some candid conversation will resolve any issues.
7. Be persistent. If a skater has stopped taking lessons with you, it may be advisable to send your final bill via certified mail, with detail regarding the dates of the lessons not yet paid for, the amount due, the due date for payment, and the requested method of payment (e.g., check, money order, etc.) If timely payment is not received, a letter to the skater's parents from a lawyer may emphasize the importance of the issue and encourage payment. A lawyer might typically charge $50-$150 to prepare a basic collection letter. Another option may be to bring an action in small claims court. In most states, the court procedures in a small claims court are designed to enable parties to represent themselves. Filing fees for small claims court are generally low. Mediation and arbitration services may also be available, but those will be more costly. A collection agency may be willing to pursue collection for a percentage of any recovery.
8. Follow the law. If you are collecting a debt under a business name, the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act requirement may apply. There may also be laws that govern debt collection in your state that apply. To the extent you have any questions regarding compliance, you should seek legal advice.

Lesson Receipts

Some rinks aid you in collecting fees by having all private lessons paid for in the rink office prior to the lesson. At that time the skater gets a receipt. The skater gives the receipt to the coach at the time of the lesson. Some rinks will not allow you to teach the lesson unless you collect the receipt from the student before you begin the lesson. This method protects you and, at the same time, it protects the rink because they are sure of collecting their commission on every lesson. At the end of the week you turn in your receipts to the rink and by the next week you are paid by the rink for the lessons you taught, minus the commission.

Receipts themselves are not enough. If you collect receipts for your lessons, it will be important for you to keep accurate records so that you will have a check-system when you receive payment from the rink. Otherwise, you will never know if the rink has made an error in your paycheck, or if you suspect they have, you will have no way of backing it up. Purchase simple statement pads with a carbon included or use a computer spreadsheet. It is inexpensive and can become indispensable. Record the following information in your statement book:

- Name of the student
- Date of lesson
- Amount paid
- Number on the receipt

At the end of the week, total your fees and deduct the commission to get your final total. Be sure to write down the date that you turn in your receipts. When you receive payment, record the date and amount paid on your original page. Find a good program that will work for you and make your entries daily.

Monthly Billing

There may be a situation where you have agreed with the parent to collect your fees once a month. This will take more thought and organization on your part. A good accounting system will be of the utmost importance to you. If you send out a statement to the family at the end of the month and do not receive payment within a reasonable time, you will have to send a reminder. If you come across a family who continually is negligent in payments, you may want to refuse to teach any more lessons to that student until you are paid, or you may want to ask for payment a month in advance. If you allow a bad situation to go on too long, you will become aggravated and it will affect your relationship with the student.

Collection of Fees—Summary

- Have your fee schedule written to be given out to each new student so that there will be no question about collection
- Be sure to get the telephone number and email of each new student
- Don't allow delinquent bills to go on too long
- Create a good system of keeping track of lesson payment and use it

Scheduling and Record Keeping

Appointment Books

Accurate record keeping is essential for your new business. Not only do you need to know when your lessons are scheduled, but you will need to keep accurate accounts for tax purposes. Your appointment book serves many purposes and will become as important to you on a daily basis as your skate. Note that many coaches are utilizing digital options in place of paper books.

Items to be recorded:

- Lesson appointments:
  - Time and Name
  - Place (if you have two rinks side by side or if you teach at more than one rink)
  - Type i.e. moves, dance, free skate
- Payments for each lesson
- Non-payments for lessons given
- Cancellations
- Group lesson assignments
- Coaches' meetings
- Test dates
- Competition dates
- Student tests taken (pass/fail)
- Competition placement
- Name, address and phone number of skaters
- Receipts (expenses, purchases i.e. music equipment etc.)

Choosing the Appointment Book

This sounds easy, right? Wrong! Appointment books come in all sizes and shapes. Choosing one that is right for you will take a little thought and effort but it could mean the difference between efficiency and total confusion in your scheduling system.

If you are coaching a lot of lessons each day you will need a book that is large enough so that you will have plenty of room to write all your lessons without cramming names together. You may want to see an entire week's schedule on one page.

Some books are divided in 30-minute segments and others in 15-minute starting at 8:00 am. If you are starting at 6:00 am and have 20-minute lessons, a book of this kind could be confusing.

The size of the book may be important especially if you plan to carry it in your pocket or purse. The important thing is that you have sufficient space to accurately record all details.

You may want to keep all your records, billing and lesson schedules on your computer and print out the information as you need it.

What to Look for in an Appointment Book

- Size
- Time segments
- Day, week or month
- Telephone, email, address sections
- Miscellaneous section to make notes, comments, etc.

There are also many mobile app and computer software options for record-keeping.

Student Record

Keep track of all your students' accomplishments. There will be times when you will need to refer back to test dates, competitions, etc., perhaps for PSA ratings or for updating your resume. You can start with a notebook or keep a record on your computer.

For Each Student:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone/Cell
- Email address
- Birth date
- U.S. Figure Skating number
- ISI number
- Level the student was at when you started
- Parents address, telephone (guardian, spouse as relevant)

For Each Test Taken:

- Level of Test
- Date
- Location
- Test chairman
- Pass/Retry and any notes

For Each Competition:

- Level
- Date
- Location

- Placement and any notes
- Music used

Miscellaneous:

- Boot/blade brand, size
- Skate sharpening frequency (type of sharpening)
- Costume provider
- Current program: music, source, time

Business Cards

When you begin coaching, it is a good idea to have business cards made. You will want to give your telephone number to prospective students or to current students so that they can call you if they need to cancel a lesson. Having a business card handy not only simplifies this procedure but it is a good advertisement for you. You may also want to exchange business cards with other coaches you meet at conferences or seminars. It is a good way of keeping in touch. Business cards can be made up at most printing shops or online. You can also order business cards through the PSA online store.

Information you should include on your card:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Email
- Specialty (ice skating instructor, dance, free skate, etc.)
- Logo
- Ratings, Rankings, Hockey Accreditation, Apprenticeships
- Any other certifications and or skills
- PSA logo for current members

Note: If your rating becomes inactive or you are no longer a member, you must not use the PSA logo on any remaining business cards or advertise that you are rated.

Professional Necessities

From the following list, select the items that will aid you in your personal situation as a professional coach:

- PSA membership
- U.S. Figure Skating membership
- ISI membership
- Liability insurance
- Current U.S. Figure Skating & ISI rulebooks
- Appointment book
- Address and student record book
- Clipboard/binder
- Statement pad
- Data spreadsheet
- Business cards
- Professional looking coat or jacket
- Mittens or gloves
- Library of music
- Library of skating books, video tapes, and DVDs

Note: a smartphone or tablet can be used for many of the above items

Contracts: The Nature and General Effect on the Professional Coach

Written by David Shulman, PSA Legal Counsel

A contract is a promise, or a set of promises, to which the law attaches certain legal obligations. It is a specific, and sometimes extended, arrangement, and must include all of the terms which are finally settled upon that the parties intended.

Contracts can be express contracts when the terms are stated by the parties, either orally or in writing. It is possible for a contract to be implied in fact from circumstances or acts of the parties. For example, a discussion takes place between a parent and a coach for the establishment of a lesson schedule with the child of the parent. Nothing is written, and the discussion centers on the rate of the professional and the number of hours which the professional will teach the child. The moment the professional begins teaching the child, a contract has been reached between the parent who is the responsible party for the paying of the bill and the professional coach.

The terms of a contract should be definite and certain. Some states require a contract for personal service, such as teaching figure skating or coaching or class lessons in a rink, to be in writing. Generally, a contract does not have to be in writing or take any particular form; but, obviously, a written contract is the best answer to avoid future misunderstandings. If a contract is written, there is a presumption that any party who signs the contract is agreeing to be bound by the obligations as set forth in the contract. It is generally not permitted to prove what your intention was under the terms of the contract after the contract is signed. A party to a contract who had an opportunity and had the ability to read the contract cannot avoid performing under the terms of the contract by claiming lack of knowledge of the contents. The moral in this situation is to read and understand everything which is set out in the contract.

What are some of the clauses which usually appear in personal service contracts which might involve a skating professional? Generally the length of time the contract is to be performed, the hours which are required for the professional to be in the rink, the amount of money which the professional will be permitted to charge, the percentage to be paid to the rink or the club, and a general statement reciting that the "best efforts of the professional will be used in performing his or her services."

Most of these provisions are normal and are subject to negotiation between the parties. It is not advisable to sign any contract which requires you to restrict your coaching duties to any single rink when you are in an area where there are multiple rinks. It may be a requirement in the contract that you not coach at any other rinks with particular students. This kind of a clause can get the professional coach in trouble if he or she intends to "rink hop." Many times the rink operator or the skating club will seek to restrict the use by certain high level users of ice time to a particular arena and attempt to restrict the teaching coach from taking those high-level users to various other rinks.

Another clause which should be carefully examined and which frequently appears in contracts involving franchised rinks is a clause which restricts the person from competing with the rink where they are employed under contract should the contract be terminated for any reason. This is commonly referred to as a covenant not to compete and which will contain some general area in which the skating professional is prohibited from coaching and also a period of time in which the skating professional coach may not compete with the rink where he or she formerly was under contract. Such a clause will state that the skating professional coach has great skill which can only be performed by this person.

Public policy does not greatly favor restrictive covenants, and such clauses in a contract are strictly construed if brought to court. They do create fear and they create uncertainty among the skating professionals who are being asked to sign these contracts. Should a problem arise where the professional coach is terminated from his or her employment, it is important to seek, as soon as possible, the services of a qualified attorney who will be able to interpret the contract language in the particular state where the contract was written and take whatever action is necessary to protect the skating coach. Most state courts have authority to modify a covenant not to compete and to declare such a clause to be an unreasonable restraint of trade. The courts have adopted the "blue pencil doctrine" which permits the court to strike from a contract certain restrictive covenant provisions which may be unenforceable. Only if the restraint is necessary for the protection of the business or good will of the employer will such a restriction be enforced. The customer lists of employers are usually protected, so it is important that if a contract is signed between a rink, skating club and the professional coach, that it be clearly spelled out whether or not the skating students "belong" to the rink or the skating club or whether they are, in fact, students (in reality the true employer) of the skating professional coach.

It is very important to remember that if you are working under a written contract, any modification of that contract should also be in writing. Occasionally a rink manager or some other person in some authority will seek to

modify a written contract by some oral command. This should be followed with some written confirmation of the new modification to the existing contract. Failure to have a written history of such oral modifications will generally result in later misunderstandings and needless arguments.

Assuming that a contract is in existence and one of the parties seeks to breach it or no longer follow through on the obligations, what should the non-breaching party do? Obviously, if some provision of a contract is not followed which is felt to be a necessary part of the contract, an immediate meeting should take place between the parties. This meeting should be generally informal, but recognize that whatever is said at the meeting may have great importance later. It is not necessary that you be accompanied by an attorney or any other person, but is important to make sure of your position, to state only that position, and to take under consideration any offers which are made to you at such a meeting before acting on such offers. Decisions made in haste at some quickly-called meeting will later haunt you and may, in fact, disturb any claim which might exist and which you could bring against a breaching party for money damages.

If, after a meeting to try and work out problems with the contract, nothing has been resolved, it is important to contact an attorney who is skilled in contract interpretation and schedule an office conference. Such an office conference will require you to bring to the conference the following items: a copy of your contract, a statement of any particular dispute which caused the breach of contract, a list of persons who could act as witnesses on your behalf and who would be willing to discuss your position on the case with your attorney, a statement of any earnings which may be involved showing how you have been damaged, a statement written by you showing why you feel you are damaged and what damages will flow from the breach of this contract, and a general statement of witnesses who will testify on the other side of your case and what those witnesses may say.

Conclusion

A contract may be written, or it may be oral. It is required that the parties to the contract be doing some act or make some agreement which is lawful. If the contract is in writing, and it is recommended that all contracts involving personal service be in writing, the specific duties should be carefully spelled out which each party is to perform, and all responsibilities should be clearly defined. It is essential that anyone signing a contract carefully read it, understand all of its terms, and have a professional (a lawyer who is skilled in understanding contracts particularly in the business of figure skating) review the contract and provide a careful and written analysis to you, the client.

Last, be wary of any contract which attempts to restrict your activity and your job, either while you are working for the employer or should the contract be terminated. Many states have laws controlling business practice which specifically prohibit such restrictions on your employment.

CHAPTER FOUR

EQUIPMENT

Recommending Equipment

Equipment, particularly boots and blades, is an extremely important aspect of training skaters at any level but absolutely critical when working with competitive skaters. It is an area where coaches do rely on others but where they need a working knowledge to ensure that they can provide sound advice to their skaters.

During your career as a group instructor you will be asked many times about whether to buy or rent skates. In most if not all cases you should recommend that they rent for the first few classes. If they decide to buy skates most often they will ask for a recommendation on what kind of boots or blades to buy. Do recommend that they purchase their skates from your pro shop. If you don't have one in your arena send them to a store that specializes in the skating industry. Remind them that you often get what you pay for. Cheaper skates are made with cheaper material and often are not worth the problems they create.

The primary goals of this section are to provide some insights with regard to purchasing and maintaining equipment. Some areas where coaches should be knowledge able include the following:

- Boot manufacturers and general cost of boots
- Strength and stiffness of various models of skates
- A general knowledge of how a boot should fit
- Boot maintenance
- When a student is ready for a new boot
- Awareness of various blade models, their uses and performance features
- Blade mounting
- Blade maintenance

DID YOU KNOW?

During World War II there was a shortage of leather so boot manufacturers used a thick cardboard instead leading to the term, "Cheap Skate."

Part of your job as a skating instructor/coach will be to recommend skates for your students according to their specific needs. This does not mean just telling the parents that the child has to have new skates and expecting them to go into the skate shop and buy a pair. It means that you have the responsibility to evaluate the entire situation, taking into consideration the parents' financial situation as well as the needs of the student.

You will first need some general knowledge as to where to send your skaters. Maybe you have a pro shop in your rink, maybe there is a shop that's nearby. If you haven't already done so, now is the time to get to know the proprietor(s). You may not want to go to just one store but check a few of them out to see who will work best with you and your skaters.

Remember, as a coach, if you send them to a shop and the service is bad, it may reflect on you. Find out what the proprietor recommends for different types of skaters and his reasons. Find out who will be fitting and what is available in the pro shop. Find out what selection of boots and blades he has to offer and the prices. Find out who will be fitting the skates and who is most proficient at mounting and sharpening. Talk to the owner/manager about your preferences. Are they willing to call you if there are questions with regard to specific selections? Can you be comfortable sending a student back to the shop for corrections? Be sure to leave your phone number and business card.

When you send a student to buy new skates always tell the parent to mention your name. As the proprietor of the skate shop becomes familiar with you and your preferences, he will be able to better advise your skater in making a selection. Chances are good that he will also give you, and your skaters, preferential treatment.

If you don't have a reliable person in your area make some phone calls. There are many places in the U.S. that will accept a foot tracing and ball measurements to assess the best boot for your students. This generally only takes four to five days once they've received the tracings. Once again, when you find the shop that will work with you

long-distance, you should build a positive relationship with the proprietor. They will respect the fact that you won't settle for second best!

Selecting Skates

Your prime consideration in choosing a skate is "what is the shape of the foot?" Some kids have a boxy foot; others have a wide ball but narrow heel. You see, it's no different than clothing. One brand of jeans may fit a size six, 120 pound person whereas a different person who's the exact same size and weight may be better suited to a different brand simply due to the shape of their bodies. Be cautious on recommending just one or two types of boots; as you know, there are MANY different types of feet.

Your prime consideration when you are teaching beginners is to get them into a boot that will support them so they can forget struggling with floppy ankles and get on with the fun and excitement of gliding on the ice. Many a skater has been turned off in the beginning due to ill-fitting skates.

Unfortunately, you may find that while you want your student in better skates, their parents aren't ready to spend what they believe is an astronomical amount of money for skates. This is especially true if they just bought a pair at a discount store for $29.95. In such cases, you may have to do the best you can with the child and bring up the subject of skates at a later time. If the child is going to continue with lessons, though, you will need to start to educate the parent. Perhaps the rink where you teach has a brochure that tells how skates should fit and how to lace the skates properly. Giving a brochure to the parents could be your first step. Ask them to read it and have questions ready for you at the next lesson. As you tell the parent about skates and skating, the parent should become more receptive to your ideas and will have faith in your recommendations.

Tots and Young Children

Perhaps you have seen tots or young children wearing the molded boot. It is an inexpensive combination boot and blade which provides immediate support. However, it does not allow the child to "feel" the ice as they can in a skating boot made of leather. So, if you have students in your classes who plan to continue taking lessons, you should recommend they buy a leather boot.

For some tots and young children, a reconstructed boot that has been used and rebuilt, could be a good way to start. A good used blade can usually be found. In some instances, there will be a blade already attached and it is a relatively inexpensive package. A skate of this type could be ideal for a child who is still in group lessons or just beginning private lessons. This saves the parent money yet puts the child in a better quality skate.

Some skate shops do not rebuild boots; they merely carry used skates. Some used skates in the smaller sizes have been outgrown before they have been worn out, so they might be a good buy for the young child in beginning classes. However, larger-sized second-hand skates are usually broken down and are not worth buying.

There is a difference between reconstructed skates and used skates. Be sure you know which you are recommending. Most skate shops carry an inexpensive combination boot and blade. This can be a nice starter skate for a tot or young child. However, if the child shows promise, is taking private lessons, or is joining a club, suggest buying a better quality boot and a separate blade.

Teenagers

By the time children become teenagers, their feet are usually too large to consider buying used or reconstructed skates. Second-hand skates of size five and larger are often too broken-down to be a good buy. Recommend new skates.

A young teenager, who is enthusiastic and is planning to skate a lot and take several lessons a week, should definitely invest in a good pair of boots and blades. The young teenager who is mainly involved in activities outside of skating and who is planning to skate only once a week could do fine in an economically priced boot and blade.

The fully-grown older teen, who enjoys skating and plans to continue into adulthood, should invest in a good quality boot that will last for several years. If cost is an issue, they can begin with a less-expensive blade.

Adults

For the adult skater who plans to continue skating, suggest they buy a high-quality boot. They will not be outgrowing their skates, so whatever is purchased will last a long time. If cost is an issue, they can begin with a lesser expensive blade. In time, as they advance in skating, they can replace the blade with one of higher quality. However, consider the age, stature and stability of your adult student when recommending skates. Too stiff or heavy a boot could be too difficult for some adults to break in and would actually be detrimental to their skating.

The Competitive Skater

There are many things to think about when choosing skates for the serious skater who is involved in tests and competitive skating. The skates must "fit" the skater according to age, size, ability level, strength and style. Take into consideration the skater's goals and potential.

Some skaters are hard on boots and break them down quickly. They will need a strong boot. Others are light on the ice. They will need a boot that gives enough support but retains a graceful line. Timing is important. Do not recommend new skates just prior to a competition or a test. There must be sufficient time to break them in.

Fitting a Boot or Skate

Have the skater wear the thinnest cotton sock possible! There are many sporting goods stores that will fit your skaters in a boot one to two sizes too big and then tell them to wear "an EXTRA pair of thick socks!" It will take a great deal of convincing on your part to "re-educate" the parent that heavy socks will restrict the skaters' ability to maneuver the skate. (It's comparable to skiing on a ski that is much too long). You may want to show parents this section of the manual if they have difficulty believing you. We receive no benefit from skate shops or retail stores.

Different brands of boots have different sizing. If your skater wears a size 3 shoe for example, a Riedell equivalent would be approximately a 1 and a SP-Teri would be a 2. The sole of the boot on a Riedell is longer than any other boot, so if a skater is going from a Riedell to a SP-Teri and only moving up one size, they may not have to get a new blade. Chances are it will fit perfectly! However, if their foot hasn't grown and the skater is changing from a SP- Teri to a Riedell, they will most definitely need a longer blade. Never allow more than half-size growing room in a skate. The boot will break down very quickly (generally in less than four months). Remind parents that the leather will give and expand slightly and it may also be stretched. A great way to check the fit of the skate is to unlace the boot completely, have the skater put their foot in and slide the toes all the way to the front of the skate. The toes should be flat but touching the end. Then have the skater bend their knee forward, if you can stick a finger in the skate *behind* their heel, it's *too big*! A properly fitted skate should last, even with a major growth spurt, for at least six months. A normal growing period is 10-12 months. If the skate was fitted properly to begin with, the resale value will be much greater (generally 40-50% of new price).

Beginners

If the parents aren't ready to spend $90-$120 on a good leather skate, encourage them to rent. When a skater asks to go skating more often and is doing well in classes, parents become more easily convinced that their child will stay in the sport and are more likely to purchase a good skate. If it's a used boot, make sure that it wasn't broken in incorrectly or it will be no different than a vinyl skate. You can usually see this in the way the boot is creased. The best case for a used skate is when a skater is coming toward the end of the group classes and is just starting basic jumps. If they can find an expensive ($300-$400) boot that is in good shape, they have probably found "a good deal". This gives the low-level skater a great boot at less than half the price. What may not be strong enough for double Axels is generally perfect for single jumps.

Many a skater has been turned off right from the beginning due to ill-fitting skates. A parent wouldn't sign their child up for piano lessons and then give their child a Casio keyboard to practice on. This analogy applies to skaters as well!

Lacing Up Your Skates

To ensure that your skater gets the most of their skating experience, it is important that they lace their skates properly. Skates that are too loose can cause the ankles to "roll" and not create enough support for your foot. It can also lead to foot problems. So with that in mind please take special care when re-lacing or teaching your students how to lace and tie their skates.

1. Loosen the laces all the way down to the toes and give the tongue a tug upwards before placing your foot in the boot.
2. Make sure that the socks have no wrinkles or seams that would irritate the foot, insert your foot into the boot and push down on the heel.
3 Again give the tongue a gentle pull and then secure it straight up and down.
4. Start at the second set of laces from the bottom. Begin pulling the laces tightly, one pair at a time, so the boot closes well over the front of the foot. For figure skates or rentals finish with #5. For hockey skates skip #5 and go to #6.
5. Figure skates or rentals: You will tighten the laces up to where the hooks begin, where you will make a half twist of the laces or a knot. Then continue up by going over the hooks, under then across. After you get to the last hook, you can add another half twist and a double-knotted bow. You should be able to put your finger up to your first knuckle behind the laces at the top of the tongue. It is important to tuck in any extra lace at the top of the boot to prevent the skater from stepping on it. Do not wrap the extra lace around the top of the boot. The lace can ride up the leg and cause irritation on the tendon as well as loosen the boot.
6. Hockey skates: You will tighten the laces up to the top where you can add another half twist and a double knotted bow. You should be able to put your finger up to your first knuckle behind the laces at the top of the tongue. It is important to tuck in any extra lace at the top of the boot to prevent the skater from stepping on it.

The most common problem in lacing skates is to lace too loosely in the ankle area and too tightly at the top of the boot (last two hooks). This provides little support in the ankle area and undue pressure at the top when trying to bend at the ankle.

TIP: Snug at the toe area; tight through the arch and ankle; and snug at the top.

Boots

In general, the more advanced the skater, the greater the requirement for support and stiffer boots. The following tips will help a coach recommend boots for their students:

- Too stiff a boot acts as a crutch
- A good firm boot for support is needed for double jumps but you have to decide just how firm by assessing the individual skater
- The tighter the boot is fitted when new, the less it will stretch after being used. The number of hours the student skates per day will influence the type of boot you recommend.
- The skaters' physical build may determine the stiffness of boot required and ability to break in the boot correctly
- A thin child has a sensitive foot due to lack of cushioning
- The test level of the skater and the level of jumping and spinning ability will affect the type of boot chosen
- The shape of the skater's foot may affect the choice of the boot manufacturer
- Too heavy or too strong a boot may be painful to break in and may result in foot damage or problems later on
- If a skater needs a combination last, a smaller heel than ball, look for a manufacturer that offers this feature
- Used boots can be a terrific choice if they fit properly and are not broken down. A beginning skater will be able to use more advanced equipment if the stiff leather has been softened by a previous owner.
- Boots should not be too heavy. They should be sturdy but the skater must be able to feel the ice.
- Dance boots should be sturdy and give support, yet they must be flexible enough to enable the skater to execute fast footwork, and be able to extend the ankle to point the toe

When determining if a boot fits properly, check the following:

- Heel to toe measurement with room for toes to remain flat. Toes should be able to wiggle freely but not slide side-to-side.
- A snug fit in the heel allowing for no vertical movement. The skater's heel should not lift out of the heel cup.
- The counter must be long enough to support the inner longitudinal arch of the foot short of the ball joint

Skaters are amazingly unaware when their boot is becoming small. Their feet seem to adapt to a small boot by curling the toes and allowing the ball of the foot to squeeze together. This of course affects balance and the ability to perform at their maximum ability, particularly in spins and landing jumps.

Warning signs a skater is growing out of her current boot:

- Pain in the arch that indicates the counter is hitting the foot in the wrong place.
- A change in the skater's balance indicated by rocking to the toes on camel spins and rocking to the front of the blade on edge jumps
- Pressure across the ball of the foot. The ball or widest part of the foot is pressing into the toe box area.
- Toes uncomfortable, particularly on toe jumps. (This is often the last indicator a skater will feel. By this time the boot is probably a full size too small).

Quick cures for a boot that is too small or tight:

- Stretching a boot will help but only for a very short time. Remember that boots can be stretched one full size in either length or width at a boot or shoe repair shop.
- All boots have some type of innersole. This can be removed for a bit more room. Although the boot is rough to the touch without the innersole, most skaters do not seem disturbed by the stitching, etc.

Boot Maintenance:

According to major boot makers, how long skating boots will last depends on four factors:

- Level of skater
- Size and weight of skater
- Type of boot being worn
- Maintenance and care of boots

Riedell explains that material deterioration due to shoe aging is the number one cause of premature breakdown and wearing out skating boots. Shoe aging occurs as a result of inside shoe thermal or chemical forces emanating from the foot which age the shoe prematurely. Perspiration is one example. Composed of 98% moisture and 2% salts and acids, it is a formidable element in shoe deterioration. About 60% of perspiration evaporates, but the remaining 40% is absorbed by the boot. The moisture (salts and acids) become fixed inside the boot leather and have a significant corrosive effect.

Bacterial growth is another factor. The foot contains more active bacteria than any other part of the body. Bacteria eat protein and leather is 98% protein. The best way to extend the life of our skater's boots is to properly maintain them.

Blades

There are many blades on the market and it is sometimes difficult to decide which one to recommend. In general, the longer the blade the more run you will have on it. Shorter blades are better for maneuverability. A blade with more rock will produce cleaner turns or brackets but may be more difficult to handle. A dance blade is thinner, has a shorter heel and is flatter than a free skating blade.

There are four categories from which to choose a blade and the prices vary between manufacturer, quality of steel and use. The following chart will help in understanding the types of blades that are available. The most expensive blade is listed at the end of each category. The blades come in the sizes listed in ¼ inch increments.

Skate Knowledge

It could be argued that most coaches select a specific blade based on their own experiences as a skater. If they stray from what they personally skated on, it most likely would still be the same rocker and toe pick profile; just a different brand. A John Wilson Pattern 99 profile can be purchased from Jackson/Ultima, Riedell/Eclipse, or Paramount. Do coaches really consider why? Do most coaches truly understand the unique performance features of each blade? Whether an athlete or coach, it is important to educate yourself regarding the various blades and their functional features.

To begin to understand those functions, a coach must comprehend blade terminology in relationship to performance. Understanding the requirements of your skater, the parts of the blade, material, performance features and such, will help you in reaching a decision on which blade is right for you or your student. Fortunately, most manufactures provide a detailed report matching skill levels with their various models. Understanding the various components that define each model will help you understand why a particular design is right for your skater.

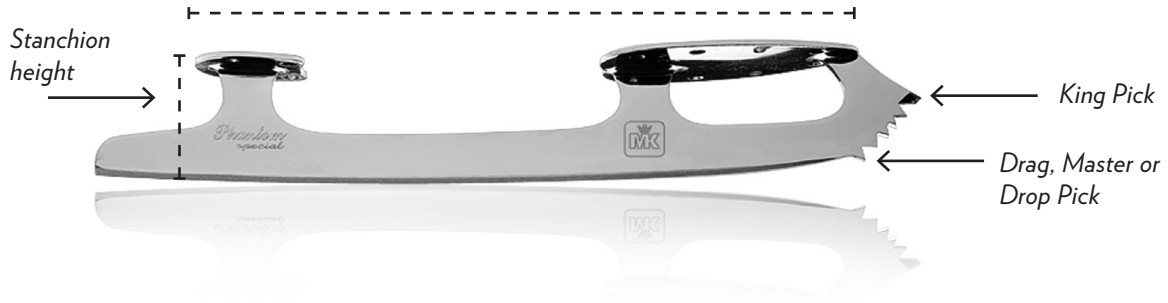
Before moving on to the making of a blade and its unique specifications, it's important to understand the terminology. Terminology can be regional. For example, the bottom pick of the blade is either called a drag, master, or drop pick.

Pick Terminology

- **Rake, pick, or teeth**—The Swedish revolutionized the skate with a modification to the prow by adding saw-tooth picks (1870) and American Jackson Haines was credited to be the first to wear them
- **Drag, Master, or Drop pick**—The extreme bottom pick of the rake that initiates vertical velocity from horizontal velocity in edge jumps and provides a pivot point on toe assisted jumps
- **King Pick, or Primary**—The top pick of the rake and generally the largest, protruding pick. The Pattern 99 King Pick is described as a flared and domed jumping pick. It enhances contact with the ice on toe assisted jumps.

DIAGRAM 1

The size of the blade is determined by the measurement from the tip of the toe plate to the end of the heel plate.



Blade Terminology

- **Toe plate**—Jackson Haines, in 1865, developed the two-plate all-metal blade by forging the skate blade to the toe and heel plates. The blade was attached directly to Haines' boots, which added stability and allowed him to do more athletic leaps and jumps.
- **Heel plate**—the heel plate is brazed to the rear stanchion and then attached to the heel of the sole with screws
- **Stanchions**—The stanchions extend from the runner to the toe and heel plates providing blade height to allow a skater to lean
- **Runner**—The runner is the actual portion of the blade that rests on the ice surface
- **Non-Skateable Zone (NSZ)**—The NSZ is an area beginning directly after the drag pick and runs backwards for a short distance to where the sharpening begins. Varying between models, the NSZ can range between one to one and a half inches. The NSZ does engage the ice in many critical moments and must be maintained to sustain the rocker profile.

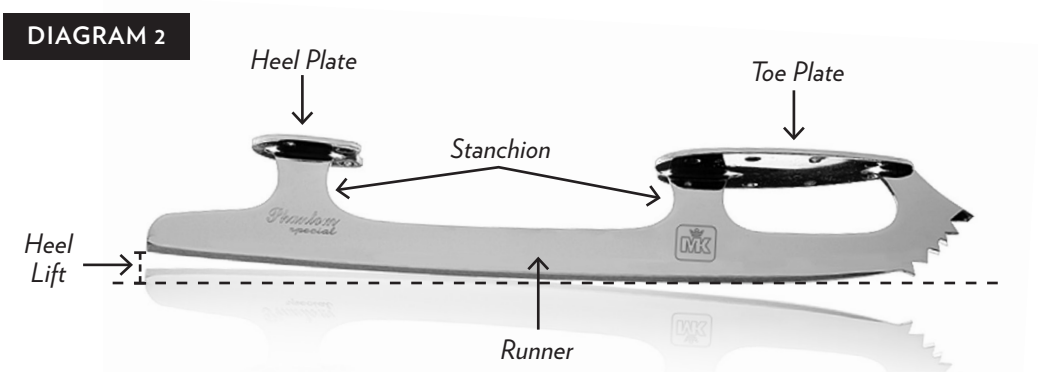
Non-Skateable Zone



*Diagram not to scale

- **Spin rocker**—The spin rocker is a portion of the rocker radius beginning at the ball of the foot, just behind the NSZ, and is considered the "sweet spot" for spinning. In some areas it is referred to as the "bulge."
- **Rocker**—The rocker of the blade is defined by how much the blade curves from the drag toe pick to heel
- **Tail**—The further most part of the blade that extends past the heel of the skate
- **Lift angle**—Also known as the "heel lift" or "toe lift". The lift angle is created when the drag pick initiates contact with the ice during a jump. The measurement taken from the bottom of the runner's heel section to the ice is the heel lift. The higher the number, the longer it takes to rock towards the pick. The smaller the number, the quicker the drag pick bites into the ice surface.
- **Rockwell scale**—The Rockwell scale is a hardness scale based on indentation hardness of a material

DIAGRAM 2



Choosing Blades

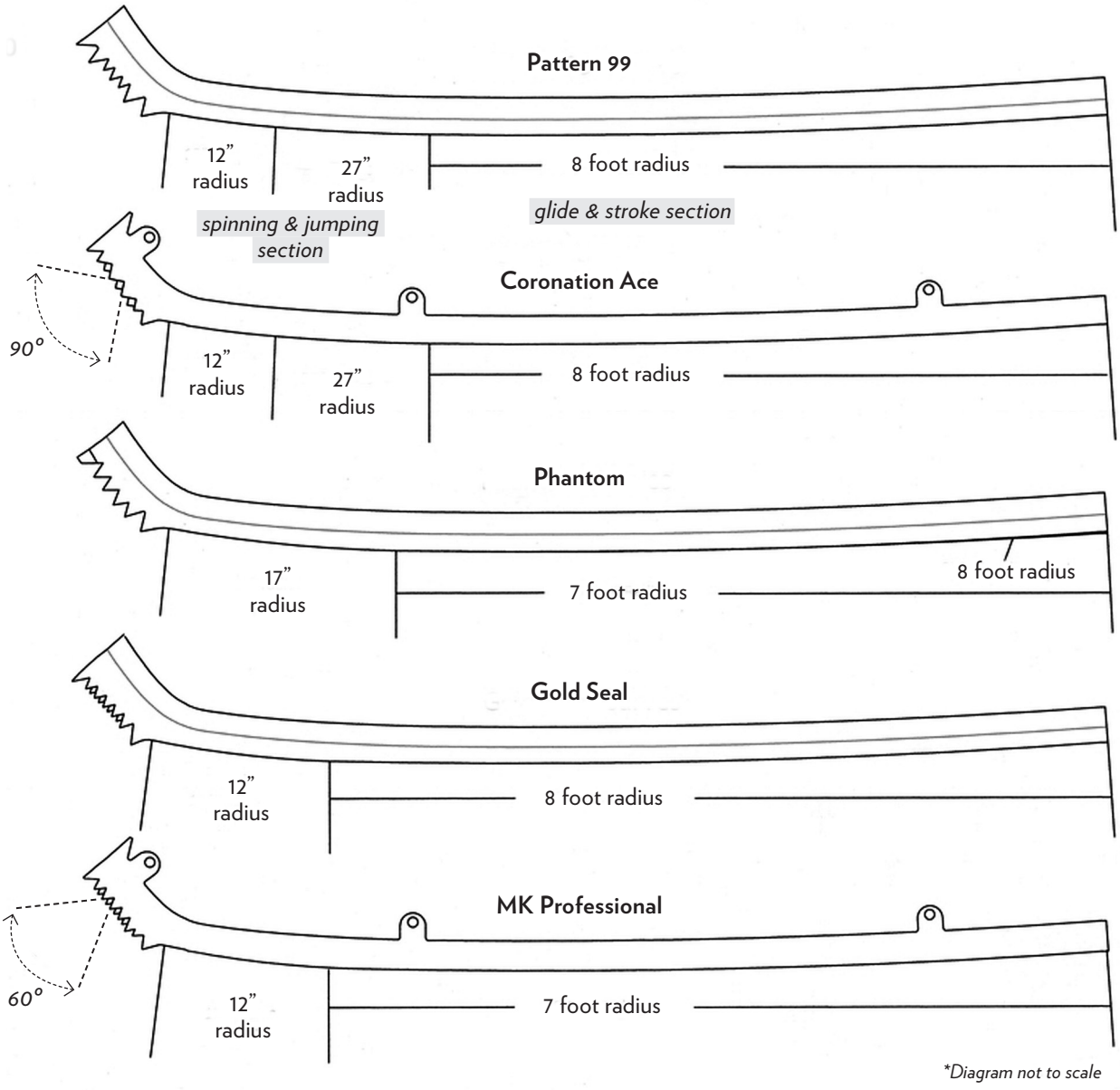
There is no perfect blade that will meet the requirements for every skater. Each individual skater will have unique needs. With many blades on the market, it is often difficult to decide which one to recommend. There are several important features that are significant in making the correct decision on which brand or style to buy. In fact, almost all features of a blade will impact its performance. The features listed and explained below can be found in many variations. Understanding how each works can help coaches make informed recommendations to the students based on several criteria.

Blades are made in increments of ¼ inches. There are five major blade manufacturers: John Wilson and Mitchel and King (MK), Ultima, Paramount, and Eclipse. There are several smaller manufacturers that make quality equipment as well.

There are at least six elements to consider when choosing a blade as all will influence the performance of the blade:

1. **Rocker radius**—The rocker of the blade is defined by how much the blade curves from toe to heel. Most manufacturers produce blades in one of these John Wilson or MK curve profiles. Blades are marketed as 7', 8', or 8.5' radius. That in itself is overly simplistic. Many skates are manufactured with various human techniques that often create variations of rockers that might not be exactly what manufactures published for the radius. Additionally, blades are often design with varying rocker patterns designed for different skill levels and technical abilities. In most blades, the curvature radius decreases toward the front one-third creating a deeper curve as compared to the less curved back two-thirds of the blade. The combination of the size of the curves gives a blade its complex profile. A blade with more rock (a more curved profile) produces cleaner turns but may be more difficult to handle. In theory, a 7' or 8' rocker matches the curvature of a 7' or 8' circle. As you can see by the diagram, there are additional rockers towards the front of the blade, often referred to as the spin rocker. It is important to remember that not only the area of the spin rocker, but the entire blade is extremely affected by excessive or poor sharpening.

   The Pattern 99 and Coronation Ace curve profiles feature three separate radiuses. Approximately two-thirds of the blade has an 8' radius, beginning from the heel to the spinning and jumping section. The 8' radius will feel faster than a 7' radius as there is greater displacement of weight, meaning less penetration into the ice that creates more drag or friction. The spinning and jumping section's 27' radius provides more stability just prior to the toe pick engaging on jump takeoffs and greater control and speed on landings. The third radius is 12' which continues from the spinning and jumping radius to the base of the drop pick. According to engineer Sid Broadbent, just prior to the drop pick is a section which contains no rocker, also known as the non-skateable



zone (NSZ). Skate technician Stewart Sturgeon goes on to say, "While it is true that a blade resting on a hard flat surface with the drag pick touching, there is a section of blade that does not contact the surface; however in practical reality the ice is not an impenetrable hard flat surface. While skating backwards as our drag pick drags it penetrates the ice and the entire front section of the blade up to and including the drag pick is in contact with the ice. It is very much a skateable zone and is in play and a factor in many critical moments during the execution of skating elements. Maintaining this "Non-Skateable Zone" geometry throughout the lifetime of the blade as you sharpen is as important a factor as maintaining the rest of the original profile of the blade. While having a hollow grind or even sharp edges at all in this section of the blade is not a factor or super important, the profile of the entire blade needs to be maintained as much as possible during the blades life of sharpenings."

The Phantom curve profile also features three separate radiuses, but in a different configuration. The heel portion of the Phantom profile is 8' which transitions to a sharper 7' radius in the heel station area. The smaller 7' radius will allow deeper edges and easier turns.

The John Wilson Gold Seal and MK Professional curve profiles are similar featuring a transition from the main radius to a 12' radius in the spinning and jumping section. The notable difference is the Gold Seal is an 8' rocker and the Professional, is a 7'. The 7' profile minimizes blade contact with the ice while spinning, creating

less friction for a faster, longer spin. On edge jumps, the radius provides for a smooth transition to the drop pick, creating an explosive take off.

2. **Blade type—**There are six types of blades: parallel, tapered, side honed, dovetail, parabolic, and slimline. The most common is the parallel blade, which has the same width from toe to heel. Blades are about 3⁄16 inch (4 mm) thick and may have a slightly tapered cross-section. A dance blade is thinner, has a shorter heel, and is flatter in profile than a free skate blade. The blade descriptions as provided by John Wilson and MK Blades are as follows:
    - **Parallel**—The parallel blade has the same width along the runner from toe to heel. The parallel blade is the workhorse of blades. It is stable and the parallel sides make this style of blades simpler to sharpen for several reasons:
        1. Because the runner is the same width the entire length while sharpening constant pressure removes the same amount of material: hence easier to maintain blade profile.
        2. Because they sit square in the skate holder it is easier to level edges taking less passes removing less material increasing life of the blade. Especially true if your sharpener groups together all parallel blades together when sharpening multiple pairs, or like me has a skate holder set up for just parallel blades.
    - **Tapered**—A tapered blade is wider at the front of the blade and is thinned consistently down the length of the blade to the tail. Tapered blades are also side hollow-ground (Tapered Side-Honed), which is the removal of the steel at the factory to reduce blade weight to provide more defined edges and increased angle to the ice for tighter turns.
    - **Side-honed**—These blades have a concave design which causes them to be thicker at the stanchions and the edge strip and thinner in between. They are easily recognizable because they cause reflections to be inverted. Side-honed blades provide more defined edges and increased angle to the ice for tighter turns.
    - **Dovetail**—The dovetail blade, also known as a side-angled blade, provides more defined edges by producing a sharper angle to the ice but is still a parallel-type blade. The increased bite angle allows for greater lean control and tighter turns. Because the blade also has parallel sides, it is easier to sharpen.
    - **Parabolic**—The middle section of parabolic blades is thinner than that of normal blades, while both ends are typically wider than those of regular blades. This translates into less steel and a lighter blade overall. Their design is meant to improve skaters' blade stability, footwork, edges, and turns. Because of the parabolic shape, when a skater achieves optimal body lean, the parabolic curve of the blade contacts the ice, displacing weight along the length of the blade creating less penetration into the ice to generate better flow, speed and control. It was first introduced by HD Sports, maker of John Wilson and MK Blades.
    - **Slimline**—Slimline blades have a thinner blade for quicker changes from edge to edge. Simply, it takes less body lean to change edges. The wider the edge, the greater the lean is needed to change edges. That being said, the thinner blade would have difficulty keeping a straight-edge profile if subject to the impact of jumping. Slimline is generally considered a dance or synchro style blade.
3. **Toe rakes—**There are several types of picks. The straight cut and cross cut are the most common. John Wilson and MK Blades also offer the K-Pick. Both the straight and cross cut are available in multiple patterns and rake sizes, as well as variable relative angles to the ice.
    - **Straight cut**—Allows the skater to dig deeply into the ice to create grip and promotes lift. Generally, a straight cut toe rake is less expensive as the blade manufacturing process takes fewer steps.
    - **Cross Cut**—the cross cut pick allows the skater to grip the top layers of ice, allowing the skate to initiate rotation quicker. The cross-cut pick was first patented in 1937 by William Blochinger, a partner of the St. Paul, Minnesota Company Olympiad Skate. In addition to "supporting the skater without unnecessarily digging into the ice," the toe pick was self-cleaning.
    - The **K-pick** design is widened for greater control and increased jump height, by as much as 5-10% according to blade manufacturers. PSA master rated coach, Pieter Kollen, invented the lateral toe pick in the late 1990's, receiving a U.S. patent on May 22, 2001. Noted in the Patent Abstract, the lateral toe pick enhanced the blades ice-gripping ability to reduce slippage at the blade-to-ice interface.
4. **Stanchion Height—**The height of the blade is measured from the ice to the sole of the boot. This often overlooked feature can extremely influence performance. The height of the stanchion determines how much body lean you can achieve before the outer sole of the boot touches the ice. The lower the stanchion, the lower the center of gravity which promotes better balance but less body lean. Riedell's Eclipse Crescent, a beginner

DIAGRAM 3

Parallel



DIAGRAM 4

Tapered

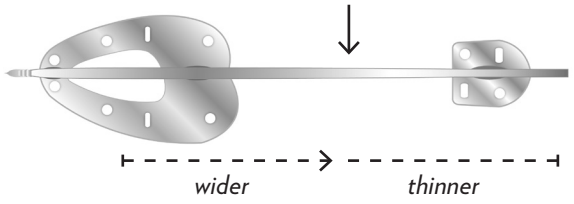


DIAGRAM 5

Side-honed



DIAGRAM 6

Dovetail



DIAGRAM 7

Tapered

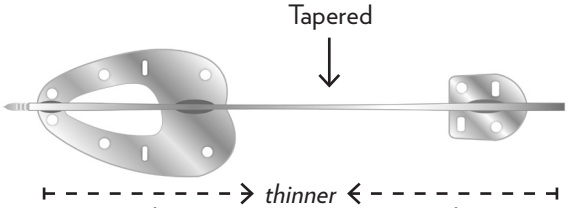
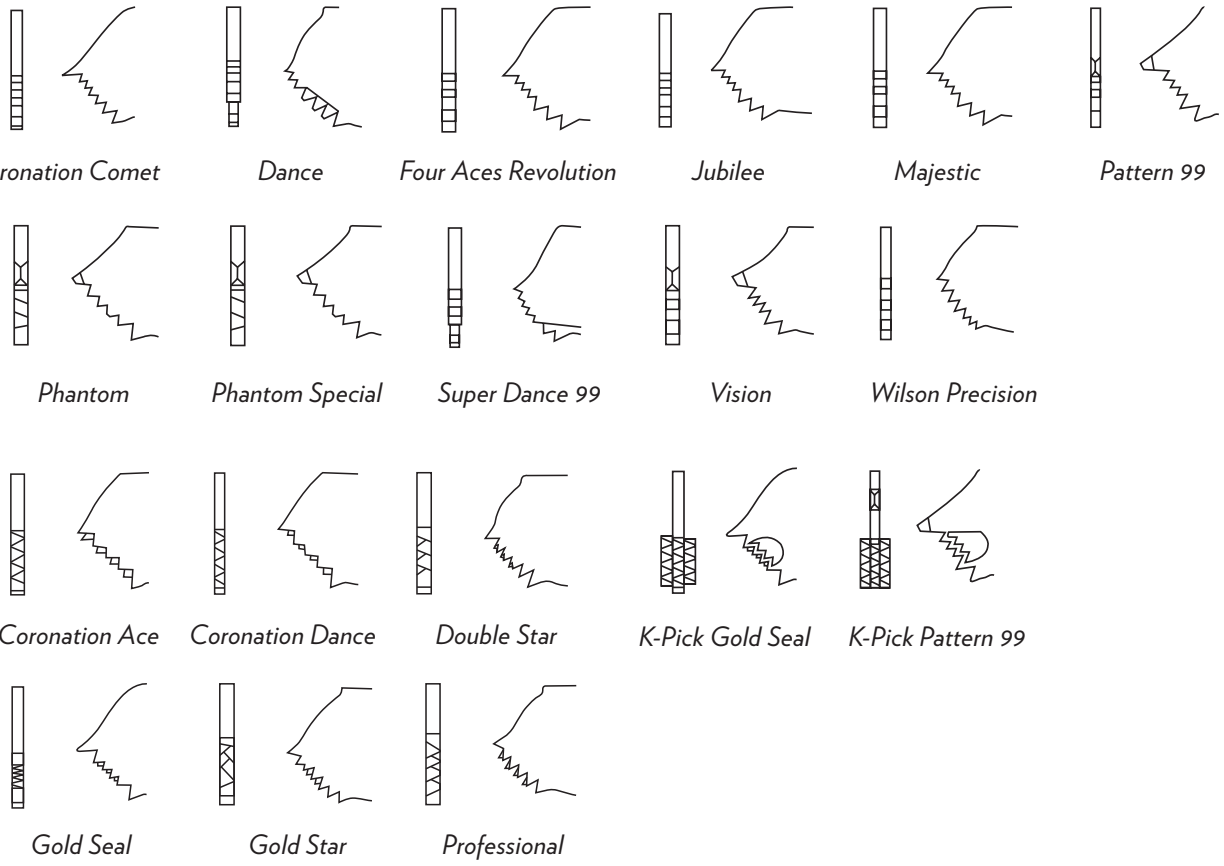


DIAGRAM 8

Slimline



TOE RAKES



Coronation Comet *Dance* *Four Aces Revolution* *Jubilee* *Majestic* *Pattern 99*

Phantom *Phantom Special* *Super Dance 99* *Vision* *Wilson Precision*

Coronation Ace *Coronation Dance* *Double Star* *K-Pick Gold Seal* *K-Pick Pattern 99*

Gold Seal *Gold Star* *Professional*

free skate blade, has a low stanchion height. The Wilson Gold Seal has the highest stanchion height allowing advanced skaters to achieve deeper edges without the boot touching the ice.

5. **Material—**While a majority of skate blades are made of tempered carbon steel, aircraft aluminum, carbon-fiber, stainless steel, and titanium are also used.
    - **Carbon steel** is steel alloy in which carbon is added to "pure" steel. Carbon is generally inexpensive in comparison to stainless steel or titanium.
    - **Nickel** is often used for plating blades and is considered corrosion-resistant.
    - **Aircraft aluminum alloys** are an excellent blade material due to its high strength-to-weight ratio. Aluminum is also one-third more elastic than steel alloys, making aluminum blades feel "softer".
    - **Carbon-fiber composite materials** are made from two or more basic materials with significantly different physical properties, that when joined, produce a material with very good rigidity and strength. Like aluminum, carbon-fiber is an excellent blade material due to its high strength-to-weight ratio.
    - **Stainless steel** does not freely rust or stain with water as carbon steel does, but it is not fully stain-proof. In low oxygen situations like leaving skate guards on wet blades, stainless steel can stain or rust. Stainless steel differs from carbon steel by the amount of chromium present.
    - **Titanium** is used in steel as an alloying element and is corrosion resistant. Titanium has a high tensile strength-to-density ratio and is extremely resistant to metal fatigue and cracking. A titanium blade can be as much as 40% lighter than a conventional carbon steel blade.
6. **Cost—**There are many variables that influence the cost of producing a blade. Prices vary depending on the manufacturing process, the quality of the steel, and the discipline of skating that the blade is intended for. In terms of the manufacturing process, there are various factors that influence the cost of a blade. The fewer steps required to make a blade can lower the cost. In effect, fewer steps reduce labor costs.

Ultimately, there are many combinations of features that can be recommended to your students. There are few reasons to put a developmental skater in a blade designed for elite skaters when many lower and mid-priced blades provide adequate performance for the average skater at each level.

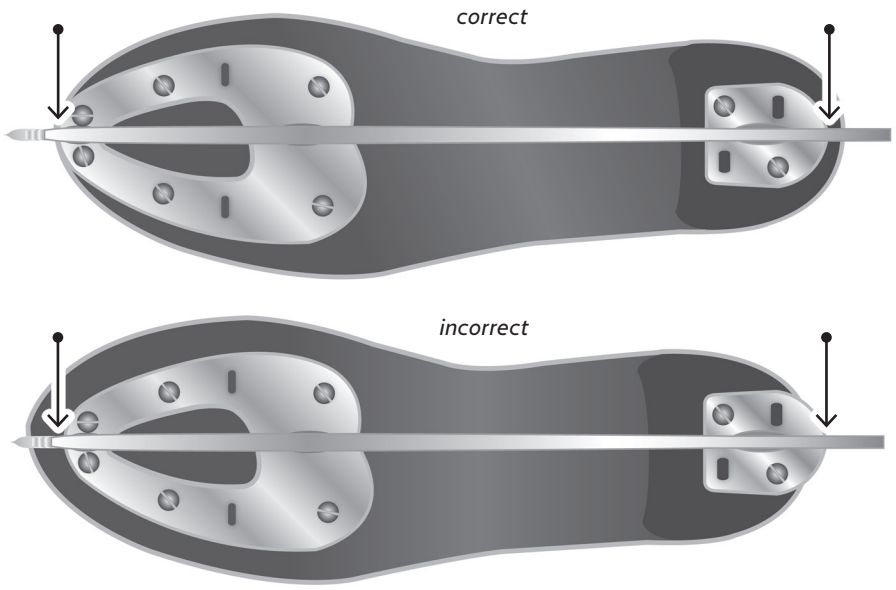
Choosing a Blade Size and Mounting

Although blade sizes are consistent, boots do vary in their outer sole length. Therefore, two boots of the same size may have different sole measurements. Once a boot has been chosen, measure its length from the middle toe to heel and fit blades that are the exact length or one-quarter inch less (not more than). The blade itself is measured from the back of the heel plate to the front of the toe plate. Blades come in sizes of quarter inch increments and with the length stamped on the toe plate. If a one-quarter inch difference is not possible, err on the long side for the blade, but do not let the heel plate extend beyond the heel of the boot. This is an important distinction. Blades are designed from the front, backwards, placing the spin rocker or "sweet spot" under the ball of the foot. A heel plate that extends beyond the heel of the boot will place the "sweet spot" further back, requiring the skater to pitch forward to attain a comfortable position.

After you've found the right blades, ask an experienced skate technician to mount them to the boots. Be aware of the following to ensure that the blades are mounted correctly:

- Prior to mounting—If wearing a skate with a leather sole, the skate should be sealed with either snow seal, varnish, or a marine grade finish
- The center of the sole and the center of the heel of the boot must be in exact alignment. Otherwise, stress is placed on the blade during mounting and the blade becomes bent or twisted.
- Holes should be pre-driven, using a drill slightly smaller than the screw size. Some technicians will seal the screw hole with silicone caulking before driving the screw into place to reduce the chance of moisture degrading the sole.
- The front of the blade should be mounted first to eliminate the possibility of a whipped or twisted blade
- The front of the long axis of the blade should be between the big and second toe
- The rear stanchion should be at the center or slightly to the inside of the heel

- Pan-headed screws should be used in the slotted holes and tapered screws used in the recessed holes. Some skate technicians will mount the skate using four to five screws in the front and three in the heel. This provides options to the technician if the blade needs to be move at a later time.



Radius of Hollow (RoH)

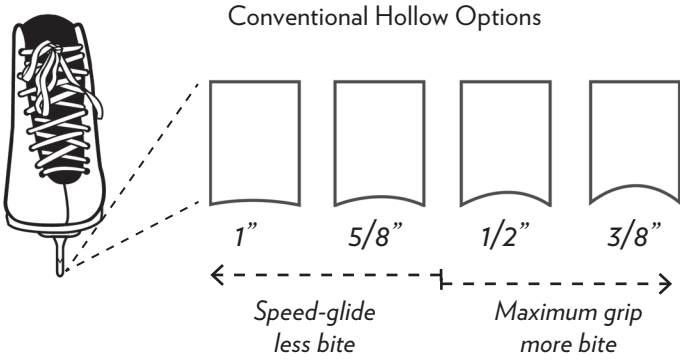
Blades are a piece of steel and typically average about 0.155" thick between the two edges for free skate blades. The Ultima Matrix 2 is 0.14" and traditional dance blades are 0.10". When a blade is sharpened, the area between the two edges is ground out with a circular rotating grinding stone that creates the "hollow." In the skating world, this is known as the radius of hollow (RoH) (not to be confused with the "rocker radius" discussed earlier). There are no less than 22 RoH curves to choose from.

The hollow was introduced in 1770 as a "fluted skate". Fluted is an architectural term that refers to a shallow groove running vertically along a surface. Today, the RoH is also referred to as a groove, a hollow grind, or a ground radius. Almost all manufacturers market their blades with the RoH listed. Realistically, this feature is irrelevant and should not be a determining factor in which model to purchase. Not all blades come from the factory "sharpened." Only John Wilson, MK, and Ultima blades come pre-sharpened. Paramount and Skate Science blades are flat and left to the technician to cut the proper RoH. The factory grind however, is rarely of the quality needed for most skaters. All blades should be sharpened by a qualified skate technician before being used the first time.

Choosing a Radius of Hollow (RoH)

Each particular radius of hollow will create "bite", which is the depth a blade will penetrate into the ice, affecting control and glide. The deeper the penetration, the tighter the control and more friction; shallower penetration creates less drag, better flow and speed, but less control. The optimum bite for each skater, according to Sid Broadbent, varies by skating style, weight, ice hardness, and most importantly, personal preference.

According to Robert Ogilvie, his preference for free style is 5⁄8". Anything deeper will necessitate a period of acclimation. The take-off of edge jumps will be more difficult until the skater gets used to the hollow. A deeper hollow will make the skater feel that the blade is in control. Most coaches prefer the Radius of Hollow from 7⁄16" to 5⁄8", but never less than 3⁄8". One of the greatest drawbacks of any hollow less than 5⁄8" is that it is very difficult to make any sort of skid stop until the hollow has been blunted.



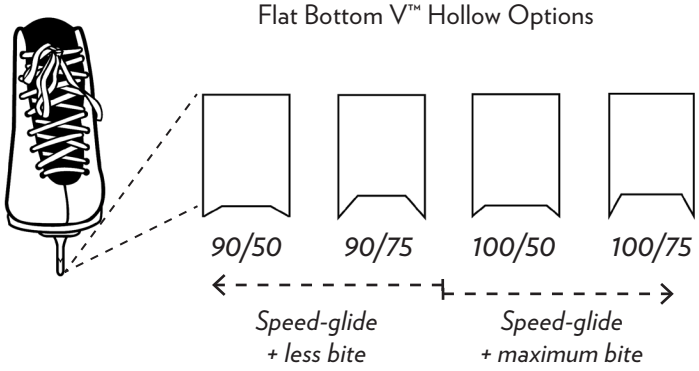
Blades that are sharpened with a shallow hollow appear to create more flow across the ice and can contribute to the desirable "effortless performance" that judge's value. Of course, the skater must be accomplished enough to recover from, for example, a slight error on the landing of a jump position or a fall can be the result. On the opposite side of the coin, a skater who lands a jump with a poor position on a blade with a very deep hollow might be able to hang on to the landing. However, the skater may demonstrate reduced flow or speed, thereby appearing choppy and slow, and may have to work harder in programs causing greater fatigue.

A more telling theory is that beginning skaters lean very little, requiring less edge. The more advance the skater, the greater the lean requiring more hollow. Many elite skaters use a three-eighths inch radius, whereas others may prefer the slightly flatter hollow of a five-eighths inch radius. Ice dancers who use a thinner blade usually require a deeper hollow to achieve the same angle of cutting edge. For skaters who skate figures, a much flatter sharpening is usually required because it tends to make more accuracy in the turns possible.

Atmospheric conditions and ice hardness will also influence the hollow. Most hockey players prefer "hard hockey ice", an ice temperature of 17 to 23 degrees. An ice temperature of 25 to 26 degrees is preferred by most figure skaters. High humidity during the summer months in some regions will soften the top layers of the ice, requiring a flatter grind. During the colder months, the ice will be consistently harder. Coaches should consider that a slightly smaller radius may be required on colder/harder ice. While developing skaters need not change their radius of hollow throughout the year, elite skaters should take this into consideration.

Flat Bottom V—Super Groover

The Flat Bottom V is trademarked by Blackstone, a sharpening machine manufacturer in Canada. It is gaining support in the hockey community as the Flat Bottom V hollow provides the benefit of a sharp edge and increased glide. With a traditional hollow you get either more bite or more flow. Recently Sid Broadbent has produce his own sharpening wheel dresser called the Super Groover which works with his Incredible Edger sharpener to create a Flat Bottom V.



The flat bottom sharpening will become popular with figure skaters. The benefits of reduced drag, allowing the skate to glide along the top of the surface rather than cutting through it will give the skater the benefit of a sharper edge with less "bite". The "V" cut allows the best of both worlds; providing the bite required to increase control during turns and intricate steps, without the loss of speed and flow.

Blade Maintenance

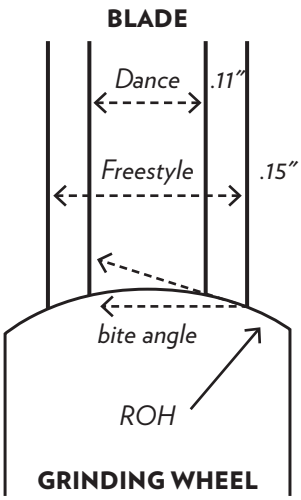
Blade maintenance includes the following:

- Blades must be dried carefully after each use
- Guards should be placed on the blades at all times when skates are worn off ice to protect blades from nicks and from the damaging effect of salt, sand, and other corrosives
- Guards should be removed when storing blades to prevent water damage
- Terry cloth soakers can be used when transporting to protect your blades from nicking. The soakers also wick away any condensation so your blades will not rust. (If you are storing your skates for a longer period of time, rub a drop of lubricant along the bottoms of the blades)
- Periodically, check the tightness of the screws securing the blade to the sole of the boot. According to Fred Martin of Fred's Skate Sharpening, loose screws can often feel like dull blades. If the screws are loose, gently tighten.

Blades should generally be sharpened after every 20 to 25 hours on the ice. Some coaches say sharpen the blades every four to six weeks depending on how often the skater is skating and how advanced the skater is. Most skaters can feel if the edges are damaged (nicks) or do not feel secure any more. Coaches can examine the bottom of the blade right after sharpening and see that it will have a mirror-like quality to it. If the skater waits too long between sharpenings, he may experience an adjustment period which can disrupt training for a day or two. Ideally, if the skater times the sharpenings well, he should feel little or no difference after a sharpening.

Another way to discern a sharp from a dull blade is the bottom of a freshly sharpened blade will have a consistently satin sheen. With more skating, the blade bottom near the edge will begin to appear "cloudy" with a flat sheen. As these lighter, flat-sheened bands get wider, it indicates that the blade is dulling.

Blade Sharpening



Know your sharpener. A good sharpener will be knowledgeable about manufacturers and their products. Sharpening a blade consists primarily of restoring the existing hollow and removing as little of the blade to accomplish that. Large nicks do not have to be completely removed.

As soon as your skater is comfortable with a certain degree of hollow, ask your sharpener what the radius of the hollow is and mark it on the inside of the boot. It is extremely important that the hollow required be maintained. The difference of ⅛" in the hollow of a blade sharpened to ⅝" radius would amount to 20%, a considerable difference.

For a new blade, do not assume that the hollow put in at the factory necessarily suits your requirements or that the edges are parallel or level. All new blades should be sharpened before use; preferably before they are mounted.

A good sharpener should do the following:

- Sharpen the blade without altering the profile of the blade or the rocker radius
- Keep the edges of the blade level
- Not interfere with the toe rakes unless instructed to do so. A qualified sharpener who specializes in figure skates will know when and how to adjust the toe rakes to assist in preserving the rocker profile.
- Not overheat the blade while sharpening
- Preserve a reasonably smooth finish to the blade
- Be able to put a specific hollow into the blade or maintain the current one
- Advise the customer without dictating
- Have a good knowledge of the customer's branch of the sport (figure, hockey, speed)

To repeat one highly important piece of advice, learn and remember the specific depth of hollow that suits the skater.

Lifespan of a Blade

The lifespan of a blade is dependent on several factors, with the quality and number of sharpening's being the most significant. As noted earlier, a good sharpener will sharpen the blade without altering the profile of the blade. Too much pressure on the blade while passing over the stone can overheat the blade, weakening the steel. Too much pressure will also remove more steel than is required, decreasing the life and flattening the rocker.

There are four other measurable and ultimately performance and design changes that occur as material is removed. Many of these changes are obvious.

1. Stanchions height decreases
2. The shape and size of the drag pick changes, and the geometric relationship of all the other picks relative to the runner changes
3. Depending on the blade type—side-honed or dove tail—the bite angle will change
4. Depending on the blade runner material the hardness changes

Poor maintenance can also shorten the useful life of a blade. Guards stored on a wet blade will create pockets of rust that will in turn eat into the steel, creating microscopic holes in the blade. To remove these marks, too much of the blade has to be removed, further altering the rocker profile of the blade.

It can be helpful to monitor your blade during its life. After buying a new blade, trace its rocker on paper. After a sharpening, compare the blade and note any visible changes to the rocker. Another test is to measure the heel lift. Place the blade on a flat surface such as a table or counter top. Press on the toe plate until the drop pick touches the surface. Then measure the difference between the surface and the heel of the blade (refer to diagram #2.)

An excellent tool for coaches is the Blade Wellness Gauge by Sid Broadbent. The Blade Wellness Gauge measures the non-skateable zone of the blade that consists of the area from the drag or drop pick to the tangent point or the start of the rocker. The gauge indicates levels of degradation as repeated sharpening does continue to flatten this area.

Conclusion

There are many decisions to be made when recommending a blade for a student. Most manufacturers market each individual model specifically to a skill set to match the U.S. Figure Skating or ISI program levels which gives the coach a starting point. In addition, this course has given you the knowledge to make an educated decision that will ultimately provide the best performance set-up for your client.

Additional reading and resource material are provided with this course. The blade comparison chart provides a list of all current blades in the North American market, the specific skating level targeted per specifications, and the current suggested retail pricing. The retail pricing could vary from the information available at the time that this material was edited. Once a blade is chosen, recommendations of blade hollow (RoH) can fine tune the blades performance for your skater.

REFERENCES

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SUGGESTED READING & RESOURCES

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Optimizing Skate Performance (From an Engineer's Viewpoint), Sid Broadbent

MK BLADE RANGE

REGULAR BLADES	ROH	ROCKER	BLADE	SIZE RANGE
Double Star	1”	7ft	Parallel	7”- 12½”
Vision Syncro	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	7”- 12”
Team Precision	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	8”- 12”
Professional	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	7”- 12½”
Vision	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	6”- 12½ “
Dance	5/16”	7ft	Slim Line	8”- 12½”
Phantom	7/16”	7ft	Side Honed	7”- 12½”
Phantom Special	7/16”	7ft	Dovetail	7”- 12½”
Gold Star	7/16”	7ft	Side Honed	7”- 12”
K-PICK BLADES				
Professional	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	7”- 12½”
Phantom	7/16”	7ft	Side Honed	7”- 12½”
Gold Star	7/16”	7ft	Side Honed	7”- 12”
PARABOLIC BLADES				
Professional	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	7”- 12½”
Team Precision	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	8”- 12”
Vision Syncro	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	7”- 12”
Vision	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	6”- 12½”
Dance	5/16”	7ft	Slim Line	8”- 12½”
Phantom	7/16”	7ft	Side Honed	7”- 12½”
Gold Star	7/16”	7ft	Side Honed	7”- 12”
K-PICK PARABOLIC BLADES				
Professional	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	7”- 12½”
Phantom	7/16”	7ft	Side Honed	7”- 12½”
Gold Star	7/16”	7ft	Side Honed	7”- 12”

WILSON BLADE RANGE

REGULAR BLADES	ROH	ROCKER	BLADE	SIZE RANGE
Jubilee	¾”	7ft	Parallel	7”-12”
Majestic	5/8”	7ft	Parallel	5¾”-12¾”
Coronation Ace	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	5¾”-12½”
Wilson Precision	7/16”	8ft	Parallel	7”-12”
Coronation Comet	7/16”	8½ft	Parallel	7”-12½”
Coronation Dance	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	5¾”-12½”
Four Ace	7/16”	7ft	Parallel	7”-12”
Super Dance 99	5/16”	8ft	Slim Line	8”-12”
Pattern 99	7/16”	8ft	Parallel	7”-12½”
Gold Seal	5/16”	8ft	Side Honed	8”-12”

K-PICK BLADES

Coronation Ace	7/16"	7ft	Parallel	5¾"-12½"
Coronation Comet	7/16"	8½ft	Parallel	7"-12½"
Pattern 99	7/16"	8ft	Parallel	7"-12½"
Gold Seal	5/16"	8ft	Side Honed	8"-12"

PARABOLIC BLADES

Coronation Ace	7/16"	7ft	Parabolic	5¾"-12½"
Wilson Precision	7/16"	8ft	Parabolic	7"-12"
Coronation Dance	7/16"	7ft	Parabolic	5¾"-12½"
Super Dance 99	5/16"	8ft	Parabolic	8"-12"
Pattern 99	7/16"	8ft	Parabolic	7"-12½"
Gold Seal	5/16"	8ft	Parabolic	8"-12"

K-PICK PARABOILIC BLADES

Coronation Ace	7/16"	7ft	Parabolic	5¾"-12½"
Pattern 99	7/16"	8ft	Parabolic	7"-12½"
Gold Seal	5/16"	8ft	Parabolic	8"-12"

In selecting blades, you have to consider the individual skater. The beginner or preliminary skater does fine with a good all-around blade that can be used for all types of figure skating. The more advanced figure skater needs a better quality figure blade with more rock. The advanced free skate skater may need a blade with larger toe-picks to assist in the takeoff of jumps.

Although blade sizes do not vary, boots do vary in their outer sole length; therefore the same size boot may have a different sole measurement and use a different size blade. Having chosen the boot, measure the length from the toe to heel and fit blades which are ¼" less in length. If a ¼" difference is not possible always error on the long side for the blade, however the blade should not extend over the toe of the boot.

A coach should be aware of the following incorrect blade mounting:

- The center sole and the center of the heel of the boot must be in exact alignment otherwise stress is placed on the blade during mounting and the blade will bend
- The center of the blade should be between the big and first toe
- The rear stanchion should be at the center of the heel
- Pan head screws should be used in the slotted holes and tapered screws in the recessed holes
- Boots should be waterproofed to prevent soles from rotting

Blade maintenance includes the following:

- Blades must be dried carefully after each use
- Guards should be removed when storing blades to prevent water damage
- Guards should be place on the blades at all times when skates are worn off ice to prevent nicks and the damaging effect of salt, sand and other corrosives
- Blades should be sharpened correctly

The following tips are from Robert Ogilvie:

- Maintain the chosen hollow
- Produce even edges
- Sharpen without altering the profile of the blade or rocker radius
- Avoid any change of the toe pick area
- Do not allow the blade to become too hot thus altering the temper of the steel

Remember:

- *Wipe off interior and exterior moisture after every use.*
- *Let the boots dry between skating sections. Use a leather protector when appropriate*

Clothing for Skaters

Proper skates are essential to good performance as well as the proper clothing. As a coach you must be knowledgeable about various types of equipment and clothing in order to be able to advise skaters.

- Clothing should not restrict movement and should be advantageous to the skater with regard to appearance of body line for correction by the coach
- Jean material is not advisable as it lacks stretch, flow and the ability to breathe. Although more materials have stretch fabrics in them nowadays.
- Tights or socks (thin) must be kept dry and clean and should be cotton to absorb moisture
- Warmth is an important factor and this is best achieved with layering. A sweater can be taken off if the skater gets too warm. Long scarves should not be worn as they can be dangerous if they drag on the ice.
- Wool gloves or mitts are important especially for beginners to protect their hands when falling down. They should not be too large or sloppy.
- Long hair should be tied or clipped back so it doesn't fly in the skater's face
- Check with your rink for their policy on helmets for beginning skaters

Summary

Beginning skaters will benefit from boots that fit properly and are of quality leather. A blade should be properly mounted and sharpened. Good used boots and blades are highly recommended. Rental boots, if of good quality such as Riedell leather boots, are far more desirable than composite plastic boots. Look for a reliable skate shop that understands how to measure and fit boots properly, sharpen and mount blades correctly. Choose boots that fit the skater's foot contour, level of skating and skating schedule. Ask parents and skaters to let you know when shoe sizes change or they notice a difference in the way their boots feel. Avoid changing boots prior to a competition or test. It is important to dress properly for skating.

Know the equipment you are recommending. When you send your student to the pro shop, tell her to convey key messages from you, such as:

- My coach says I am hard on boots
- I am just learning single jumps
- I need a blade for dance
- I am on my juvenile test

Make sure the student gives your name so that you can be reached if there are any questions.

Check each skater for fit of boots, placement of blades and proper lacing on the first day of lessons. The blade must be centrally located and the boots firm through the arch and heel and snug at the toe and top of the boot. Skates that are laced improperly are just as bad as skates that don't fit.

CHAPTER FIVE

MUSIC AND CHOREOGRAPHY

Building a Music Library

If you are working with competitive skaters, you will probably be expected to select and cut music. You will need to build your own library of music.

Organize Your Thoughts

Before shopping for music, think about the kind of music you will need for your present students. Consider their skating ability, personality, age, size, strengths, weaknesses and goals. With this in mind, you will have a more direct approach to shopping.

Shop for Music

Having organized your thoughts, you are now ready to begin shopping.

- Look for categories to fill your most immediate need
- Look for instrumentals
- Shop online and download to your PC
- Check out your local library
- Listen to the radio and YouTube
- Find a good music store with a large selection

TIP: Record information in a spreadsheet, music binder, notebook, or on file cards.

Music Categories That You Might Look For:

Classical	Polkas	Marches	Country
Overtures	Ballets	Waltzes	Hip-hop
Operettas	Jazz	Disco	Rock
Shows and Musicals *(Overtures)*		Unusual music *(perhaps ethnic)*	

Sources

CDs and online music providers are the most common source for music. CDs are sometimes slightly more expensive than purchasing online but both are superior in quality and easy to edit. Libraries offer CDs on loan, although the selection is limited. Radio stations are a great listening source for both classical and popular music. Remember the conductor, the orchestra and the arrangement of a particular piece of music. An arrangement of Scheherazade for violin and piano will be different than an arrangement performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Listen To Your Music

Listening to music for your students can be very time-consuming. It is time spent at home when you are not getting paid for every minute. It can become very frustrating when you are pressured to find suitable music in a hurry. However, if you choose music away from the rink, at times when you are not under pressure to find something, it can become a pleasurable experience. There are two ways of doing this:

Music in the Background

If you get in the habit of putting music on while you are driving in your car, or when you are at home, you can be reading or doing other things while the music is playing in the background, even while doing household chores. If there is music on the CD that is good for one of your skaters, your ears will probably perk up when you hear it. You

can then stop what you are doing and write the selection in a notebook or card file for future use. If you listen to the radio, keep a note pad and pencil handy so that if you hear a good piece of music you can jot down the name. The next time you shop for music, you will have a particular selection to look for.

Consciously Listening

After purchasing new music, you can sit down and consciously listen to the music, taking notes as you proceed. Use index cards or a spreadsheet and record what you think of the album in general and descriptive words about the selections you may particularly like. You can file these notes by album name, artist, or descriptive words.

Catalog Your Music

In order to make it easy to find music when you want it, begin right away to catalog your music. Think of categories for classifying your music, so you will have distinct sections that you may refer to when necessary. For example, you may want all classical music together, a separate section for ballets, jazz or disco, shows and musicals. You may organize by skater level or gender of skater. Whatever way you do it, have a system that means something to you—you are the one who has to use it.

Keeping Track of your Recorded Music

Once you have recorded music for a student, it is a good idea to write down all the pertinent information in a notebook or card file. If you ever need to re-cut or if in later years you want to use a certain cut again, you will have all the information at your fingertips. Your entry might look like this:

Date recorded: January 2015
Student name: Margaret Davis
Level and length: Juvenile (2:07)
First Cut: Album number and title, track number location and number of seconds
Second Cut: Album number and title, track number location and number of seconds
Third Cut: Album number and title, track number location and number of seconds

Copies

Once you have finished putting together a CD, keep the original, and make two copies for your student (one for practice and one for competition). You might also want to copy the original onto a master CD of all of your current music, and keep a digital copy on your computer.

~ *Remember: Skaters are required to enter their music information when registering for qualifying competitions. The U.S. Figure Skating Media Forms must be filled out with the label, composer, and cut of each piece used in the program. It's a good idea to document that information when editing music.*

Selecting Music for a Specific Skater

Making the Selection

Well-known choreographer Sandra Bezic includes the skater in the selection of music. Bezic suggests you consider the skater's "age, style, physical structure and especially the spirit of the skater." It is important not to overpower a petite seven year old with a booming orchestration of Rachmaninoff. On the other hand, maybe your skater does not have a delicate touch or a refined grace but can tear across the ice to the dramatic music from "Batman." A delightful smile and energy might lend itself to an Irish jig, while simple elegance might lend itself to new age music. It is important that the music have an impact on the skater. In other words, does the music cause the skater to move, raise her eyebrows and brighten her eyes? Remember however, skaters can grow when given new music. Perhaps they have never focused on a quiet flowing movement, a long spiral, or complicated footwork, but the new music will inspire and focus their energies.

Often music will sound different in your living room than it will on the ice. Tiny details in the sound might be lost and the music might sound soft and uneventful in the rink. When listening to the music envision the skater. Does the music sound like a spin, a long Ina Bauer, or footwork?

When putting together two pieces of music you should consider both the themes of the pieces and the tonal quality of the orchestrations or recordings. There should be a reason or story that explains why you put two pieces together. Do they come from the same musical, are they both Spanish or from the same genre or era?

The Program

Think of all the required elements first. The music and choreography must be able to show off each element. There must be sufficient time for each element to be completed well. What is the required length of the program? How many mood changes do you need? Maybe it is a beginner program and you won't be cutting any other music with it. You need to think of this as you are listening to the music.

Selecting Music—The Right Way

Selecting music for your student is highly personal. It is important not only for performance value but is essential in the progress and development of a skater. The music should be there to challenge, excite, stimulate, seduce. The selection should compliment the skater's style, yet be different enough to allow for creativity. The slow skater can be encouraged to skate faster, the bouncy skater can learn to be more graceful, and the shy skater can learn to add more spice to the program. If the music is chosen with great care, the skater will most certainly benefit.

When listening to music for your student, you will have three major things to think about: your skater, the program, and the mood.

1. The skater: What is her personality? Age? What type of skater is she? Fast and energetic, or slow and graceful? At what level will she be competing or testing?
2. The program: What level? Is this for testing or competing? If competing, is it an artistic number? Short or long program?
3. The mood: Dramatic or light? Conveying sadness or glee?

Selecting Music –Things to Avoid

The following are suggestions for fast and easy music hunting; but refrain from the easy way out. It will probably end up to be the wrong music for the wrong skater in all the wrong ways.

- Borrow a piece of music from another coach and record it for your skater
- Give the skater any kind of music she likes or brings in
- Tell the parent to find something and cut it themselves
- Give your skaters the same music a medalist used at the Olympics
- Give this year's skaters copies of music you used for your skaters three years ago
- Give seven-year-old Susie the music you used for your junior program

Selecting Music—A Summary

When listening to music for your skater, keep in mind:

- Skater's age
- Body build
- Personality
- Program required elements
- Number of mood changes desired
- Slow part
- Level of skating
- Strength
- Natural style
- Length of program
- Music beginning & ending
- Step sequence part (footwork)

A well-chosen musical selection, along with the right choreography puts your skater on the path to a successful program.

Choreography

A good first step when you've picked a piece of music is to have your student skate to the music. Even though a fourteen year-old might show her embarrassment by shrugging her shoulders and pleading that she doesn't know what to do, ask her to interpret the music and do what comes naturally. This can give you ideas-you can take a piece of, or elaborate on, an arm movement or a step your skater has done impromptu. Having a skater move to the music on her own will give you a feel for how she relates or does not relate to the music. This exercise also gives the skater responsibility for the program and involves her in the choreography.

There are some basic things that can improve the choreography or style of any program: eye focus, extension, pause and stillness, high and low movement and good layout and timing. Ask the skater to follow an arm with her eyes or intentionally focus her eyes elsewhere. In a spiral, landing or simple connecting move, encourage pointed toes, long arms and legs and open shoulders. If you intend a sequence to be short, choppy and flexed, make that explicit too but don't let your skater hover in a neutral zone. Take a beat or pause when it is appropriate. Have your skater hold that spiral a second longer or linger after a stop or in a landing position. Stillness can be as effective as movement. Use all the space around the skater's body. Stretch high into the air above and also create a movement that is near the ice. Combine the two by having the skater sweep the ice and then reach into the air with extended arms.

Always consider the pattern you are creating on the ice. Do the unexpected turn outside the circle, do a rocker to change directions, place a flip in the middle of the ice rather than in the corner. Order the difficult elements carefully. If your skater takes thirty seconds into the program to get settled, start with spins, spirals or footwork. On the other hand, if she wants to get that jump out of the way and can consistently complete it, make it the opening move. Consider the skater's endurance: a death drop or a double Lutz might be inconsistent and sloppy at the end of a program, yet dynamite in the opening.

Trust yourself. Both your skater and you must be willing to laugh, to cut loose and be dramatic. Encourage exaggeration-a move might appear expressive from four feet away but might be lost when viewed from the top of the bleachers. Watch movement and dance outside the setting of the rink. Notice arm, head and body movements in music videos, ballets and shows. Finally, the development of a program is an ongoing process. There is certainly a stage, as competition nears, where additions to the program will be disruptive. On the other hand, it's important to keep the program growing-experiment with an additional arm movement, a tilt of the head or a combination jump.

TIP: If a skater travels often on their spins, don't place it on or near a line in the program. It will give judges a bold reference point that will make it look worse than it really is.

Remember: There's never enough time to do it right the first time but always enough the second.

Part II -
Coaching Specific Disciplines

CHAPTER SIX

GROUP INSTRUCTION

Group Teaching

Before Getting on the Ice:

In most cases the rink will be divided into five to ten teaching areas with one or more instructor for each area. You may be asked to teach fifteen or more students in one class. Usually students are divided according to age and ability. I hope that as an instructor you will have some input organizing students and classes to provide a productive learning environment.

A letter accompanying registration can relay important information, such as how to choose new boots, lace your skates, select the proper attire for comfort and warmth, and the amount of practice needed to learn the skills. Many programs teach part of the first lesson off-ice, instructing students how to lace skates, to stand and balance, and to walk through some basic skills.

The First Tot Class:

The first day of class means different things to different children. Some will be eager and excited, others will be apprehensive, and others will be scared. Take special care to ensure that each child will have a positive and safe first experience. With this in mind start each beginner class off-ice. Each class can gather around their coach. This is their first chance to meet each other and for the coach to learn their names. Explain to the children about their skates; show them the toe picks and edges. Take time to show them how to fall (bent knees, arms forward and chin tucked in, and sit) and then get up (on all fours, then one foot, the other and reach for the sky). In many instances the coach will walk them around this area to get them used to the feel of the skates. When they are ready they will approach the ice. The coach will bring out the children one at a time and then begin the on-ice instruction. Once the children are on the ice their personalities will take over. Obviously some will pick it up faster than others. They all learn at their own pace. For those skaters who refuse to get on the ice it is important to remain patient and supportive. Some children just need to get used to the surroundings when they're up that close to the ice. When they are ready let them join the class. In some instances, your skater might not take to the ice during the first class. Remember, one crying child can start the whole class crying.

Teaching the Basics:

Once on the ice, you will find the boards a useful tool which can be used to provide students with needed support in learning new skills. The most important first skill to be taught is how to fall on the ice without injury and return to a balanced standing position. For safety, skaters should be spaced apart and away from the boards. Skaters should be taught to fall on the side of their buttocks by bending their knees and crumpling the body. This will prevent them from bruising their knees, hitting their tailbone, and most importantly, from falling backwards and hitting their head. Most coaches start by demonstrating a fall for the class and then demonstrate how to stand by first rising to the knees and hands, then placing the toe in the ice for balance, and finally rising to both feet. After this most basic lesson, you can move on to teach marching in place. Skaters should move across the ice with small march-like steps. Sometimes beginners will naturally translate this mechanic movement into a skating stroke with more flow and extension. More often, you have to demonstrate stroking and explain the basics of bending the knees, applying pressure to the ice with the blade (rather than the toe), pushing to an extension and bringing the feet back together to transfer the weight, and pushing with the second foot. Before beginners are successful at stroking, they are likely to be able to execute two

foot glides, one foot glides and swizzles. As soon as skaters have established some balance, it is also important to teach them a basic snowplow stop. It often helps to start by the boards and have students try to make "snow" by pushing their blades along the top of the ice. They will learn by trial and error that when they apply too much pressure, their foot won't slide; with too little, their foot flies out and makes no snow. Backward skating should also be introduced as an entry level skill.

Teaching Intermediate Skills:

More advanced skills such as Mohawks, three-turns and spirals require careful utilization of the ice both for safety and for optimum learning. A hockey circle may be used to teach crossovers and lines may be used for three-turns. Having skaters attempt "shoot the ducks" and spirals in shifts is safer and allows you to give students more individualized attention. In every class, some skaters will adapt more quickly than others will but it's important to keep all the skaters active and involved in the learning process. Similarly, you need to divide your attention among skaters evenly, regardless of their stage of development. With a skater who has mastered the skill, you might focus on form; with another you might continue to focus on the "how-to."

The Big Picture and Keeping Informed:

Remember to evaluate what you are teaching based on long-term goals. Will your methods help a skater learn edges, good stroking technique, balance and correct posture? As a group lesson coach you begin the training of a skater. You have a responsibility to do it well. Upgrading your own skills and keeping yourself current on rule changes and new techniques is an important part of meeting this responsibility. There are many educational opportunities provided by the PSA to enhance and improve your skills. The PSA offers:

- **Seminars & Clinics**—one-day and half-day events
- **Conference**—an international multi-day event held in May with lectures on- and off-ice for all levels of instruction. Oral rating exams at all levels and disciplines are held prior to the conference.
- **Ratings Prep Training**—this program will provide coaches with a classroom environment in which to prepare for rating examinations
- **Foundations of Coaching**—build a foundation of resources and tools as a new coach
- **DVDs & CDs** for all levels and disciplines are available for purchase
- **E-Learning** at www.skatepsa.com
- ***PS Magazine***—bimonthly magazine provides updated skating information, including rule changes, coaching tips and business advice
- **Apprenticeships**—apprentice with a master-rated coach in any discipline

Class Discipline:

Learning cannot take place without discipline. Many group coaches come well equipped to work with groups and use past experiences from church, school or work to keep a class in order. Other group coaches are at a total loss as to how to handle fifteen active five year-olds or twelve petrified adults. Children and adults will obviously respond to different kinds of motivation and teaching techniques. Children need to be active and are game-oriented, whereas adults enjoy succinct explanations and reasonable answers to their many questions. Some coaches prefer one group to another, and if possible, should be offered classes that capitalize on their strengths. Nonetheless, a well-rounded coach should be able to maintain discipline with all types of groups. Perhaps the most challenging classes are those with skaters of disparate ages and abilities. Such classes can still be divided according to ability. For example, the first group across the ice may be those who can only march and the second flight for those working on one foot glides.

In general, skaters should not be skating when an coach cannot see them. That requires some waiting at the boards while small groups or individuals perform. Hopefully skaters can benefit from watching others attempt skills both successfully and unsuccessfully.

Preventing Misbehaved Classes

How to prevent classes from misbehaving is the question most coaches want answered. You know that maintaining good discipline is important for a group, and that it's best to deal with it early in the season.

- Establish clear expectations right away
- Hold a group meeting to involve your skaters' parents in discussing reasonable class rules (no crying!) and the consequences for breaking them. Cooperation is more likely if your skaters help form and publicly agree to the rules. Discuss rules that you think are important and the reasons for them, but be willing to listen to their ideas as well.
- Try to develop structure with a bit of freedom. Remember that your skaters are there to have fun.
- Reinforce and encourage good behavior
- Safety is an important consideration

What to do about Rule Violations and Refusals to Cooperate:

- Give your skaters fair warning
- Give your skaters a chance to explain. There may be reasons behind their actions, good or bad.
- Be consistent and impartial
- Stay cool and calm. Don't show anger or lose control.
- Avoid lecturing or embarrassing the skater. It isn't necessary or helpful.
- Give the option of speaking with the parent after class, or for them to start behaving properly

What Types of Discipline might you use?

- Speak with your director, club, or arena management on rink policies
- Under no circumstances should physical, verbal, or emotional abuse be used

Coaching Awareness:

- Ignore annoying behaviors that do not cause real problems. Be above the problem.
- Be a role model for appropriate behavior
- Emphasizing improper technique or failure leads to resentment and frustration

Safety and First Aid

As a group class instructor, you are responsible for the safety and welfare of your students while they are on the ice, and in some cases, in the building. Awareness of your surroundings and where your skaters are at all times should be your focus. Don't rush your skaters into trying something they are not mentally or physically ready for. If a skater is in an inappropriate class for their skill level, bring it to the attention of your director.

Survey your Work Area:

Before the class starts, look over your class area to see if there are any safety related issues. Large holes or ruts, foreign objects on the ice (hair pins, food, coins, etc.) and open doorways are all potential injuries and lawsuits. Draw a line with a marker or the heel of your skate four feet from the wall. All skaters should stop before this line to prevent any one from crashing into the wall.

Entering the Ice:

Position yourself by the entrance to help each child of your class onto the ice in single file order. Make sure that each child's skates are properly tied, correctly fit, and guards off as they step onto the ice surface. The skaters should not be eating candy or chewing gum (to prevent choking or in the event that it finds its way onto the ice, another child does not trip and fall). Many problems and injuries can be avoided by catching them before they enter the ice.

The Class:

Once your class begins, make sure you keep the skaters in front of you at all times. Encourage your skaters to spread out and do not allow them to touch each other. If you have a large class, have them skate in waves or on a circuit to keep them from knocking each other over. Keep a watchful eye out for skaters who grab onto their fellow skaters when they fall.

Safety Equipment:

Encourage your skaters to wear safety related equipment. A helmet or knit hat and gloves are extremely helpful in preventing many minor injuries. Knee pads, elbow pads and wrist guards are also excellent ideas. If possible keep a first aid kit and ice packs on hand.

First Aid

It is strongly recommended that you take a basic First Aid course and be CPR certified.

When a skater falls and hurts themselves you will most likely be the first on hand to deal with the problem. Remain calm and assess the skater and injury.

*Scrapes and Cuts: ** Use Disposable Gloves **

1. Stop bleeding by applying direct pressure with a clean dressing. Elevate wound.
2. Cleanse wound once bleeding is controlled.
3. Protect the wound with a sterile gauze or bandage.
4. Remove and dispose of gloves according to local codes.

Strains, Sprains or Bumps & Bruises:

Use the PRICE Method

P—Protect injured body part from further danger or trauma

R—Rest area to avoid further damage

I—Ice area to reduce swelling and pain

C—Compress area by securing ice bag in place

E—Elevate the injury above the heart to keep the blood from pooling in the area

Serious Injuries:

Head, neck and back injuries, fractures, and injuries that cause a skater to lose consciousness are among a class of injuries that you should not try to treat yourself.

- Assess the skater and injury
- Have someone call 911
- Do not move the skater. Stay with the skater, calm them, and keep them as warm and comfortable as possible.
- Have another instructor take your class
- As with all injuries that occur in the arena, an accident or incident report form must be completed by you and turned into the director or arena management

Features of Concussion Frequently Observed:

Vacant stare, delayed verbal and motor responses, confusion and inability to focus attention, disorientation, slurred or incoherent speech, gross observable lack of coordination, emotions out of proportion to circumstances, memory deficits, or any period of lost consciousness. Visit www.cdc.gov/headsup for concussion information and training.

Crisis and Disaster Management:

Common sense should prevail in all situations. Remember, during a crisis or disaster, ***you*** are responsible for your skaters' safety. In an emergency, do not exit the ice or building without all of your students! For policies regarding Crisis and Disaster Plans, please refer to your director or arena management.

Standards:

U.S. Figure Skating, ISI, or a well-organized individual program can provide uniform standards for each class or level. Following a written set of rules is a necessary first step, but instructors must further be certain that they are resolving ambiguities in the same way and adhering to the rules with a similar level of strictness. For a group lesson program to be successful all instructors need to be active participants in this process of coordinating and enforcing standards.

It's essential that an instructor clearly communicate these standards to their skaters. It is important to explain what skills will be taught in the class and the level of proficiency needed to progress to the next class. This is true for two reasons. First, many skaters assume they can learn all necessary skills by simply attending class. In reality, many skaters can only pass a test with practice. Informing skaters at the outset will give them the opportunity to tailor the amount they practice to their desire to master a skill.

Second, skaters are often disappointed when they do not move on to the next skill level, but if standards are clearly explained, they will usually accept the decision as fair. For example, if you have established at the beginning of the class that every skater must be able to hold a glide for ten seconds in order to pass, it will be less of a surprise to the skater who doesn't pass because they can only hold their glide for five seconds.

It is important that coaches adhere to the standards they establish. You do a disservice to the coach at the next level if you let a skater move on who hasn't met the requirements of your class. It is difficult to teach back edges to a skater who has never learned to transfer their weight while skating backwards or to teach a Mohawk to a skater who cannot glide on one foot forward or backward.

Parents:

Unfortunately, parents can become illogical when it comes to their children not passing a test, regardless of the fact that the requirements of the class were made clear from day one. Coaches need management to back their decisions and to explain to parents that repeating a class is in the child's best interest. Coaches should be willing to talk with parents, explain the standards and offer helpful solutions such as extra practice and added instruction. (Guidelines for supportive parents can be found in Chapter One.)

Teaching Methods

The methods coaches use to teach skills should be varied to some extent. This is partly because everyone learns in a different way. One teaching strategy might be right for some skaters and another for others. For a visual learner, watching an coach perform a skill will be the best way to learn. Others will respond to a verbal explanation as long as they are allowed to repeat it back to the coach. Many skaters respond to being given the rhythm or timing of the skill. Counting will help them develop muscle memory and perform a skill consistently. In a group setting, a good coach uses all of these methods to tap into each skater's strengths.

A good coach should have stored away a number of ways of describing and demonstrating a single skill. A Mohawk is a good example of a skill that can be very difficult for a beginning skater to learn. A veteran coach will describe the Mohawk in a variety of ways. For example:

- A mohawk is a step involving a change of foot with no change of edge
- A mohawk is a step turning from forward to backward or backward to forward, stepping from one foot to the other. Both steps are on the same edge, inside to inside or outside to outside.
- The basis of an inside mohawk is a three-turn motion performed on two feet
- A mohawk is a turn from forward to backward and from one foot to the other in which the course of the exit edge continues the curve of the entry edge

Just as an effective coach will be able to describe the skill in a number of ways, he or she will be able to teach the skill in a number of ways, or break a complex skill down into parts. Again using the Mohawk as an example:

- Use the boards to assist in turning the hips and placing the free foot on the ice
- Demonstrate turning the hips quickly at tip of the turn
- Open the toe of the free foot and place the heel at the instep of the gliding foot
- Straighten the knee on the forward step and bend the knee on the back step

Types of Group Instruction:

- Groups can be organized to teach many different skills: dance, jumps, spins, and moves in the field. People are often motivated and encouraged by peers which make group training a useful and economical teaching method.
- Large groups can be taught by one instructor with several assistants or helpers
- Groups can be open to the public or organized through special interest organizations such as scouts, churches, camps, or schools
- Very large groups with a single purpose such as earning a badge can be taught over a PA system by one coach off the ice while several assistants demonstrate and oversee skaters on the ice
- Stroking and conditioning classes can be very helpful and practical for all levels of skating
- Power skating for figure skaters or hockey players is an excellent way to generate additional income and increase skating skill

Your Responsibilities as an Instructor:

Before teaching any group, it is important that you and the rink staff have a clear plan for handling injuries, accidents and emergencies. Most rinks have very clear guidelines. It's important for you to be familiar with these guidelines for the safety of the participants and for your own protection.

You should always be punctual and professional in your dealings with skaters and parents. As discussed above, a good coach continues to update their skills and credentials. Always be enthusiastic.

> "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." ~ *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Games

Here are some commonly used games. Remember, the games that you play should feature elements/skills that your skaters are working on in class along with ones that they have already mastered. Also most of these games can be adapted for various levels.

1. **Red Light, Green Light**—Used to help with snowplow stops, T-stops, and hockey stops.
2. **Duck, Duck, Goose**—Used to help with left and right crossovers.
3. **Mr. Fox**—Used to help with forward swizzles and stops.
4. **Follow the Leader**—Good for a combination of skills.
5. **Add-On**—Good for free skate levels. Keep adding on a skill for each skater.
6. **Simon Says**—Good for a combination of skills.
7. **Balloon Game**—Used to help swizzles. Make a circle of skaters, wiggle out to blow up and swizzle in. Pop balloon by doing a two foot jump.
8. **Swizzle People**—Draw people on the ice with your marker. Have skaters follow your drawings with their swizzles.
9. **Yellow Brick Road**—Good for stops, dips, and two foot jumps. Use a marker for your road, write "dip" for a dip in the road, stop signs for stops, and bumps in the road for jumps.
10. **Obstacle Course**—Good for a combination of skills. Use your marker to make shapes on the ice for obstacles such as boxes, balls, cones and snakes.
11. **Theme Class**—Today is keeping your arms up day…
12. **1, 2, Buckle My Shoe**—Marching and dips.
13. **Puppets**—Using a puppet you can tell the kids to do different skills.
14. **Washing Machine Game**—Put everyone in a circle; draw a picture of a washing machine with your marker. Ask the kids, "What are we washing?" add the soap, add the clothes, and shut the lid-jump-wiggle back–jump-turn around-jump-swizzle in-jump.
15. **Going on a Trip**—Such as: the zoo, the park, camping… Choose your transportation: car, bus, boat, plane, train… Use a circle, like a hockey circle or draw one with a marker. Use swizzles, dips, one foot glides.

16. **Fishing**—Draw a road, a river, trees, and fish. Use swizzles, dips, one foot glides.
17. **If your**—name begins with a___do a___, favorite color is___do a___, Birthday month is___do a___, favorite animal is___do a___
18. **Blast Off**—Used mostly for tots. As they are moving, "1, 2, 3, fall (or Slide)." For backward wiggles or swizzles, count down from 10 while holding onto the railing. At zero blast-off, children wiggle or swizzle a short distance and repeat.
19. **Tick Tock**—Used mostly for tots, "tick" bend to the left, "tock" bend to the right, "Coo Coo" two foot jump.
20. **The Dot Game**—For Tots, cut 12 inch and six inch dots of different color cardboard. Have them laminated. Scatter the larger dots over the ice. Give each skater a small dot. Have each child find the matching color dot and return them to the bucket.
21. **Relay Races**—Good for all ages and skill levels. Set up teams and use different skills forward and backward.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FREE SKATING

Spins

Spinning Direction

Perhaps the most important thing you do when you teach a beginner to spin is to pick the direction in which they should spin. You should look for the direction that the skater spins naturally. Look to the beginner's instinctive movements: the tilt of the head or the slant of the shoulders. Skaters must be taught to jump and spin in the same direction, therefore, spins are an extremely useful way of teaching the body to center, tighten and check. As a result, in addition to having an independent and important role in skating, spins are integral parts of any jump training.

Look for other clues: how a skater kicks a soccer ball and which is the strongest landing leg. Do not rely on which hand the skater uses. This has proven to have little or no correlation to a skater's rotation.

Parts of a Spin

1. Preparation
2. Entry
3. Spin Position
4. Exit

This section begins with a description of the entrance to a standard spin. Then each of skating's basic spins will be addressed in more detail, with suggestions for improvement and master tips from Janet Champion. (Note that all spin descriptions will be based on a counterclockwise jump/spin direction.) The test and competitive level at which each spin is required and the number of revolutions required can be found in the current U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook. This will help you to understand the comparative importance of each spin and to establish goals for your skater.

Standard Spin Preparation

- Do back crossovers clockwise on a small circle (right over left)
- On the final crossover, glide on the right back inside edge with your right knee deeply bent. Leave your left foot stretched under and behind your right foot with your left toe pointing out of the circle.
- Press your right arm back and hold your left arm across and in front of your body, so your torso twists and faces out of the circle

Spin Entry

- Step into the circle on a tight left forward outside edge with your left knee deeply bent. As you step, look to the left and rotate your arms to the left.
- Do a left forward outside three-turn. The exit edge of the three-turn is the left back inside edge on which you will spin, turning in small circles.

Two Foot Spin

DESCRIPTION: This is an upright spin with both feet remaining on the flats of the blades.
ENTRY: Push right foot forward and left foot backward, or begin from a forward left pivot position.
Tips:

- Bend knees as you enter the spin and straighten as you begin to rotate
- Keep elbows out as you spin

Master Tip:

Start two-foot spin standing on two feet. Wind up arms and shoulders clockwise against the hips which remain square. Swing arms and shoulders counter-clockwise until they are square with hips allowing feet, hips and body to spin to the left. The feet should be slightly apart, no wider than the shoulders, and the toe lightly scratching the ice.

One Foot Spin (Scratch Spin)

DESCRIPTION: An upright spin on a shallow left back inside edge.
ENTRANCE: Standard Spin Preparation. Stepping into the center of the circle created by the preparation edge will help center the spin by converting angular momentum into rotational momentum.

Tips:

- Arms must be powerful and slow, resisting as they pull in; elbows out
- Free leg begins to move in before arms

Centering a Spin:

Centering a spin is the most important part of spinning because the balance achieved from centering allows the skater to spin in a great number of aesthetically pleasing positions. Many things about centering can be learned from the scratch spin:

- The body weight should be over the skating foot for the entry
- The entry edge should be a circle whose diameter diminishes
- The first turn of the spin should ideally be a circle that goes back to the point of the three
- The skating arm leads into the spin and gradually reaches back as the skater reaches the three
- The skating knee should be gradually deepening on the entry edge and stays bent for at least one turn of the spin
- The free leg swing starts at the point of the three-turn, not before
- Relax and balance in the open position before pulling in
- Accelerate gradually by pulling in (foot-arms)
- Work on the feeling of spinning on small circles not little loops

Back Spin

DESCRIPTION: An upright spin executed on a shallow right back outside edge.
ENTRANCE: Begin as L forward inside eight, turn R inside three; or begin back spin after forward spin (change foot spin).

Tips:

- Keep spinning, hip pressed under
- Free leg resists being open
- This spin is excellent for practicing the air position in jumps, and the exit from the spin simulates a jump landing

Master Tip:

The upright back spin or back scratch spin is important to learn as a prerequisite to learning all the other back spins such as the back camel and back sit spins. This spinning position is the same as the air position in multi-revolution jumps with the weight balanced over the skating side and free leg crossed in a tidy position in front of the ankle of the skating foot. The hips and shoulders should be square to one another with the free hip more lifted than dropped. Dropping the free side creates an unwanted lean to the outside of the circle. The skating foot should be moving backward (not forward) on circles with the weight on the ball of the foot and the toe lightly scratching the ice.

Forward Sit Spin

DESCRIPTION: A forward spin performed in a sitting position.
ENTRANCE: Standard Spin Preparation.

Tips:

- While bending the left knee, swing the right foot out and forward
- Bring the arms together just as the free leg completes its swing
- Keep the back straight and eyes forward
- The knee bend going into the spin must be continuous

Master Tip:

The standard spin preparation is used for the sit spin. Stepping into the circle from the back inside preparation edge, as well as a powerful push-off stroke into the spin will create a great rotational force for spinning. Stretch the free leg far behind on the spin entry edge. This will build up power for the swing of the free leg. When you reach the three-turn, swing the free leg in a wide arc from the back to the side of the body. The farther the arms and free leg reach out away from the vertical axis of the spin, the faster the spin will be after pulling in. When the free leg reaches the side position, it is time to start turning the free foot out and reaching it and the arms downward and forward into the spinning position. The arms and free leg resist the centrifugal force as they press downward into the spinning position. This spinning position will have a different look on each skater. The main elements to try to achieve in this position are: 1) the body should be forward with the back as straight as possible, trying to avoid hunching or rounding of the back. 2) The free leg should be in front with the toe turned out and pointed. 3) The spinning leg from the knee to the hip should be parallel to the ice. 4) The shoulders are in a level, square position with the head looking straight forward.

Camel Spin

DESCRIPTION: A spin executed in a spiral position.

ENTRANCE: Standard spin preparation, except the body leans a little further forward.

Tips:

- The weight of the body must be over the skating hip to avoid spinning on a deep inside edge
- Arch the length of the body, chin up
- Turn out the free leg, turning toe toward the ceiling
- Do not lift the free leg into spiral position too soon
- The free leg must not drop below the head during the spin

Master Tip:

The camel spin has a different entrance technique than the upright, sit or layback spins. The free leg swing is not a factor used to create rotational force in the camel spin because it remains stretched behind on the entrance edge and in the spinning position. Spin centering will not be achieved if the free leg is allowed to move out to the side as you enter the camel spin. As you enter the camel spin, step into the circle from the back inside preparation edge. Push strongly into the spin with the skating arm leading and gradually reaching back as the skate reaches the point of the three-turn. As you hook the three-turn, keep the skating arm and shoulder pressing to the left. This pressure with the skating side of the body, in the direction of the deepening entry edge, helps center the spin and change the forward momentum into rotational force. The camel spinning position is based from the ballet arabesque position. The beauty of this position is determined by the arch of the body, the stretch and turn-out of the free leg, and the extension of the arms and head.

Layback Spin

DESCRIPTION: A spin performed in a partial back bend position.

ENTRANCE: Standard spin preparation, allowing the free leg to drop behind after reaching the forward position.

Tips:

- Push hips forward
- Keep skating leg straight
- Go straight back, keeping shoulders level
- Make an arch from the head to the free foot, bending the free leg a bit

Master Tip:

A ballet attitude position spin with an upright body posture (a very effective spin in itself) is an excellent teaching tool for layback spins. The free leg attitude position used only in layback spins is an essential ingredient in the beauty of this spin and can be taught first. This position can be learned after centering an upright spin. Start with the free leg in its forward position (turned out and toe pointed). Keeping the arms and shoulders in a level position, press the skating arm strongly back in the direction of the spinning position while the free arm reaches in front of the body. This skating arm position helps stabilize the spin both for centering and speed. As the arms move into this position, turn the body away from the free leg ending with the free leg straight behind and bending into an attitude position. Remember that a good attitude position requires the free foot to be turned out (parallel to the ice) and the free knee should be a little

higher than the free foot. This attitude spin can move easily into a full lay back position by allowing the hips to move a bit forward of the skating foot as the upper body and head arch backward. Starting the layback spin position with the hips pushing forward first helps to keep the spin centered and counter-balances the upper body bending backward. After this basic layback spin is mastered many different ballet arm positions can be added.

Crossfoot Spin

DESCRIPTION: This spin is executed on two feet which are crossed. Weight must be distributed equally on the center part of both blades.

ENTRANCE: You can enter this spin from a two foot spin, from a forward upright spin into the crossfoot spin, or from a back upright spin.

Tips:

- It helps if the man has a leg and hip configuration that allow the legs to cross and spin evenly. (If you have a male skater who is unable to do the crossfoot spin for the Junior Men's Free Skating test, you might consider substituting a back layback spin).

Master Tip:

- Keep arms open until after the feet are crossed. Keep legs slightly bent and try to position feet toe-to-toe.

Flying Spins

Before teaching flying spins, it's important that all backspin positions have been taught, and that skater can maintain balance and a solid position for three revolutions.

Flying Sit Spin

DESCRIPTION: This spin departs the ice on the toe of a left forward outside edge. In the air the left leg tucks under while the right leg reaches the position of the free leg in a sit spin. The flying sit lands spinning on the left foot in a forward sit spin position.

ENTRANCE: A reverse "s" is executed by skating a strong right back inside edge and stepping forward on a forward outside edge for the takeoff.

Tips:

- Arms should be open in the air position and close at the moment of landing
- A slight skid on the takeoff gives more thrust and lift
- The free leg comes around on the takeoff
- The left leg reaches down from the tuck position to land

Master Tip:

As with all flying spins, minimizing forward motion on the jump portion is a good idea that will help center the spin upon landing. This means that the jump should go essentially up and down (vertically), not out. The flying sit, flying reverse sit spin and the death drop should have big, lifting jump take-offs that land fairly close or only slightly ahead of the take-off. The farther these spins land ahead of the point of take-off, the more likely the spin will travel. Bring the free leg around in a wide swinging action as the arms and jumping leg lift at the take-off. A strong skater can tuck the jumping leg into a sit spin air position during the one and a half revolution flight before landing in a forward sit spin, spinning on a back inside edge. Beginners can start by skating the entry as for a normal sit spin, then lift and jump as just described but only turn one-half revolution before landing in the sit spin. Holding onto both sides of an open doorway at rink side, a skater can practice the timing of the lifting until the jumping leg is straight, tucking quickly the same jumping leg into the sit spin air position, then reaching for the landing with the same jumping leg.

Flying Reverse Sit Spin

DESCRIPTION: Flying sit take-off and air position with a change of foot before landing so that it ends on the right back outer edge, in a back sit position.

ENTRANCE: A reverse "s" is executed by skating a strong right back inside edge and stepping on a forward outside edge for the takeoff.

Tips:

- The free leg comes in front on the take-off of this spin

- The reversal of feet must take place immediately after tucking the left leg under

Master Tip:

Many strong skaters find the flying reverse sit spin easier to land consistently than the flying sit spin. This is because skaters are used to landing on the opposite foot to the take-off foot, not the same foot. The same principles of entry and take-off for the flying sit spin apply to the flying reverse. The main difference is in the quick tucking of the right foot and the left leg coming in front in the air before landing on the right back outside edge in a back sit spin. This reversal of leg air positions can be practiced at an open doorway stretch and turn-out of the free leg and the extension of the arms and head.

Death Drop

DESCRIPTION: This spin takes off forward, reaches a horizontal position in the air, stomach down, landing on right back outside edge in a basic back sit spin.

ENTRANCE: A reverse "S" position with the lift off from the forward outside edge

Tips:

- The free leg reaches up into the air followed by the arms reaching forward
- The body, arms and legs reach a layout position in the air
- The raising of the left leg helps to begin the flip over into a back sit position

Master Tip:

The movements for entry and take-off for the death drop and the flying camel are very opposite. Since the flying camel lands in an open position, a wide, swinging motion on take-off along with a flat jumping arc are required to initiate a great rotational force for spinning. On the other hand, the death drop can start with an explosive jump straight up off the left take-off leg. Rotational speed for spinning is gained when the landing position closes into the sit spin position. The right free leg assists in the take-off lift by swinging wide and kicking high in front of the skater. At the end of the jumping phase and as the right free leg reaches its peak and starts down from the kick, the left leg kicks into the air straight behind as the body and left arm reach forward. The body has two positions in the air in the death drop. The first position is straight (perpendicular to the ice) and the second position is a layout position (parallel to the ice) as the right leg begins its descent to the ice for landing. When the right leg touches down for landing, the body is in a fully stretched out spiral position with the left arm checked in front of the body. A great deal more speed can be used on entering the death drop than any other spin. A skid on the entry edge can help create the explosive lift. This makes this move exciting. To eliminate confusion, it is a good idea to add the death drop to a skater's repertoire after the flying camel is mastered.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Death Drop was originally called a "David Jenkins" after the skater who first performed it.

Combination Spins

Combination spins are extremely important in both the test and competitive structure. There is no end to the combinations that can be executed. Rather than describe combination spins this manual will give a few axioms which should assist a coach in teaching these spins.

Tips:

- Change foot spins always require the arms to reach out and away from the body
- The weight should be shifted completely when the feet are changed to avoid spinning on two feet
- When changing positions the body should be open so the skater can increase speed when pulling in (camel/sit)
- In all camel spins the spinning knee should be hyper-extended
- All sit spins benefit from a straight back both in the spin and during the change of foot

Master Tip:

The basic combination spins include: 1) a forward scratch spin changing to a back scratch spin, 2) a forward sit spin to a back sit spin and 3) a forward camel spin to a back camel spin. These simple combo spins require that the skater achieve some proficiency at performing each of these spinning positions individually. When changing to the backspin, the arms should reach out away from the center axis of the first spin before resisting the centrifugal force as they pull into the back spinning positions. On the change foot camel spin, a wide step in the changeover helps to achieve a

powerful push off and fresh energy for continuing speed in the back spin. To balance in combination spins, have the skater think about rearranging the body weight around the same axis of rotation. This helps to maintain the centering of the spin when changing positions. When trying to develop variations on combination spins these variations are only limited by the skater's body flexibility (or lack of) and/or the degree of skill achieved by this skater in all the basic spin positions. As with any advanced skill in skating, the quality of the advanced skill is based on the degree of perfection achieved at the basic level.

Achieving test and short program spin requirements: The required number of revolutions on each foot must be closely monitored to achieve the correct requirement without penalty. Many skaters find it easy to complete the total required rotations when doing a change of position, but difficult to hold one position for the required number of revolutions. The faster a skater spins, the shorter the time needed to produce the required rotations. Flying spins must "fly" and demonstrate solid centered landings.

Jumps

Jumping continues to be the central focus of free skating. No matter the number of elements added or the emphasis placed on spirals, spins and step sequences, jumps are the single most impressive element of any free skating performance. This section does not include specific techniques as there are many different methods for teaching jumps. However, there is common ground that supports all good jumping techniques. This manual reviews the theory behind jumping and addresses the basics of jumping as well as identifying some of the key tools available. With these basics, you should be better prepared to adopt the specific teaching techniques that are right for you.

Jumping Theory

The biomechanics of jumping has been explored rather thoroughly in the last few years and continues to be the subject of numerous studies. All agree on a few basic premises. The height and length of a jump are proportional to the vertical and horizontal forces generated at takeoff. If the horizontal force (speed) is much greater than the vertical thrust (the energy of the arms, knee, ankle and free leg), then the jump will be very long and not very high. However, if the vertical thrust is greater than the horizontal force, the jump will be high and not very long. Proper integration of these forces at takeoff is an important element in ensuring the energy of the jump is not prematurely dissipated or inefficiently applied. For example, the lower and upper body must maintain the same vertical axis. Failure to maintain the correct vertical axis occurs when the free shoulder is ahead of the skating shoulder at takeoff, causing the jump to be over rotated at landing.

The USOC Sports Science & Technology Division conducted a 1992 study in which triple Axels were videotaped, transferred to a computer and digitized, thereby enabling creation of three dimensional representations of each jump. This study has given coaches a better understanding of the basic physics that govern jumping and rotating. It concludes that two of the most important elements in figure skating jumps are rotational speed and flight time.

To perform a multi-revolution jump, a skater exerts forces against the ice to initiate rotation. Once a skater is in the air, however, there are no significant forces to change the angular momentum, which equals the skater's moment of inertia (resistance to rotation), multiplied by his or her angular velocity (rotational speed). Therefore, skaters must generate angular momentum for triple or quadruple jumps before leaving the ice. A figure skater's moment of inertia depends on body position and is greater when the skater is in an "open" position than when in a "closed" position. The farther the limbs are from the axis of rotation, the slower the rotation.

Although a skater's angular momentum cannot be changed during flight, resistance to rotation and speed of rotation can be changed. When the body position becomes more open, speed of rotation decreases. Conversely, when the body position is more closed, speed of rotation increases. During flight, skaters increase their rotation speeds by pulling in tightly. Skaters open up the body position to decrease the rotation speed when landing jumps.

The angular momentum appears to be increased on the triple Axel by the following methods:

- Increased skid length and widths
- Decreased height of the arms and free-leg
- A quicker "step over" of the take-off leg

In analyzing the relationship between the speed of a jump and its distance and duration, the study found skaters attained similar heights and spent about the same time in the air for single, double and triple Axels. The skaters traveled farther in their single Axels than in their double Axels and the shortest distance in the triple Axel.

In summary, the following theories were reinforced:

- Rotation is governed by the principle that angular momentum (determined by both body position and rotation speed) does not change once the skater leaves the ice
- The skater must generate as much angular momentum as possible during take-off for a multi-revolution jump
- Once in the air, a skater controls speed of rotation by closing or opening the body position
- To achieve the tightest position as quickly as possible, the skaters in this study lifted their arms less and raised the knee of the free leg less in the triple Axel than in the single or double Axel

You as a coach may or may not have the opportunity to teach a triple Axel but many of the concepts will be the same in any multi-revolution jump. Watch for future studies that explore and refine the biomechanics of both jumping and spinning.

Jumping Basics

Moving from theory to basics, it is useful to view the world of jumps from different perspectives. When teaching or taking a rating exam, you may choose to categorize jumps according to the takeoff. These are sometimes referred to as families of jumps.

- Edge Jumps: bunny hop, waltz jump, Axel, Salchow, walley, and loop
- Toe Jumps: split, flip, Lutz
- Tap Jumps: toe loop and toe walley

Another way of grouping jumps is by jump axis:

- Same axis jumps (non-transition): loop, flip, Lutz
- Change of axis jumps (transition): bunny hop, waltz jump, Axel, Salchow, toe loop

The advantage of categorizing jumps in teaching is recognizing the similarities and differences in executing jumps. This can be of great value in explaining jumps to skaters and helping their bodies feel the jump.

It's important to have a progression in mind when teaching jumps. Bunny hops are often the first form of jumping introduced to a beginning skater. Most skaters are able to do this jump off either edge. The bunny hop is a good introduction to a waltz jump as the takeoff and springing action used on a bunny hop is also used on waltz jumps and later on Axels. Repeated bunny hops covering the length of the rink will help with timing of arms and free leg while strengthening the jumping leg. Half jumps are valuable in teaching the action and timing needed for single jumps. The order for teaching single jumps is usually Salchow, toe loop, loop, flip, and Lutz but there are no hard and fast rules. Small jumps such as mazurkas and falling leaves are helpful in establishing a rhythm in jumping and useful in developing footwork and jumping sequences. Before teaching an Axel, the following should be accomplished:

- Land all single jumps soundly
- Land single jump combinations with balance and strength; i.e., flip-loop, loop-loop, Lutz-loop and waltz-loop
- Execute strong backspins

When introducing an Axel, the waltz-loop combination illustrates the action of an Axel in the air. The back spin with a strong exit illustrates the air position and landing action of an Axel.

Landing positions may vary, but a skater must execute landings with hips square, an extended free leg, and a strong upper body.

It's important for a coach to teach jumps in an organized and thoughtful manner. Each jump not only relates to other jumps in specific ways, but they should be developed with a particular pattern and setup. Skaters can be taught the rhythm pattern and set-ups on half jumps, and carry this knowledge through singles, doubles and triples.

What follows is Christy Krall's method of teaching a double flip. Note that the key parts of executing the jump are:

- Phase #1: the correct pattern for entering a jump or set-up including the setting edge
- Phase #2: the take-off position

- Phase #3: the air position
- Phase #4: the desired landing position

For each phase of the jump there is a clear description of the desired movement followed by common errors and suggested solutions. When teaching or preparing for a rating exam, it is beneficial to prepare your presentation with these points in mind.

As previously indicated, timing and rhythm are important factors in teaching consistent jumps. Don Laws, a World and Olympic coach, provided the following definition of rhythm and how it relates to jumping, "Any kind of movement characterized by the regular recurrence of strong and weak elements. Variations of these elements must be determined in order to produce the preferred technique. The two swing jumps, Axel and double Salchow, most clearly demonstrate the necessity of analyzing and understanding the rhythmic process inherent in the finest of jump techniques. Focusing on the center of balance (gravity), we must recognize through multiple viewing of what we perceive to be the cause of errors. Often the most visible problems are the result of less perceptible movements. Reviewing video tapes of fine performances can be helpful."

Mr. Laws continued with the following tips for teaching jumps:

Errors that may occur:

- Leaning excessively in the airborne position
- Imbalanced ratio of height of jump to distance of jump
- Pounding of toe in toe jump takeoff
- Excessive curve of edge at takeoff
- Pelvic area placed off the line of balance
- Lack of a rhythmic process

Qualities to be achieved in jumps:

- Speed
- Height
- Distance
- Posture
- Security

Tools for Teaching Jumps

A harness is an invaluable aid in introducing Axels and double and triple jumps. This tool, properly used, helps skaters develop the timing of a jump, muscle memory in performing and landing the jump, and increased confidence. Remember, it is only a tool. If you do not have a harness installed at your rink, a hand held harness is useful. If you have not used a harness, be sure to ask another coach for assistance before putting a student on the harness.

Videotaping a student's jumps is another wonderful aid in teaching. Some rinks provide a video camera rink side. During freestyle sessions, an employee is available to tape students upon request. The student is able to perform a jump and immediately view the jump on the screen. It is also important for the coach to review jumps with the student to point out strengths and weaknesses. The Elite Training Camp at the Olympic Training Center uses a highly sophisticated form of videotaping for elite skaters to analyze their jumps. The biomechanical variables computed include free leg position, take-off angle, vertical and horizontal velocity, rotational velocity, time to attain the rotating position, and jump height. The skater, assisted by a coach, is then able to evaluate each jump on the following basis:

- Preparation or set-up
- The takeoff
- The position in the air
- The landing
- The speed at which the jump is executed

Although these sophisticated cameras are not available to all skaters, coaches can view video performances with the above checkpoints in mind.

Dartfish is a highly sophisticated program that provides a visual breakdown of a skater's jumps. First, the skater is taped as he or she performs each jump. The jumps are then stored as digital video in the computer. Because of the digital format, the jumps can be watched at any speed, even on a frame-by-frame basis and paused at any point. The software calculates the instantaneous and maximum height, time in the air, average rate of rotation, and vertical takeoff velocity for each jump. Then, if the student or coach so chooses, each of his or her jumps can be compared to an elite skater in a side-by-side, simultaneous format. The coach and student can observe the proper technique of the elite skater and directly compare how to improve the skater's execution of the jump.

Off-ice jumping is extremely helpful in teaching and perfecting jumps in a non-threatening environment. This is explained in more detail in the Strength and Conditioning chapter.

Off-ice conditioning is clearly a necessity if a skater is to achieve maximum potential in jumping and is a great protector against injury. The U.S. Figure Skating Sports Training camps stress, "Strength training is essential to improve jumps, spins, pair elements and dance lifts." The Olympic Training Center has weight training routines designed to increase strength and power without undesired muscle bulk. They observe, "It is obvious that improved lower body strength can increase your jump height, however biomechanical analysis has demonstrated that great upper body strength is needed to pull in tightly for fast spins and triple jumps. (This subject is developed further in the Sport Sciences chapter 16 under Strength Training and Conditioning of this manual.)

Impact pads protect skaters against being injured when falling repeatedly on jumps. Although skaters find these pads too cumbersome to use all the time, they are often an aid when learning a jump.

Summary

While you will employ many different techniques to help your students master increasingly difficult jumps as they progress, it is important to remember the basics. Speed, timing and rhythm are a necessity; consistent approaches and set-up are key components of success. Successful jumps rely on strong, correct execution at three critical junctures: takeoff, air position, and landing.

To conclude this free skating section, it's important to keep jumps in perspective. They may be the most exciting element in a program but not all skaters are gifted jumpers. Judges constantly encourage coaches to not overload a program with elements a skater cannot execute effectively. They continue to stress that a high, strong single jump is better than a small double jump that is cheated and barely leaves the ground. Gale Tanger, a national and international judge, describes what judges look for in winning performances, "The judges first look for a balance of well-performed elements, well-executed jumps and spins. In addition, good connecting steps between elements link together the performance. Choreography that brings the skaters ability to the composition and packages it as a whole, bring the best results and marks."

CHAPTER EIGHT

MOVES IN THE FIELD

Descriptions and diagrams of the Moves in the Field patterns can be found in the current *U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook* and the PSA *Moves in the Field* booklet. The PSA publishes a spiral bound *Moves in the Field* booklet that is handy to take out on the ice to have at rink side. After each description, there are tips and drills to work the skills needed to execute the move. There are also DVDs available from PSA that provide excellent pointers on how to break down the moves and teach the needed skills and patterns. The tips and drills include many useful suggestions. Contact the PSA office or order online at www.skatepsa.com.

Ice Time for Moves in the Field

Moves assimilate well into a number of types of sessions. They are an excellent warm-up for the first ten minutes of a free skating session and they also can be effective as a cool down at the end of a long, exhaustive free skating session. Many dance sessions can accommodate moves if skaters are courteous and watchful of the patterns. Public sessions may be utilized to work on skills involved in moves. Just as many coaches taught the turns of figures isolated from a circle, they can also teach the skills involved in the moves without using complete patterns. In fact, completing a whole pattern of stroking with turns on the ends is often a waste of time if the turns are the problem and not the stroking. It would be more time efficient to repeatedly practice the turns in the center of the ice until they are controlled and then add the stroking.

Coach's Training For Moves

- U.S. Figure Skating Judge's Seminars provide excellent insight into what judges are looking for in the various test levels
- PSA Instructional DVD for *Moves in the Field*:
    1. One or two repetitions at regular speed and in slow motion
    2. Correct teaching technique and ideal positions
    3. Prerequisite moves in order to teach the step or most difficult portion of the move
- PSA Seminars and annual International Conference
- Current U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook
- PSA *Moves in the Field* booklet—pre-preliminary to senior

The Basic Focus Points for the Moves in the Field:

- Power
- Edge Quality
- Extension
- Quickness
- Continuous Flow
- Turn Execution

Power

Power is the creation and maintenance of speed and flow without visible effort. It is developed by a continuous rise and fall of the skating knee together with the pressure of the edge of the blade against the ice. (The skater should demonstrate the ability to exert equal pressure against the surface of the ice on both the right and left foot.) End products of power are (1) velocity, speed of pace; (2) flow across the ice; and (3) acceleration.

Edge Quality

Edge quality is initiated through proper body alignment over the skating foot, creating a stable arc that travels uninterrupted until a required transition takes place. Depth of edge refers to the acuteness of the arc and is created by the lean of the body and the angle of the blade when it takes the ice. Good edge quality results in a confident, sure and controlled movement.

Extension

General carriage should be erect, characterized by an extended body line. The angle of the head follows naturally from the line of the back; the arms should be naturally extended with the shoulders down and back. The skater's hands should follow the line of the arms. The free leg should be turned out and carried in an unbroken line, the height of which would be determined by the type of movement being executed. The final extended position should be executed in a controlled manner and should achieve the maximum length of all body lines.

Quickness

Quickness refers to foot speed. It is the precise, rapid and crisp execution of turns, changes of edge and transitions. Quickness does not refer to the overall pace at which the move is skated, although in some moves the foot speed will result in a brisk and continuous cadence. Refinements to acknowledge include movement that is quiet, fluid and continuous without disturbing the proper and erect carriage of the upper body or interrupting the established rhythm.

Turn Execution

The proper skill and technique of how the turn should be performed. The correct entry and exit edges are to be adequate and maintained throughout the turn for its identification.

Continuous Flow

The skater's ability to maintain a consistent and undisturbed running edge across the ice. Flow does not necessarily relate to the speed at which the skater is traveling as it is sometimes best recognized as the skater starts to slow.

The moves in the field exercises are marked on a scale of 0 to 6 and the following are considered:

A. **Accuracy**—the correct start, steps and adherence to the general pattern;
B. **Edge Quality**—as above
C. **Turn Execution**—as above
D. **Extension**—as above
E. **Quickness**—as above
F. **Power**—as above
G. **Continuous Flow**—as above
H. **Posture/Carriage**—is the proper alignment of the hips, back, arms and shoulders and head over the skate. Unless the move requires a variation, typically, the skater's back should be straight, with the spine and head perpendicular to the surface of the ice. The arms should be extended out from the shoulders and level and relaxed. The free leg should be extended in a straight line and slightly turned out from the free hip to the free toe.
I. **Bilateral Movement**—is the ability to execute movements on both sides of the body, clockwise and counterclockwise, forward and backward.
J. **Strength**—the creation and maintenance of balance and flow developed by a continuous rise and fall of the skating knee together with the pressure of the edge of the blade against the ice. (The skater should demonstrate the ability to exert equal pressure against the ice with both the right and left foot.) End products of strength are: (1) good posture; (2) flow across the ice; and (3) consistent pace.

Please check the current U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook for the test elements, rules, marking, and requirements for passing moves in the field tests.

CHAPTER NINE

ICE DANCING

Arriving at a rink as the new dance coach presents many challenges and opportunities. It is, of course, crucial to gain the respect of the more established and experienced coaches, including those in other disciplines. Demonstrating that the fundamentals of dance can be applied across the board to moves in the field, free skating, pairs and basic skating skills can lead to many additional opportunities and improve the general level of skating in the rink.

Sparking an interest in dance and showing the skaters all that dance has to offer can be quite a job in itself. Due to the chronic shortage of boys, dance teams are a rarity at the average rink. However, having a boy interested in dance presents an avenue through which girls can see where the sport can lead. Basic dance, either as a team or as a single, can be an important addition to free skating. It teaches control of one's own body and movements, skills that no skater should be without. Non-qualifying competitions offer a variety of competitive opportunities for both single dancing and shadow dancing. The skater who can apply the fundamental techniques of ice dance to all disciplines of skating will see significant improvement across the board.

A dance coach may be asked to partner skaters, both their own and those taught by other coaches, through dance tests. It is advisable to arrange at least one practice session with these skaters before testing. The fee for these sessions should be established with both coaches and parents in advance.

Dance weekends, tea dances and other social dance sessions offer the new dance coach opportunities to meet the ice dancing community at a rink or in a local area. This is an important step in meeting those with an interest in the sport, demonstrating your own skills, and making contacts, which can build a student base.

As in all disciplines of skating, rules frequently change and new requirements are introduced. It is imperative that dance coaches attend available seminars, judge's schools, etc., to stay current.

If you are fortunate enough to be working with a dance team or teams, an important element of being a successful coach is dealing with the organizational and personal issues attendant to a team. Just remember, it is crucial to establish mutual respect between all team members, including parents and coaches.

Dance Holds/Positions

The following dance holds are used in pattern dance tests: Variations to the holds can be used in original dance, free dance and where stated in the U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook as optional.

A. **Hand-in Hand**—facing the same direction or facing in the opposite direction

B. **Closed or Waltz**—partners facing each other (one backward and one forward)

C. **Open or Foxtrot**—partners facing the same direction

D. **Kilian**—partners facing the same direction with the lady on the man's right side

E. **Reverse Kilian**—partners facing the same direction with the lady on the man's left side

F. **Outside or Tango**—partners face in opposite directions with one forward and one backward in a slight off-set position with the lady on the man's right

G. **Reverse Tango**—same as above only the lady is on the man's left

Pattern

The pattern of a dance is the design of the dance on the ice. Each compulsory dance has a diagram which includes all the information needed to execute one complete pattern of the ice. Some patterns are set and others are optional.

SET—A dance for which the location, direction and curvature of all edges to be skated are designated in the diagram. This pattern is prescribed and must be followed as closely as possible. The steps are always skated in specific places on the ice surface.

OPTIONAL—A dance for which the pattern may be altered provided that the original step sequences, positions and timing are maintained. Each repetition of the altered pattern must be executed in the same manner and maintained throughout the dance.

Dance Steps and Turns

Please refer to the current U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook for the listing and definitions of all the steps and turns.

Dance Music

The following fundamentals of music must be considered for ice dancing:

A. Beat
B. Accent
C. Measure
D. Meter
E. Tempo
F. Rhythm
G. Melody
H. Phrase

All compulsory dances have a set tempo (number of beats per minute) that must be adhered to for tests and competitions. For example, the Dutch Waltz is 138 bpm (beats per minute) whereas the Canasta Tango is 104 bpm and the Rhythm Blues is 88 bpm.

All of the compulsory dance diagrams and descriptions can be found in the U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook or in the PSA Dance Manual. The sequence of the steps, their relation to the music and their relation to the continuous, longitudinal and transverse axes are shown in the dance diagrams. The partner positions for each dance are indicated on the diagrams or on the chart of the dance steps.

The steps of the dances are numbered on the diagrams for easy reference and the edges are indicated as to outside/inside, forward/backward, and left/right. The relationship of the music to the steps of the dances is shown by the numbers placed on the diagram showing the number of beats for each step.

The PSA publishes a "Dance—Preliminary to Senior International" booklet that is available for purchase through the PSA website or by calling the office. It is a handy spiral bound booklet to take out on the ice to have at rink side. It includes the ISU compulsory dance patterns and the major elements of each dance are outlined so that the performance of the skater and the teaching of the coach are aligned with the expectations of the judge. Each page consists of the dance pattern and the topics containing the major elements that are needed to achieve the objectives. The topics covered are as follows:

- Focus
- Check
- Merits Additional Consideration
- Pros and Cons

Focus: What the skater learns from the dance

Check: Elements that should be executed well for the beauty of the dance and the development of the skater

Merits Additional Consideration: Elements found in the above average performances. Sometimes helping to gain points that were lost in "check".

Pros/Cons: Adjectives to aid judges in their assessment of the test, to quickly and accurately describe characteristics of the dance and to promote consistency

CHAPTER TEN

PAIR SKATING

While there are significant technical and artistic differences between pair skating and dance, many of the organizational and cultural issues involved in forming and developing a team are similar.

Pair Coaching

One of the first great challenges in coaching pairs is finding a compatible team. You would like to start a pair team, but you are not quite sure how to begin. The following article brings a fresh, yet knowledgeable approach to the skills and information needed to start a pair team. This article, "Starting Your Own Pair Team", will give you some ideas on how to begin a pair team and prepare your students to become pair skaters.

Starting Your Own Pair Team

By Brad Cox, printed with author's permission

Generally, a pair team has both a girl and a boy. Since there are many fewer boys than girls in our sport, finding the male member of the team is often a limiting factor. There are many boys in the U.S. who are strong free skaters but have never tried pairs. Some have no desire to do pairs, but others simply haven't been exposed to outstanding pair skating. One way to expose your young male skaters to pairs is to take them to an ice show that features pairs, and show them how many different things pair skaters get to do besides jump and spin. You could also point out that since there are few pairs compared to the number of free skaters in most competitions, pairs may offer one of the quickest ways to reach a sectional or national level of competition. If you are fortunate enough to have more than one boy to choose from, the attributes you should look for or try to develop are free skating ability, physical strength (especially upper body) and affability. If your student is going to be working with a partner every day, it is important that he have a fairly easygoing personality. If your student is under thirteen, you could start him on a program of push-ups, sit-ups and chin-ups, in part to instill the idea that a daily workout is a part of his skating routine. For teenagers, lifting weights is a must, even if you have not found the right girl yet. Pay particular attention to shoulder flexibility and strength. Important exercises include military press, bench press, squats, and roman sit-ups (back raises). Training tips are included elsewhere in this manual and a qualified trainer can help you in this area if necessary.

Let's assume that you do not have any boys available at your club, but you would like your girls to develop some of the skills they will need if a boy does become available. One thing they can do for fun is to jump or spin side by side. One of the most difficult things for young pair teams to do is to develop a sense of where the partner is and what he or she is doing. You can start this process by pairing the girls up and having them work on jumping and landing at exactly the same time and on the same edge. Sometimes compromises will have to be made on entrances so that this unison can be achieved. When entering a side-by-side spin, look at the tracings on the ice to make sure they are going in the same direction. Teach your students to spot so they know how far ahead or behind they are in the rotation relative to their partner. Another good idea is to partner up during moves in the field sessions to work on matching edges and the timing of steps. Some non-qualifying events offer similar pairs events. These events can be fun, and again, can be used to help young skaters learn about matching someone on the ice.

Let's assume that you have several girls who are enthusiastic about pairs, and a boy who is also ready to give it a try. How should you choose the right partnership? The first and most important factor is: do the two skaters get along with each other? Will they be able to practice together without fighting? If either is a prima donna, the partnership is unlikely to work and will be a constant source of irritation for you. If you have found two skaters whom you think will work well together, the next question is what is the size differential? For young skaters, i.e., pre-teen, having a size difference is not critical. They will be doing simpler lifts and it is more important that they develop unison and have fun more than anything else. For teenagers that want to be competitive in the intermediate or novice divisions, a good rule of thumb is a weight ratio of 2:3. Look for a girl with short parents. The female partner should be fearless and a background in gymnastics can be very helpful.

Now that you have found and assembled your team, you need to sit down with everyone concerned and discuss what the year's goals will be. This includes you, the skaters, and very importantly, the parents. Since they will be paying

the bills, they need to know what to expect. How many extra lessons per week will they need? What is the cost of cutting new music, choreographing a new program, and making another set of costumes? Will they be going to extra competitions so that they can skate against other pairs?

The most important thing is to establish communication between all the parties. When misunderstandings occur, it will be your responsibility to resolve them. Another issue you must address with the parents is the inherent danger of pair skating. Accidents can and do happen and you must prepare the skaters and their parents for this possibility.

Once all the logistics have been worked out, it is time to start training. As mentioned before, you should begin with stroking exercises that emphasize unison, and side by side jumps and spins. When you begin to work on lifts, do it on the floor. Any lift should be performed many times on dry land before being attempted on the ice. Whenever something new is being attempted, stay close and "spot" the lift so that you can catch the girl should anything go wrong. One hard fall from a lift can be the end of a partnership. Make sure that your skaters continue to advance in their singles skating. Pair skaters are doing more and more difficult jumps every year and becoming a pair skater is not a reason to stop free skating. In fact, more control and consistency in the jumps is required, as one missed jump can severely damage the unison and overall presentation of a pair program.

Working with a pair team can be a lot of fun. There are a wide variety of elements to work on and many possibilities for creating interesting choreography. If you need help, there are several major training centers in the U.S. that specialize in pairs. Good luck!

Pairs Elements

Pair skating is the skating of two persons in unison who perform their movements in such harmony with each other as to give the impression of genuine pairs skating as contrasted with independent single skating. Attention should be paid to the selection of an appropriate partner.

There are some competitions that include Similar Pairs—two ladies or two men. In pair skating competitions only pairs of the same composition (lady and man, two ladies, or two men) may compete against each other.

The pair skating includes:

- Short Program (novice through senior)
- Free Skate (pre-juvenile trough senior)

Short Program shall consist of prescribed technical elements (please refer to the current U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook)

Free Skating Program consists of a well-balanced program (listed in U.S. Figure Skating rulebook) and is composed and skated to music of the skaters' choice for a specified period of time. A good program contains moves of single skating executed simultaneously, either symmetrically (mirror skating) or in parallel (shadow skating), and especially typical pair skating moves such as pair spins, spirals, lifts, partner assisted jumps, etc., linked harmoniously by steps and other movements.

All elements are to be linked together by connecting steps and by other comparable free skating movements, together with a variety of positions and holds, while fully utilizing the entire ice surface. Special attention must be given to choreography, unison, expression, interpretation of the music and intricate footwork with a variety of partner positions utilizing dance holds.

Except as otherwise provided in the pairs well-balanced program rules, the number of each element may be varied, but an excessive number of any element or fewer than the minimum required of any element, as well as the lack of connecting steps and other comparable free skating movements between the various elements, must be penalized by the judges since they are against the objective of a well-balanced program.

Both partners need not always perform the same movements; they may separate from time to time, but they must give an impression of unison and harmony of composition, of program and of execution of the skating. Movements performed entirely on two feet must be kept to a minimum. Harmonious steps and connecting movements, in time to the music, should be maintained throughout the program.

Lifts

Lifts are an integral part of pair skating. They are one of the most difficult and spectacular elements. Lifts are required at all levels of testing, short programs and all well-balanced pair programs.

1. For all pair skating lifts, the partners may give each other assistance only through hand-to-hand, hand-to-arm, hand-to-body and hand-to-upper part of leg (above the knee) grips. Changes of hold or of the lady's position during the lift are permitted unless specifically stated otherwise for the pair level of the skaters. If, however, the man changes hold for less than one revolution it is not considered as a "change of hold." Change from right arm hold to left arm hold or vice versa with at least one revolution in each position is an additional feature for levels. Only if there is a significant impact in the balance of the lift, the lady's change of position will be counted as an influence of the level. A landing procedure, where the lady is not immediately landing on the ice, is not automatically considered as a difficult landing.
2. For purposes of these rules, a lift means a complete lift, including full extension of the lifting arm, if required for the type of lift concerned.
3. The lift must consist of one continuous ascending and descending rotational movement, which may be interrupted for a maximum of three and one-half revolutions of the lifting partner with extended arms.
4. Lifts must have a minimum of two revolutions of the lady and a minimum of one and maximum of three and one-half revolutions of the man. Lifts in which the lifting partner exceeds three and one-half revolutions are illegal.
5. For senior and junior pair events only, one of the required lifts with at least one continuous revolution of the man may include a carry.
6. Carry lifts: A "carry lift" consists of the simple carrying of one partner without rotation; only one-half a revolution of the man is allowed on the take-off and/or the exit. All holds in the carry lift are unrestricted. The carrying of one partner on the back, shoulders or knees is allowed. With the exception of senior and junior, the simple carrying of the partner without rotation is allowed only once and marks must be deducted if repeated. In senior and junior, the number of carry lifts is unrestricted and shall not be counted in the number of required lifts in the well-balanced program. Carry lifts shall be counted as a skating movement/ transition.
7. Small lifts: Small lifts, which may be either ascending or descending or rotational in character, in which the man does not raise his hands higher than the shoulder level, as well as movements which may include holding of the lady by the legs, are also permitted. Small lifts shall not be counted in the number of required lifts in the well-balanced program.
8. The carrying of one partner by the other on the back, shoulders or knees (while allowed in the carry lift and in the small lifts) is illegal in lifts that are not carry lifts or small lifts.
9. Pair lift group descriptions are located in the glossary of current U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook.

Twist Lifts

Twist lift is required for short program and for well-balanced free skating (intermediate and above). The number of revolutions of the lady rotating freely in the air is specified for each skating level. The lady must be caught in the air at the waist by the man prior to landing and be assisted to a smooth landing on the ice on a backward outside edge on one foot. The man also exits from the lift on one foot. In the twist lift, a split position by the lady in the air prior to rotating is not mandatory, but will be one of the features that might increase the level of difficulty of this element.

Throw Jumps

Throw jumps are partner-assisted jumps in which the lady is assissted into the air by the man on the take-off and lands without assistance from her partner on a backward outside edge. The woman's role in throws follows the guidelines of a freestyle jump. Pair coaches consistently emphasize the concept that a throw is an assisted jump and the man's role is that of assisting the lady.

Jumps

Solo jumps are required for all levels of testing, short program, and for a well-balanced free skating program. A jump combination or jump sequence is also required for a well-balanced program (except pre-juvenile). Please refer to the current rules.

- Jump combination consists of only two jumps in which the landing foot of the first jump is the takeoff foot of the second jump. A three turn on one foot between the jumps without touching the ice with the free foot keeps the element in the frame of the definition of a jump combination, although with an error. If the skater's free foot touches the ice while turning between the jumps, however, the element becomes a jump sequence. (Likewise, if the two jumps are connected with a half-revolution jump, the element is a jump sequence rather than a jump combination.) If the first jump of a two-jump combination fails to succeed and turns out as a "non-listed jump," the unit will still be considered as a jump combination.
- Jump sequence may consist of any number of jumps of any number of revolutions that may be linked by non-listed jumps immediately following each other while maintaining the jump rhythm (knee). There cannot be more than two three-turns/mohawks during the sequence. There can be no crossovers or stroking during the jump sequence.

Solo jumps, jump combinations and jump sequences: In case of unequal number of revolutions of the partners in a jump performed as a solo jump or part of a combination or a sequence, this jump will be called as a jump with lesser amount of revolutions executed by the partners. All jumps executed with more than two revolutions (double Axel and all triple and quadruple jumps) must be of different nature (different name). However the jump combination or sequence can include two same such jumps.

Spins

Synchronized solo spins and pair spins are necessary for all test programs, all short programs, and all well-balanced long programs. The minimum number of required revolutions must be counted from the entry of the spin until its exit. Spins with less than three rotations, however, are not counted as a spin; they are counted as a skating movement. The concluding upright position at the end of the spin (final wind-up) is not considered to be another position if it does not exceed three revolutions and the revolutions executed in it are not to be counted in the required number. The minimum number of revolutions required in a position is two. In case this requirement is not fulfilled, the position is not counted. If one or both skaters fall when entering a spin, a simple spin or a spinning movement is allowed immediately after the fall (for purposes of filling time) and this spin/movement shall not be counted as an extra element. The spins must have a required minimum number of revolutions.

a. Solo Spin combination

The solo spin combination may be commenced with a jump. It must have a minimum of five revolutions on each foot. The change of foot may be executed in the form of a step over or a jump and the change of foot and change of position may be made at the same time or separately. The concluding upright position at the end of the spin (if not otherwise chosen as one of the required positions) (final wind-up) is not considered to be another position if it does not exceed three revolutions and the revolutions executed in it are not to be counted in the required number of revolutions. Variations of the position of the head, arms or free leg, as well as fluctuations in speed are permitted. When the spin is commenced with a jump, no previous rotation on the ice before take-off is permitted, and a step-over must be considered by the judges in the grade of execution. The mode of exit from all spins is not prescribed.

b. Pair Spin combination

The pair combination spin must have at least one change of foot and one change of position of bothpartners. Each partner must execute at least two basic positions or their variations. The change of foot and the change of position may be made either at the same time or separately, but both partners must change feet simultaneously. The rotation must be continuous and no stop is permitted. The pair spin combination must not be commenced with a jump.

Death Spirals

One of the most beautiful elements created for pair skating! The four death spirals are: forward inside, forward outside, backward inside and backward outside. In the final position while the lady is performing the actual death spiral, both the man and the lady must execute a minimum of one revolution with the knees of the man clearly bent and in full pivot position. The lady must skate on a clean edge with her body and head close to the ice surface; however, she must not touch the ice with her head or assist herself with the free hand or any part of the body. The lady's body weight is

supported by the force of the spiraling edge and the hold of the man. The man must be in a centered position with a fully extended arm. Variations of arm holds and pivot positions (backward or forward) are possible. The change of lady's arm hold or the opposite hold of the man after/before the regular hold is counted as an additional feature. Any kind of position is counted as a feature if the skaters' hold lasts for at least one revolution; each additional revolution of the lady (full 360 degrees) after the first revolution will count as one additional feature to increase the level.

Remarks: If the man does not reach the pivot position at all (including toe pick in the ice), there will be no level called and the value of the death spiral is zero or, if the man does not stay in the pivot position (toe pick in the ice), while the lady is executing any kind of changes of positions or holds, the position of the lady does not count as a feature.

Step Sequences

All step sequences should be executed together or close together, according to the character of the music and may include small, jump-like movements with no more than one-half revolution. Short stops in accordance with the music are permitted. Credit will be given to a pair that changes places and holds or uses difficult skating moves together during a step sequence. A variety and/or complexity of turns and steps must be balanced in their distribution throughout the sequence. The workload between both partners must be even to be taken into account for a possible higher level.

Spiral Step Sequence

Consists primarily of spirals, commencing at the end of the ice surface, progressing in bold curves and ending at the opposite end of the ice surface (serpentine), or skated in a complete circle or oval utilizing the full width of the ice surface (circular), or a combination of two circles or two serpentines, or a combination of one circle and one serpentine. At least two spiral positions by each partner must be executed. The minimum hold to be counted as a spiral position is three seconds. The number of spirals, the length of hold of position (minimum of three seconds) and the edges used must be even between both partners to be considered as "balanced." If one partner executes no spiral at all, the spiral sequence will receive no level and consequently no value. A spiral sequence in which all executed spiral positions are held with less than three seconds receives no level and therefore no value. Pushes in order to gain speed are permitted at any point in the sequence, but only by one partner at a time. Connecting steps, including spread eagles and Ina Bauer (two-footed movements with one leg extended and the other bent), turns and small jumps are permitted at any point in the sequence, but only by one partner at a time. At least one of the partners must always be in a spiral position, that is, with the free leg higher than the hip level; variations of position are permitted, including holding the knee or skate blade and the position of the free leg is otherwise free. The skating separately of the partners (shadow or mirror skating) is permitted.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SYNCHRONIZED SKATING

Synchronized skating involves a team of eight or more skaters skating various elements and formations to music of the team's own choice.

Synchronization, precision of the elements, steps and movements, degree of difficulty, gliding, and the unity of the team are taken into account when marking. On the contrary to single figure skating, values such as team spirit, team discipline, team work, and reaching a team oriented goal are important in team development.

Each year in the United States thousands of skaters compete in synchronized events. In 1994, the International Skating Union developed a technical committee embarked on plans for a World Synchronized Championship that was first held in Minneapolis, MN in March 2000.

Synchronized teams have certainly arrived and have a secure place in the competitive structure of figure skating. In addition, synchronized teams are a great way to keep people skating. Many skaters stop skating when freestyle, dance and pairs become too competitive, time consuming, and expensive, and success comes less frequently. Synchronized teams allow these skaters to continue to improve, compete and build social skills.

Duties of the Coach

- Selection of team
- Selection of music and editing music with professional choreography
- Supervision of training
- Costume design
- Schedule practices
- Select all competitions
- Set a skater code of conduct
- Keeping the team focused with a positive self image
- Have team choose captains
- Set goals (short and long term)
- Find strengths of individuals and use them to strengthen the team
- Try to keep the team excited about creating a program and performing it!

Technical Terms

Element—The element is the executed formation. The degree of difficulty of the elements depends on the speed, skating direction, contents of the step sequences, holds and free skating movements (small hops or jumps, spirals, Ina Bauer, spread eagles, etc.) The degree of difficulty increases when the rotating elements travel.

Transition—The transition is the connection from one element to another in the program. It should be exercised with deep edges, kept as short as possible and be harmonious.

The Five Basic Elements

Circle

A circle is defined as an element that revolves around a common center. The circle may revolve either clockwise or counter clockwise, forward or backward. The team can either skate looking in or out of the circle. There are many variations: single, double, triple circles, one inside another or side by side, stationary, or traveling.

Line

A straight line by which the whole team moves in the same direction, either side by side or one behind the other (follow the leader). A line consists of one or two straight rows (i.e. straight line, parallel lines and all variations thereof). Many directions (diagonal, curves, retrogression, etc.) can be skated. The team can skate forward, backward or in a combination of both.

Block

A block is an element made up of three or more lines in varying shapes that move as a unit (i.e. square, triangle, and rectangle). The block can be open or closed. The basic block shape is closed and should, as much as possible, form a uniform formation. Blocks—like lines—can move vertically, horizontally, on the diagonal or as a wheel. The team can skate forward, backward or a combination of both. In a block the whole team moves in the same direction, either side-by-side or one behind the other (follow the leader).

Wheel

A wheel is an element where varied formations rotate about a pivot point. For example you can have a two-spoke wheel, three-spoke, four-spoke, five-spoke, or six-spoke. You can have parallel pinwheels, S-shaped wheels, pivot wheels, interlocking wheels (egg beaters). The wheel can rotate by skating forward or backward, clockwise or counterclockwise, stationary or traveling.

Intersection

Defined as an element whereby a part of the team intersects through the other part of the team. Intersections are possible in any formation (circle, line, block, or wheel) or in a combination of these. The intersection itself can be done simultaneously or by the individual skaters one after each other.

Holds

A. Hand Hold—handshake grip, wrist grip, or "pinkie" grip
B. Variations of Hand Holds—palm to palm or wrist to hand
C. Basket Weave / Catch Hold—crossed arms in front of body or crossed arms behind body. In the basket weave the skaters have to drop their hands to change where in the catch hold no drop of hands is necessary.
D. Waist Hold—hands are placed on the waist of the person in front of them. This is also called the choo-choo hold.
E. Shoulder Hold—this is the standard hold where one arm is behind the team member's arm and the other is in front holding on to the shoulder. This is a very stable hold.
F. Elbow Hold—this is a variation of the shoulder hold where the skaters slide out a little from the shoulder hold and hold on to the elbow. This hold increases the space between the skaters.

Program

A good synchronized skating program should be like reading a good book. Catch the judges and audience with excitement and interest at the beginning, maintain interest with highlights and finish with a strong dynamic conclusion. The program should provide a lasting memory.

Planning and Organization

Much more planning and organization must take place for a team than for a single skater. Trips and competitions must be planned down to the smallest detail. Choosing a costume is much more difficult as it must be suitable for all body types, heights, ages and sexes. It takes much more planning and coordination for a team.

Generally apart from the coach each team needs three or four people who help manage the team. One person may be in charge of fund raising in order that the team can travel together to events.

It must be decided if there is going to be a team captain or co-captains. The team captain is responsible for the team during the competitive performance and must know and understand the rules. The team captain is the liaison between the coach and the team.

Goals are an important part of planning for any sport and should be established at the onset of the season. You must consider both short and long term goals. Meetings should be scheduled on a regular basis between the coach and administration (team managers and parents). Parents need to understand their role as a parent.

The training for the team needs to be planned as to the number of practices per week on-ice and off-ice. This will depend upon the level of the team, their goals and finances.

Top Ten Mistakes Already Made

1. Keeping a piece of music that does not work because it will take too much time and effort to change it
2. Using weak skaters in a lead position. Forget it! Switch to another skater fast!
3. Keeping an element which has never worked correctly, but hoping for a "miracle" during competition
4. Over-rotating wheels or circles. Be sure the team understands that wheels and circles must be formed and finished in exact spots under all circumstances.
5. "Competition practice ice is too expensive." Always take it! Even the best of skaters can get disoriented in an unfamiliar rink!
6. "When a fall occurs get right back into your spot!" Generally true, but ***never chase a pinwheel or circle!*** Let them come to you.
7. "Get that footwork right at all costs!" Wrong! The person staring down at their feet while executing perfect footwork is more obvious than the poised skater with footwork trouble. Remember... fake it until you make it!
8. Skating half of the team at opposite ends of the ice makes it too difficult for the judges to watch for unison or appreciate the choreography. Always keep within the judges' peripheral vision.
9. Last minute changes: be careful, there are probably a couple of skaters that do not understand.
10. Is taping the top of the skates really necessary? Yes! Unexpected mishaps do happen!

Always remember to **check** *the requirements and team level classificiations with a current U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook in case of changes.*

CHAPTER TWELVE

HOCKEY SKATING

Figure skating coaches are often asked to teach hockey players, at all levels of the sport, in order to improve their skating skills. The PSA is exploring this area of coaching and has established certification for teaching power skating and hockey skating skills.

This is by no means a new field. Coaches have been teaching power and hockey skating skills to both amateurs and professionals for many years. Most hockey coaches are delighted to have a skating coach improve their players' skills and often request figure skating coaches to work with individual players and to give clinics on power skating skills.

A coach interested in teaching and working with hockey players should be familiar with the following areas:

Hockey Blades

It is important to understand the convex shape of a hockey blade and how this affects the skater's balance, posture, and blade run. A hockey player generates skating power from a slightly different position than a figure skater and is not concerned with the artistry involved in skating.

Skating Skills

Certain skills have special importance to hockey players, including forward and backward skating, stopping, turns, explosive moves, forward and backward starts, crossovers and pumps. All instructional maneuvers should be designed to produce an agile hockey player who can execute a wide range of maneuvers in a game situation. Skills such as 360 turns, pivot turns, knee drops, lateral jumps, and tracking will improve the players' agility. Complex skating skills distinguish elite players from less agile players.

Conditioning

Hockey players have intense rotations on the ice not unlike a figure skater's performance, but of course they return many times during the course of a game. Conditioning is important and interval power skating drills can be very helpful in improving a hockey player's endurance. Hockey is played under "sprint conditions" and requires very intense anaerobic fitness, as well as muscular strength, power, flexibility and agility.

The Game of Hockey

To be effective in teaching a hockey player it is important to understand the basic rules of the game and the various hockey positions. Certain skills may demand more emphasis depending on the player's position.

Hockey Drills

There are numerous drills used by hockey coaches to train the team. These drills will help a figure skating coach set up a program, and understand the general hockey skills and specific position performance needed to be a successful hockey player. Remember hockey coaches work with teams and seldom have the time, and/or expertise to work on specific skating skills with individual players. You have the unique opportunity to zero in on strengths and weaknesses, and improve these skills.

The figure skating coach working with a hockey player to improve their skating skills would be wise to ask the hockey coach about the weaknesses and strengths of the individual skater and the areas that need special emphasis. Remember, the skater is there because he or she wants to improve his or her hockey play and will listen very carefully to the figure skating coach who has conferred with the "coach."

If you are to be successful teaching hockey players, you must be prepared to skate with the student. It takes hard work and physical fitness; you cannot teach from the boards! If possible, you should attend a hockey game where your students are playing. Make notes of specific skating skills that would improve their performance. Relating skating skills to actual game performance will increase understanding and motivation.

Hockey pads are bulky and heavy. They often encumber a young skater's skills. It may be wise to encourage your hockey students to wear their equipment during your lessons to assure that you understand the limitations and can help them with achieving the desired skating strength and agility in realistic conditions.

Teaching skating skills to hockey players can be a rewarding experience and significant business opportunity for figure skating coaches. Remember that you are a skating coach, not a hockey coach.

The PSA's Hockey Accreditation Program

Mission Statement:

It is our desire to provide our members with an educational program that will teach the fundamentals of coaching hockey players to be better skaters both as individuals and in groups. We seek to translate the basic skating skills a figure skating coach already has into terminology and technique that a hockey player can learn and easily understand.

PSA Courses:

- Hockey Skating 1
- Hockey Skating 2

available in the PSA E-Learning Academy

- Hockey Skating 3
- Hockey Skating 4

offered at the annual PSA conference

These instructional courses cover ice skating technique used to develop maximum power. Exercises will be demonstrated for individual, class and team lessons to improve balance, blade usage and agility, body awareness and body mechanics for forward, backward and lateral skating utilizing edging, stopping, crossovers and turns. Safety, ethics and promotion will be an integral part of these accreditation courses.

It is necessary to find common ground between teaching hockey skills, such as drills using the stick and puck, and teaching basic skating skills in which PSA coaches are already familiar. Although some stick handling drills are taught to ensure program graduates remain as credible as possible, this is mainly a hockey skating program. The goal is to design a program that helps seasoned coaches direct their knowledge and skating theory toward a positive and productive learning experience for hockey players. Knowledge in the area of figure skating power, edges, balance, etc. requires credible translation to the hockey world.

These programs are often offered at the PSA Annual Conference. Certificates are awarded for successful completion.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CREATIVE TEACHING

Creative Teaching & Coaching

The more you coach and teach, the more you will realize how many little corrections you have to make and you may have to repeat them over and over again. In some cases it will be just as effective NOT to make a correction and just say, "Do it again." In order to be effective, you must be able to make your corrections in a way that is understood by the student, keeping them simple and interesting enough to remember.

There will be instances where you will become totally stuck as to what to say next to get a particular student to retain what you have been saying over and over again. When you get to that point, let your creativity take over and turn to picturesque teaching. Young children and adults will be most receptive—especially if the picture you create for them is really silly. They will remember it for years!

Read on for some samples of creative teaching.

The Cactus Plant that Saved a Spin

Mary, an adult student, was a little uptight about spinning, although she really wanted to learn. Every time she started to spin, she would pull her arms in tight to her body. It was an automatic response because it made her feel more secure. However, with her elbows down and her arms clenched tight around her middle, her shoulders would go up and her spin would travel. Showing Mary the correct position of her arms outstretched—holding her arms and rounding them in at the same level helped her to know exactly what to do and was easy for her to perform as long as she was standing still. But as soon as the spin started, the arms automatically clenched tight. Nothing seemed to correct it until she was told to imagine a large cactus under each arm. From that moment on, the arms stayed where they belonged. The spin was instantly centered and easy for her. The picture was vivid in her mind and to this day Mary remembers the cactus every time she spins.

Spelling a Name

An adult student, Gloria, was being taught a footwork sequence. She could not comprehend that each step should be separate and she was running the first three steps together. She was having her lesson on a public session and was not doing it to the beats of music as she would if she were putting it in a program. Over and over the reminder to separate the steps was repeated. Over and over she forgot and continued to slur the steps together. Finally she was told to relate each step to a letter of her name. The first three steps spelled "G-L-O". As she practiced, she kept repeating the letters of her name and soon had the footwork sequence down pat.

The Tree that Grew Out of an Arm

Luanne was a teenage student who was working on a flip jump. She had an arm that didn't seem to belong to her. Every time she did the jump, her right arm twisted in back of her as she turned in the air. Over and over again she worked on the correct technique of what the arms do as you jump in the air. Standing still she could follow through perfectly with her right arm but as soon as she actually skated into the jump, the arm did what it wanted. Finally she was told to imagine a large tree growing out of her right arm. As she went into the jump, she had a picture of the silly tree and it was enough to get her to remember to focus on that arm. She corrected her jump immediately and for a long time afterward, Luanne remembered the tree.

Another way to alleviate a problem with placement of arms in a single jump is to have the skater hold a mitten in the right hand and pass the mitten to the left hand in the air (for skaters who jump to the left). It also reminds them to check the landing; if they don't see the mitten in front of them when they land, they haven't checked.

Three Elephants

Do you ever get tired of telling your student to hold the landing of every jump or the exit edge of every spin? Try asking them to hold it for three elephants. By the time they say "one elephant, two elephants, three elephants" the edge has been held sufficiently. Instead of sounding like a nag telling them to hold their edge, if they have forgotten, just ask them if they left their elephants at home. You will usually get a smile as they immediately produce a good landing position.

Puddle Jump

Here's a great way to teach a moving two-foot jump for the first time. All kids instinctively know how to jump a puddle. Draw a "puddle" on the ice with a washable marker or the heel of your skate.

Ice Cream Dips

If you teach beginners to do dips, i.e. two foot glides in a squat position, you will get a lot of falls or spills. In a group lesson, ask the children if they like ice cream. Tell them to imagine that their body is the cone and their head is the ice cream dip in the cone. Now you are going to do dips across the ice and you have to keep the ice cream on the cone. Whoever falls loses their ice cream. You can also call out the flavors to perform their dips. Not too many kids want to fall any more.

Lollipop Leg

When trying to get a small child to understand how to keep their weight over the skating hip, refer to it as the lollypop leg. When they are stroking it helps them to hold the glide when you keep repeating "Skate on the lollypop leg" and as they change feet "Skate on the lollypop leg." It works like a charm and although you would think they might interpret it as being totally stiff, they don't. Don't ask why! It works on figures, too.

Icing on the Cake

If you've ever taught a snowplow stop, you know how hard it is to get the skater to skid. Relate it to scraping the icing off the cake. The ice is the cake and they must shave just the top surface. If you talk about using a finger to carefully scrape off the icing on the cake so that you don't get any cake with it, children will immediately be able to relate to it. If you press down on the finger too hard, it will bump into the cake. When they practice their snowplow stops, they will be thinking of scraping the icing off the cake and the technique of the stop will come easier.

Rolling the Quarter

An excellent visual aid for understanding the relationship between balance and speed is "Rolling the Quarter." A quarter rolled on its edge slowly will wobble and soon fall over on its flat side. In contrast, a quarter rolled with speed will remain upright and travel for some distance. It can also work for spins. A fast spinning quarter will remain upright while a slow spinning quarter will fall over almost immediately.

Summary

These are just a few ideas for you to start with. Creative coaching works miracles for the beginner. The more you coach, the more your students will teach you. When they can't seem to comprehend the technique you are using, try inventing a method they can relate to. You will be surprised how your ideas will grow.

Part III
Coaching Full Circle: The Complete Coaching Experience

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TESTING

Rules

All tests, free skating, moves in the field, pairs, and dance, require lengthy mental and physical preparation. Testing is a unique part of figure skating and requires specific strategies. A skater who knows how to prepare for a testing situation should be able to use that skill when testing in school or in many challenges he or she will meet in their lifetime. A testing situation, although filled with variables, has many constants. Those are the factors to dwell on when preparing a student for a test. To avoid generalizations each of the disciplines will be briefly explored.

Moves In the Field Testing

This innovative yet controversial program replaced school figures in the world of figure skating. The format of testing is so varied that it is difficult to evaluate and give sound guidelines. Again, it is very important to observe testing sessions at your individual rink. Consider the following things:

- Skaters should know the order in which the moves are skated
- They should be prepared to begin at either end of the ice
- They may be asked to skate simultaneously with other skaters
- They should understand the primary focus of each move
- Although there are optional steps and positions, a skater should be taught a specific number of entry steps, and definite arm and free leg positions
- The skater should clearly understand the long axis and pattern of each move

Free Skating Testing

Free skating tests have very specific requirements and, unlike in a competitive program, a great double Lutz does not make up for a spin with too few revolutions. Before taking the test, the skater's program should be tailored to meet the test requirements. Consult the U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook for the current required elements. The skater should know which elements in the program are required and the number of revolutions required on each spin. Ask your skater to recite required elements out loud. When practicing for a test, simulate the testing environment:

- Skate a short warm-up as if the judges were watching
- Rest a moment and mentally prepare for the program
- Imagine your name being announced
- Skate to the appropriate place with a strong extended position of the arm and free leg
- Perform the program
- Re-skate missed elements if necessary

Although this program is about required elements, a wise coach uses the opportunity to do much more. Encourage your skater to wear a costume that enhances the music and the program. Energy, speed and good interpretation of the music should be an integral part of a test program. This is the skater's opportunity to impress the judges with her performance without the pressure of competition. A good presentation on a test is appreciated by the judges and is a confidence booster for both the skater and the parents. Do provide your skater with numerous opportunities to skate the test program.

Test sessions are scheduled throughout the year. Contact your club rink for the days and times of the appropriate tests for your skaters.

Pair and Dance Testing

Perhaps the most important comment about pair and dance tests is that all preparation is doubled. When working with a team all simulating exercises must be practiced together. Special attention must be paid to costumes and warm up jackets. The time for warming up off ice should be clearly designated. Both pairs and dance benefit from a walk through that allows them to connect and operate on the same wavelength.

When a skater is being partnered through a dance test, be sure to provide ample practice time with the designated partner. Also, find out what the designated partner will be wearing so your skaters can coordinate their costumes. Often a simple black dress provides the best line but the theme of the dance should also be considered.

> "Expect the best. Prepare for the worst. Capitalize on what comes." *Zig Ziglar*

Strategy

Test Strategy

Training a skater to take a test is similar to teaching a pilot to fly in a simulator. You provide a similar situation and evaluate the response. Most rinks have a designated warm-up area separated from the testing area depending on the test given. If there are many possibilities explore how the skater will handle each test session.

Hockey lines, circles and dots provide a consistent frame of reference for testing. When teaching a skater to test, create a simulated training experience. Choose a likely warm up area, introduce yourself as the Judge in Charge and ask them to please proceed.

Any skater may be asked to do a re-skate. First the skater should know the causes of a re-skate. Technically a re-skate can only take place at the end of the test and occurs at the request of one or more judges. Skaters should be told not to leave the ice at the end of a test until told to do so. The Judge in Charge will come to the skater requesting a particular segment be re-skated. The skater will then be given time to practice with the guidance of the coach. This occurrence should be simulated in practice.

Be sure to practice with your skater on either ends or either side of the rink so they will be familiar with all surroundings.

Preparing Parents for Testing

Nothing matches the horror of a coach when their skater goes out of town or arrives two hours late for a test not realizing the time and energy spent in arranging judges and ice time. If the student has only been exposed to the testing format of classes this is understandable but not a very auspicious beginning.

If you are teaching beginning skaters, take the time to explain the testing system. You will also want to be clear about testing procedures such as when to arrive, what to wear, how to warm up, etc. Review the test judging system, the standards for the test, and your expectations for behavior after the test results are received, especially if the result is a retry. A little time spent on educating parents in the beginning can prevent difficult situations later.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

COMPETITIVE COACHING

A Different Lifestyle and a Unique Accountability

As a group lesson instructor, or a recreational coach of singles or groups, you have some control over the hours you teach and the extent of your commitment. Taking the responsibility of being a competitive coach involves a different lifestyle and a unique accountability. You will be expected to teach early in the morning and during club sessions that may be scheduled at dinnertime or in the evening. You will also spend hours building your own clientele by teaching group lessons and working on public sessions. A competitive coach is expected to accompany their students to most test sessions and competitions, sometimes traveling long distances at inconvenient times. Not only will you have to make sacrifices, but your skater and their parents will as well. This is where accountability comes in. You are accountable to parents because they are making a substantial financial commitment and trusting you with their greatest treasure. You are accountable to the skater because they are entrusting you with their dreams and formative years, and their self-image. You are accountable to the parents, skater, and rink, and to yourself to be the best you possibly can be.

Moving Skaters Toward Their Goals

A coach teaches skills and makes technical corrections on spins, jumps, lifts or steps but they also do much more. A coach moves a skater towards his or her goals. If the skater's goal is to qualify for Sectionals, the coach needs to address a host of issues. Has the skater met the test requirements to compete? Does the skater's program have all the required elements? Does the skater have the emotional strength and mental discipline needed to make it? How much preparation or training will be required? Do the skater's parents understand their son or daughter's goals? What his or her chance of succeeding is? Does the skater have an appropriate costume? Do they know what to do on the day of the competition—when to rest, what to eat, and when to arrive at the rink? In other words, an instructor might teach the camel spin, but the coach teaches the spin, incorporates it in a program, trains the skater to perform the spin consistently in the program, and prepares the skater on the day of competition to execute the spin along with everything else in the program.

To move a skater towards his or her goals, the coach needs to be able to communicate with the skater, the parents and the judges. You'll have to be observant of the skater's strengths and weaknesses, know how and when to correct an error, be knowledgeable about the competition and the rules, and most importantly, a coach will need courage, a winning attitude and confidence that can be conveyed to the skater. Finally, coaches need honesty, with themselves, their skaters and their parents. The following section addresses five skills and qualities: communicating, being observant, having a good attitude, caring and being honest.

1. Communicating

A good coach must be a good communicator.

> "You may have the most up-to-date, scientific, technical information available and you may know the best there is to know in coaching, but if you do not communicate that information to your athletes, then it's useless." ~ *Dick Hannula, Olympic Swim Coach*

Communicating with Skaters

- Listen
- Compliment a good performance
- Accentuate the positive, but be honest about the negative
- Use body language to emphasize a point
- Be creative with your words, but be specific
- Speak to every skater during every training session. Make each one feel special.
- Encourage feedback from skaters. Teach your skaters to come to you first with their concerns and questions.

Communicating with Parents

It is a coach's responsibility to keep parents informed of the requirements and goals of the training program for their skater. Parents must be given up-to-date information on how much rest and what kind of nutrition athletes require. Don't assume they know how important it is to drink water or how hard it would be for their skater to have a restless six hours in the car before stepping on the ice to compete. Be sure parents are aware of how much time and commitment is necessary to be successful in this highly competitive sport. Also, be sure they understand the cost of equipment, ice time and lessons.

A letter listing scheduled events, goals and general information can be very helpful in communicating with parents. Don't count on skaters to share information with their parents.

Keep parents up to date on the progress of their skater. Be sure they appreciate the difficulty of what their son or daughter is attempting. Encourage them to be supportive and not to constantly compare him or her with others.

> "A good teacher can speak the language and communicate clearly so that the student understands. An excellent teacher can speak the language of the body by showing the muscles, bones and nerves how an activity should feel if done properly. A great teacher speaks the language of the emotions by inspiring and motivating, and by rekindling the original love of the activity with which you began. The Master teacher can do all three." *~Dan Millman*

Communicating with Other Coaches and Officials

You can learn a great deal by communicating with experts in your sport. Stay well informed by attending training seminars, club functions and judges' seminars. Volunteer your skater as a demonstrator only after careful consideration of the vulnerability of the skater's self-image and the anticipated tone of the seminar.

Show respect for officials in your sport and encourage your skaters to do the same. Most officials will communicate criticism about a skater's performance to the coach rather than going directly to the skater because they recognize that the coach is best equipped to talk to the skater. Soliciting opinions directly from judges, or at least being available to receive their input, will encourage them to continue contacting you first rather than your skater.

Communicating with Schools

Competitive skating demands a huge time commitment and often infringes on school time. As a result, it is important that a coach maintain a good relationship with the skater's school.

Send achievement certificates from tests, competitions or camps to the school principal so they can be included in the student's file. Invite faculty members to attend exhibitions, tests, local competitions and shows. They will most likely be impressed with the skater's dedication and discipline.

You may be asked by a parent to write a letter asking that your skater be released from physical education or an elective class. (Sample letter on next page)

Communicating with the Media

Many times newspapers are unresponsive until skating becomes national news. Try to establish good relationships with interested local media to insure fair coverage of all skating events. Keep a file of media contacts and notify them when there is a competition or show, or when the club has awarded a scholarship.

2. Being Observant

"Observant" is defined in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary as "paying careful attention, being keenly watchful." That definition certainly describes how an alert coach trains skaters.

Keep a watchful eye and help students avoid bad habits. A good coach has to notice gradations of error and tune in to what the skater is feeling. For example, a coach sometimes needs to encourage overcompensation. When a skater has been doing a move wrong, doing it right feels wrong, and as a result, their corrections are insufficient, and their attempts remain centered around old habits. After working both sides too much and too little the skater will know where the middle ground is. Encouraging your skater to be observant of her own body will help in this correction process and help her replace mechanic repetition with concentration.

Your return address

August 29, 2014

Counselor
West Evergreen High School
6500 Quander Road
Evergreen, CO

Dear Counselor,

The purpose of this letter is to support Diane Lyn's request for a waiver of the full day schedule requirements. Diane is a competitive figure skater who trains under my supervision. I train 12 competitive skaters, I am Senior Rated by the Professional Skaters Association, and have skaters competing at Sectional and Regional levels.

Diane skates in the Senior division, the highest level of competitive skating, where she can potentially compete in both national and international competitions. Her competitive cycle will begin this fall with the Southwestern Championships, where she was a finalist last year as a representative of the Evergreen Figure Skating Club. She is a serious competitive skater with outstanding talent and skill. Diane is a United States Figure Skating double Gold Medalist in Figures and Freestyle, and has passed the Senior Level Moves in the Field Test. She is the Senior Ladies Champion of the Evergreen Figure Skating Club. She successfully competed in Junior Olympics as an Intermediate.

Diane is completely committed and has a real opportunity to reach ranked status. Her schedule is rigorous and demanding. She spends 6 hours per day during the summer in both on and off-ice training. This includes weight training, ballet, jazz and special classes on nutrition and health. She will continue to require 3-4 hours of training during the fall as the competitive events leading to Nationals begin in October. Despite this intense schedule, Diane is taking three Gifted and Talented classes and has maintained Honor Roll status. She is an exceptional young woman.

I strongly recommend that Diane be granted a partial-day schedule to enable her to continue to pursue the admirable goals she has set. They will contribute to her growth academically and socially as well as give her a chance to fulfill her dreams as a scholar athlete. Please call me if you need further information or detail.

Sincerely,

Janet Doe
Professional Skating Coach

Observing an error doesn't always bring a solution, but until you observe the error there can be no solution. Observe from afar. View skaters' programs from the top of the bleachers and take notes on their strengths and weaknesses.

"Most problems precisely defined are already partially solved." ~ Harry Lorayne

3. Attitude

Skating is a subjective sport and not always fair but neither is life. Teach yourself and your skaters to approach skating with an attitude that works. Many times we forget to capitalize on what comes. We often brood about the defeats and do not accept the gifts that are occasionally part of victory. In discussing a winning mental attitude, Dan Millman in *The Inner Athlete* states:

> "We all began life as movement masters, our minds free of meaning, naturally blissful in our pristine "ignorance" until associations and preconceptions begin to inhibit the body and the learning process. Babies, for example, when learning how to stand, just stand up and fall down, stand up and fall down. They don't judge their performance or compare themselves to anyone else. "Oh darn! I'm such a klutz! I'll bet the baby across the street is doing this a lot better!"

He continues with four obstructions that plague most athletes:

- Limited self-concept
- Fear of failure
- Destructive self-criticism
- Lack of one-pointed attention

Consider how these might apply to you or your skater.

Some other maxims to remember:

- The specific is not the general
- Avoid personalizing everything
- Monitor your critical thinking and keep your sense of humor
- If one of your skaters isn't working hard, don't generalize and complain that none of your skaters work hard
- If a skater performs one element in a program badly, instead of telling him his whole program was a mess, point out the significance of the error and the positive aspects of the program
- Try not to consider a judge's inappropriately low placement of your skater as a personal affront
- Be sure the motivating and inspiring aspects of your coaching persona keep up with the critical aspect

Attitude and awareness are closely linked. Without awareness, you won't know what you need to do or how you need to change, so it's critical that you have awareness. At the same time, with awareness, the distance that you have yet to go comes into clear view and with that appreciation comes frustration. As a result, one sure sign of growing awareness is you feel as if you are getting worse. It is important to understand and account for this internal resistance to awareness so that you can avoid the discouragement and frustration that has caused some athletes and coaches to quit a sport just when they are beginning to become proficient because they imagine that they are getting worse.

4. Caring

Caring can be tedious when parents ask you about everything from the color of the competitor's costume to the time of arrival at a competition. A competitor's list can be helpful, especially for entry level competitors and, surprisingly, for seasoned competitors. Here is a sample of a check list for competitors:

> "Be a good finder. Look for the gold in others." ~ *Zig Ziglar*

5. Honesty and Integrity

It is tough to be successful and honest in a highly competitive world. However, consider the responsibility you take on when you're coaching a skater. If a skater can't trust you, whom can he trust? A skater trusts you to make his goals your goals and not to act in self-interest. He trusts you to stand up for him in a political situation and he entrusts you with his dreams. Parents trust you to be honest with them about their child's future and to bill them fairly. The rink and your fellow coaches rely on you to report a commission fairly and to follow ethical guidelines. There is no right way to do the wrong thing. You might think the end justifies the means, but the skating world is small.

Furthermore, as coaches, we set the standards for our skaters. When we cut down other coaches we encourage our skaters to cut down their competitors, and when we lack respect for officials our skaters in turn will lack respect. Appreciate the impact you have on the skaters you teach. How much of their life is devoted to skating is probably an estimate of how large an impact you have on them.

Preparing Your Skater for Their First Competition

So it has come time to enter the world of competition with your students! The following are a few key things to help you in preparing yourself, your skater, and their parents for this new venture in which you are about to partake.

Coaches Responsibilities:

- Make sure your skaters' test records and membership to U.S. Figure Skating or ISI are current

- Selection of music and the correct time for that level. (CD's are preferred by most rinks and digital uploading is required for qualifying U.S. Figure Skating events. Additionally, skaters must include the album titles, and the cuts used for their programs when registering for qualifying competitions.)
- Choreography for all programs
- Approve competition attire. Suggest you have a dress rehearsal.
- Instruction of criteria to prepare for event
- Making sure that the correct requirements are in the skaters programs. (If you are not sure of a maneuver or capability of performing a maneuver at a certain level do not be afraid to ask your skating director or higher level coach.)
- Making sure correct level is on competition form
- Competition form has all required signatures, including the club officer or skating director if required
- Forms are mailed on time
- Positive feedback on performance
- Parent is informed of correct day/time of event
- Parent is informed of what time to arrive prior to the event
- Check the rink for revised schedules
- Check in procedures
- Directions to arena
- Make sure your skater is checked in with ice monitor at proper time before event
- Check for any "scratches" or changes in the skating order
- Make your skater aware of the entrance and exit door, and verify the correct side for compulsory events. (Remember some compulsories are skated on a full sheet)
- Verify the length of the warm-up, and go through on-ice warm up procedures
- Double check the order of the compulsories
- Inform your skater of what to do if they fall, forget their program, the music stops, etc.
- Proper billing of services

Parents' Responsibilities:

- Check Equipment—Skates sharpened no less than one week before competition, new or cleaned laces, hooks, and polished boots
- Paperwork and fees
- Sleep and dietary habits
- Adequate practice time for event
- Proper attire approved by coach
- Coaching support
- Transportation to event
- Coaching fees for event
- Making sure skater is present for all practices and lessons before event
- Skater is equipped with what is required by coach for competition: warm-up sweater, gloves, clean laces, polished skates, etc.
- Parents are responsible for making any school cancellations etc.
- Do NOT take competition information over the phone. Most arena employees are not familiar with figure skating terminology and often give out the wrong information.

Skaters Responsibilities:

- Be on time for all practices and lessons
- Use practice time constructively
- Remember you are skating against yourself, not other skaters

- Strive to better your last performance. Conduct yourself in a respectful manner at competition.
- Thank coaches
- Clean and polish your boots
- Wash your laces. If you're using a new pair, give yourself at least two practices for them to break-in.
- Get a good night sleep the night before competition.
- Eat sensibly
- Eat three to four hours before your event
- Avoid hard to digest food (raw vegetables, beef or bran), rich foods (buttery sauces, or desserts) and salty foods
- Drink lots of water as usual (This is imperative for good endurance!)
- Stretch at your hotel room on the day of your event. Plan to stretch again briefly just before your warm-up.
- Plan to arrive at your event 45 minutes before you are to skate. If you are in the second warm-up, arrive 15 minutes before the event begins, if you are in the third warm-up, arrive just before the event begins.
- Remember your smile!

Competition Reminders

- Make sure forms are completed and returned to coach by required date
- Several weeks before competition try on costume and check for comfort
- Buy new tights and laces
- Check skates for sharpening
- Check for copies of CD; notify coach if more are needed
- One week prior: make sure costume is clean, clean and replace laces, polish boots

Make sure your skating bag has the following:

- Two or more copies of the CD
- Extra laces, correct size
- Skate polish
- Skate guards
- Warm-up sweater
- Gloves (no holes)
- Extra tights
- Tennis shoes for warm-up
- Mat to stretch on and/or jump rope
- Your costume and back up dress (just in case)
- Any make-up you require
- Any hair needs (brush, barrettes, scrunchies, ponytail holders, etc.)
- Your "emergency bag" (spare screws, screwdriver, Band-Aids, aspirin, needle and thread for repairs, safety pins, etc.)
- Your event schedule and directions to event
- Remember; if event requires air travel pack your skates, costume, music and essential items as a carry-on if possible. In most instances, they will require you to check your skates with your luggage.

The Day of Competition

- Hair is done neatly and securely off the face before arriving
- Arrive one hour before your first event. Non-qualifying U.S. Figure Skating and ISI competitions are under no obligation to run on time. Events do run early.
- Check in at registration and turn in CD

- Never leave your skates unattended
- Check in with your coach
- Say goodbye to parents and entourage
- Visualize where you will start and end your program, and where your elements will go for compulsories
- Check in with door monitor (make sure you know if they are on time). Do not go too far away after checking in.

Positive Coaching Alliance

The "Double Goal" Coach/ Positive Coaching Alliance

A Mental Model

Mental models have power. They affect how people see, think and behave. If one were to characterize the current mental model for coaching, it might be called "win at all costs."

Positive Coaching Alliance has developed the "Double-Goal" Coach Mental Model and will promote it until itbecomes the industry standard for youth sports.

The Double-Goal Coach

A win-at-all-cost coach has only one goal: to win. He or she is concerned primarily with teaching skills and developing strategy designed to win games. A Positive Coach is a "Double-Goal Coach" who also wants to win, but has a second goal: to help players develop positive character traits, so they can be successful in life. Winning is important, but the second goal, helping players learn "life lessons," is more important. A Double-Goal Coach puts players first.

Double-Goal Coach Mental Model

The "job description" of a Double-Goal Coach includes three major elements:

1. Redefining "winner"
2. Filling players' emotional tanks
3. Honoring the game

Redefining "Winner"

A Double-Goal Coach helps players redefine what it means to be a winner through mastery, rather than a scoreboard orientation. He sees victory as a by-product of the pursuit of excellence. He focuses on effort rather than outcome and on learning rather than comparison to others. He recognizes that mistakes are an inevitable part of learning, and fosters an environment in which players don't fear making mistakes. He sets standards of continuous improvement for himself and his players, and encourages his players, whatever their level of ability, to strive to become the best players, and people, they can be. He teaches players that a winner is someone who makes maximum effort, continues to learn and improve, and doesn't let mistakes (or fear of mistakes) stop him or her.

Filling Players' Emotional Tank

A Double-Goal Coach is a positive motivator who refuses to motivate through fear, intimidation or shame. He recognizes that every player has an "Emotional Tank," like the gas tank of a car. Just as a car with an empty gas tank can't go very far, players with an empty emotional tank don't have the energy to do their best.

A Double-Goal Coach understands that compliments, praise and positive recognition fill emotional tanks. He understands the importance of giving truthful and specific feedback. When correction is necessary, a Double-Goal Coach communicates criticism to players in ways that don't undermine their sense of self worth. A Double-Goal Coach strives to achieve a 5:1 "Plus/Minus Ratio" of praise to correction, recognizing that this allows players to better hear criticisms.

A Double-Goal Coach establishes order and maintains discipline in a positive manner. He listens to players and involves them in decisions that affect the team. He works to remain positive even when things aren't going well. He recognizes when things aren't going well. He recognizes that it is often when things go wrong that a coach can have

the most lasting impact and teach the most important lessons. Even in adversity, he refuses to demean himself, his players, or the environment.

Honoring the Game

A Double-Goal Coach feels an obligation to his sport. He understands that honoring the Game means getting to the ROOTT of the matter, where ROOTT stands for respect for:

- Rules
- Opponents
- Officials
- Teammates, and
- Tradition of the game

A Double-Goal Coach loves his sport and upholds the spirit, as well as the letter, of its rules. He respects opponents, recognizing that a worthy opponent will push his athletes to do their best. He understands the important role that officials play and shows them respect, even when he disagrees with their calls. He encourages players to make a commitment to each other, and to encourage one another on and off the field. A Double-Goal Coach demonstrates integrity and would rather lose than win by dishonoring the game.

For more information on the Positive Coaching Alliance, see their web site at: www.positivecoach.org.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SPORT SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

Sports Medicine

Acquiring some basic understanding of this subject is of great importance in teaching at all levels of skating so that the coach can either deal directly with an immediate problem such as an injury from a fall or have the knowledge to refer the problem to a professional in the field. This may be a physiotherapist, a weight trainer, a doctor specializing in sports medicine, or other qualified individual such as a stretch specialist with an understanding of the workings of the body under varying degrees of stress. It also equips the coach to be aware of the symptoms of overtraining and overuse, and to use teaching methods that can prevent this from happening. Integrating a plan of off-ice training into the skater's general program is a necessity for the conscientious coach. Ankle and calf problems are becoming more frequent. High heels contribute to lack of calf muscle flexibility and stiff boots are a major cause of ankle instability. Too many repetitions of the same element in practice can lead to stress syndromes from overuse in any part of the body.

Overuse and Overtraining

Flexibility must be maintained on a daily basis. The Anderson System identifies specific exercises for the sport in question and the appropriate ones to be done before and after each session.

For competitors, the training and conditioning schedule should be varied according to the time and the season to maintain the proper degree of flexibility, strength, and endurance. The occasional day off is not only acceptable, but even advisable. Skating in pain should not be tolerated and such a condition should be treated aggressively with physiotherapy. For routine training portable strengthening equipment may be practical. To avoid competitive glut, the achievement demand must be planned so that the skater doesn't try to stay at peak. Making up an itemized sheet for mental and physical goals is useful for many skaters.

At the end of the season, it is wise to evaluate the preceding season and assess the flexibility of the important muscle groups—groins, abductors, hip flexors, quads, hamstrings, and calves. In relation to the ankle stabilizers, the possibility of sprains or shin splints from heavy boots should also be assessed. Boots may also be responsible for tendonitis and stress fractures. Knees are subject to problems from jump forces and overuse as well as inflexibility. Laybacks and triple toe jumps can cause stress fractures in the back. A strength-training program should be devised on the basis of these evaluations. For immature, growing athletes the strength-training program must be monitored by a knowl edgeable individual. Finding one may not be easy.

After the season, (winter) a new program can be implemented. It can be both interesting and varied and adjusted for injuries by cross training (biking, pool, lap pool). At the end of the summer, the program should again be re-evaluated.

Flexibility

Flexibility is a measure of a joint's ability to move through a normal range of motion. The Olympic Training Center provides elite skaters with an examination, which measures the range of motion of neck, shoulders, hips, quadriceps, hamstrings, knees, ankles and feet. Few skaters have the opportunity to be evaluated by the Olympic Training Center. Private evaluations are available, but are often expensive.

The Center for Health and Fitness in Granbury, Texas found that flexibility or stretching exercises are seldom assessed, yet are vital components of a complete program for conditioning and performance enhancement. A true assessment of flexibility requires several tests. With this in mind, The Center has developed a series of simple flexibility assessment tests for evaluating range of motion and suggestions for developing individual flexibility programs without sacrificing valuable practice time. In establishing the testing system they chose areas of the body most likely to need stretching:

- The muscles on the back of the leg in order to prevent soreness, vulnerability to sports injuries, Achilles tendon injuries, and back pain
- The lower back muscles in order to prevent back soreness and pain

- The muscles on the inside thigh in order to prevent back, leg, and foot strain
- The muscles on the front of the hip joint in order to prevent lordosis and backache
- The muscles on the front of the chest and shoulders in order to prevent rounded shoulders and limited range of movement in the shoulder joint

You can assess your skater's flexibility in less than 10 minutes with five simple tests. Then you or your trainer can begin a flexibility program for your skater based on the results.

General Guidelines: Warm up before testing. Hold the final position for each test for at least two seconds. Allow two trials for each test, and use the average of both scores.

The five tests are as follows:

1. Modified sit and reach
2. Side-lying hip abduction
3. Total body rotation
4. Back hyperextension
5. Shoulder rotation

Modified Sit and Reach Test:

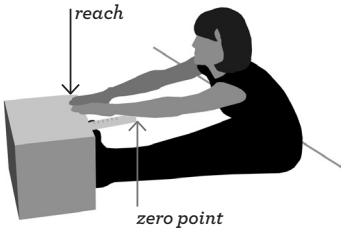
To determine hamstring and low back flexibility: Remove shoes. Sit on the floor with hips, back and head against the wall, knees straight, and feet flat against the sit-and-reach box. (A yard stick properly placed may be used if a box is not available).

With hands together and head and back against the wall, reach forward. The reach indicator is set touching the tips of the fingers. This is the zero point.

Letting the head and back come off the wall, reach forward as far as possible. Record the final reach in inches. Most skaters will be familiar with this test as it is on the Presidential Fitness Test given in all public schools.

Set the yardstick between the skaters' legs with the zero mark of the yardstick nearest the body. Place the yardstick at the point where the skater can reach without leaving the wall.





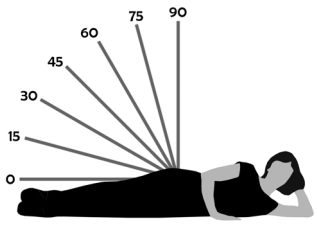
Side-lying Hip Abduction Test

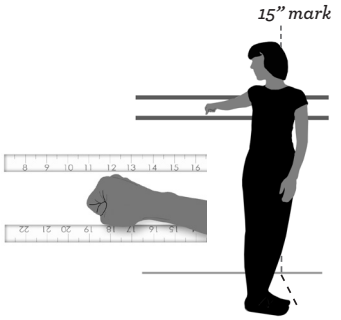
To determine hip abduct length: Begin lying on side with head, back, hips and heel of the top leg against the wall. Raise the top leg up as far as possible keeping the heel against the wall and the toes pointed forward. Record the hip maximum abduction angle achieved in degrees.

Total Body Rotation Test

To determine ankle, hip, trunk, and shoulder mobility: Attach two measuring tapes to the wall at shoulder height. The top tape measures flexibility from left to right and the bottom tape measures from right to left. The 15-inch marks on the tape are above one another. Mark a line on the floor at the 15-inch mark. Remove shoes. Stand at arm's length from the wall with feet straight and toes up to the mark on the floor. Abduct arm opposite the wall and make a fist.

Rotate the trunk backward, reach back with an extended arm with the little finger forward. Do not move the feet. Record the farthest point in inches reached by the little finger side of the fist.

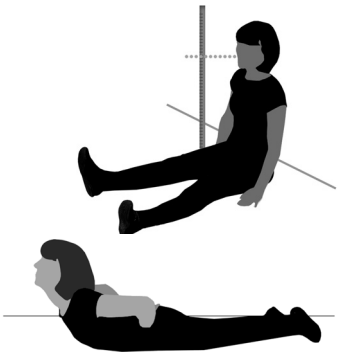




Back Hyperextension Test

To determine low back and hip extension: Sit with hips, back and head against the wall. Record the distance between the floor and the tip of the nose in inches.

Lie face down with legs held stable by equipment or by an assistant. Place hands on the small of the back. Raise trunk upward as high as possible. Record the distance from the floor to the tip of the nose in inches. The score is determined by subtracting the second measurement from the first.



Shoulder Rotation Test

To determine shoulder, chest and upper back mobility: Measure the distance between the lateral aspects of the acromion processes (the outer most aspect from shoulder to shoulder across the front of the body). Record in inches. *(Measurement 1)*

Begin with the measuring device behind the back with palms forward and right hand on zero. *(Figure 1)* With elbows locked, bring the measuring device over the head until it reaches forehead level. *(Figure 2)* Repeat, moving left grip inward until the shoulders cannot be rotated with excessive strain or bending the elbows. Record the position of the left little finger in inches on the last successful trial. *(Measurement 2)* The score is determined by subtracting the first measurement from the second measurement.

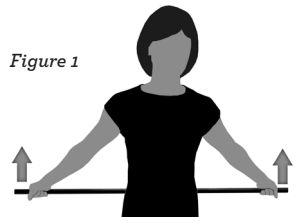


Figure 1

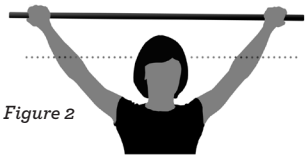


Figure 2

Stretching Routines

While research has indicated that several types of stretching are effective in improving flexibility, static stretching is recommended. It poses the least potential for injury, does not require the assistance of an experienced practitioner and can be done independently.

The Granbury Study indicates that some athletes may need no more than two or three stretching exercises, while others may need five or more. Each exercise should be performed to the point of moderate stretching without causing pain. Each stretch should be held 30 seconds to allow elongation of connective tissue. Each stretch is performed three times to meet the guidelines that each muscle group should be stretched three to five times for maximum benefit.

Plyometrics

Plyometrics are drills or exercises designed to assist the skater in performing with greater power and explosiveness. In the majority of cases, the athlete with the greatest power will achieve the most success. Power is a combination of strength and speed. Resistance training is designed to increase strength while plyometrics training is designed to improve the speed component. The most effective way to increase power is with a program that combines resistance training and plyometrics training. Leg plyometrics are important for developing the explosive power critical to being successful in multiple rotation jumps.

Example of Types of Leg Plyometrics Exercises

Low Intensity

- Skipping—start with four sets 12 repetitions
- Double leg squat hop on to box—four sets 12 repetitions
- Knee tuck jumps—four sets 12 repetitions
- Stride jumps (box or bench)—four sets 12 repetitions (Variation: include turn with each jump)
- Sprint stairs—two steps at a time, at least 15 steps

Moderate Intensity

- Squat jumps—three sets of 10 repetitions
- One legged hops—three sets of 10 repetitions
- Repeat long jumps—three sets of 10 repetitions
- Scissors jumps—three sets of 10

High Intensity

- Hopping over boxes three sets of eight repetitions
- Lateral jumps half turn over rope or cone—three sets of eight repetitions
- Depth jumps—three set of eight repetitions

Low intensity exercises are good warm-up exercises for running, lifting or skating. Many jumping activities can be used; be imaginative and inventive. You can use stairs, boxes, benches, ledges or platforms, as long as they are sturdy and stable. Do not do jumping exercises on excessively hard surfaces; however, you do need a firm surface for rebounds. Wear good fitting athletic shoes when performing plyometrics.

Don Laws co-authored an article published in the National Strength and Conditioning Journal that suggests utilizing depth jumps from various box heights can simulate landing and take-off for combination jumps. "Depth jumps from boxes allow skaters to experience a landing and takeoff from a height higher than they may encounter on ice. Not only is this an appropriate time to practice exploding out of the first landing position with the legs but also to use the arms to help accelerate into the rotation."

There are many books and articles available about plyometrics training. Dr. Donald Chu, one of the foremost authorities on this type of training, has published a book, numerous articles, and videos on the subject.

Ideally, every committed skater should have a personal trainer to increase strength, flexibility and explosiveness. Even if the ideal were possible, the figure skating coach should be knowledgeable about off-ice training methods that are most effective in preparing their students for the sport of figure skating.

Strength Training

Some of the advantages that a strength-training program provides the skater include the following:

- Reduced injury potential
- Increased strength and power
- Increased flexibility
- Muscular endurance
- Increased lean body mass
- Improved speed/quickness
- Increased confidence

There are many exercises that can be used in designing a strength training program.
The following criteria will be helpful in choosing exercises for your particular program:

1. Will the exercise strengthen muscles needed for improved performance?
2. Will the exercise strengthen a joint susceptible to injury?

Volume and intensity of exercises may be adjusted either to increase endurance or strength. If the training goal is to increase endurance, then the athlete completes a high volume of work at low intensity. If the goal is to increase muscular strength, then the volume of work is lower. Rest periods can be used as another variable. If the training goal is to increase muscular endurance, the rest periods are reduced; if the goal is to increase strength or power, longer rest periods are used.

The frequency of training is determined by the desired goals and adjusted according to the competitive season.

Exercises for Figure Skaters

The following exercises are recommended at the Junior Elite Figure Skating Camps*

BODY PART	EXERCISE	SPECIFIC MUSCLE
Triceps	Tricep Pushdowns	Tricep
	Tricep Extensions	Tricep
	Dips	Tricep, Deltoids
	Dumbbell Tricep Press	Tricep
Abdominal	Crunches	Upper Abdominal
Trunk Flexion	Hanging Leg Raise	Abdominal, Hip Flexors
	Bent Knee Sit-ups	Upper Abdominal
	Twisting Sit-ups	Abdominal, Oblique
	Barbell Twist	Abdominal, Oblique
	Russian Twist	Abdominal, Oblique
	Pelvic Tilt	Lower Abdominal
	Weighted Bent Knee Sit-ups	Abdominal, Hip Flexors

**Adapted from 1995 U.S. Figure Skating/USOC Junior Elite Figure Skating Camp*

Biomechanics

Some understanding of biomechanics is necessary in working with skaters both for the prevention of injuries and for the adaptation of techniques to different body structures. The understanding of some of the basic biomechanical concepts is a very valuable teaching tool.

A great deal of the research in this field has been done on jumping, and although the work was done with elite skaters, the principles involved apply at every level. Strength, speed and skill are most important in jumping. The height of the jump determines airtime and the velocity of leaving the ice determines the height itself. Two types of contractions are involved: eccentric, in which the muscles lengthen under tension and concentric, in which the muscles shorten. The eccentric is stronger by two or three times. Strength training trains neuromuscular contractions. This neuromuscular training trains at the speed of the exercise and is not necessarily transferable to other speeds.

Plyometrics training is useful-box jumping, pattern jumping on the floor—it prepares the potential to jump. Muscles are capable of supporting three to four times the body weight and the approach speed of a jump should be the maximum the muscles can support in transition. Better jumpers for any type of jump have shorter take-off times and an efficient arm swing may make a 5% to 20% contribution to the jump. (The motion of the arm swing must be arrested at the horizontal position).

In jump landing, the biomechanical goal is to minimize the forces of impact, which can range from two to 15 times the body weight and last on the order of milliseconds. Research indicates that the ankle plays a large role in the absorption of impact forces. Athletes tend to be "toe landers" or "mid-foot landers", with the toe landers producing forces ⅔ as large as those of mid-foot landers. Decreasing ankle mobility forces the athlete into a mid-foot landing.

The energy storage in the muscle is strongest at 1.2 times its resting length. A takeoff preloading reflex causes the muscles to contract. Proper mechanics, rather than "proper technique" are important in developing a good jump, which can lead to a compromise in skating between mechanics and aesthetics.

If a skater's hamstrings are weak, it is difficult to arrest the leg swing (the same would be true for arresting arm swings if there is weakness in the arms). In toe jumps, if the tap is off center, the boot absorbs the energy instead of transferring it to the muscles. In the hip-knee-ankle system, the ankle stores the most energy in a backward jump, the knee in a forward jump. A toe landing diminishes the shear forces; a mid-foot landing is faster and exerts more force, the speed of the landing determining the force. A stiff boot forces a mid-foot landing which can lead to stress fractures from micro-damage, with the highest frequency of damage in the knee because the ankle cannot absorb the stress in the boot, transferring it to the knee.

Sports Psychology

In working with skaters, on and off-ice training satisfy the physical requirements, but other factors that must be taken into consideration are the skater's relationships with coaches and parents, the relationships between coaches and parents, and in the case of elite athletes, the relationships of coaches, parents, and skaters with the media. It is important that the coach or team of coaches prepare the skater carefully for meetings with the media to avoid panic and stage fright that may occur with the unprepared skater.

It is useful for skaters to be encouraged to keep logs of what they say to themselves (self-talk) and also to allow only a fixed amount of worry time. Mind sets such as "I always fall" and "I'll never get it" must be refocused. The proper focus can also be established by the question "What is the purpose of practice today?" When dealing with performance, the attitude to be encouraged is "trust your training." Key words and phrases such as "go for it" and "nice and easy" or "stop" for getting off track are very useful.

In planning for the new fall season ask the following questions:

- Are you willing to move forward?
- Are you willing to be a little different?
- And in some cases, are you willing to continue to work on the present program and at the present level? (Caution: perfectionists cannot move forward).

At the national level there should be interaction between coaches and psychologists. At lower levels coaches themselves should apply these principles:

- Assess the stress level at which the skater performs best and know which attitudes are likely to cause problems rather than worrying generally
- Draw the skater's programs with three to four elements to a sheet, mark the elements with key words and label the judges' side for orientation
- Study the skater's breathing habits, writing in breathing spots, mark rest moves, and emphasize exhaling to remove stale air
- To help the skater to adapt to rink size, use cones to simulate smaller rinks
- Develop good training attitudes by discouraging hanging on the boards and standing around on the ice and chatting

Emphasize the need to be aware of other skaters' music and programs, and which skaters are in lesson, since they have the right of way. Emphasize that this should be done for reasons of both safety and courtesy. Discourage interference with skaters on lessons and giving opinions on their training techniques.

Nutrition

Nutrition is an extremely important part of training that is frequently overlooked. Hospitals and doctors provide many pamphlets that are informative for both parents and students. Several periodicals focus on nutrition for athletes. The PSA, U.S. Figure Skating and ISI also provide guidelines in this area.

With so much emphasis on maintaining an "ideal" training weight in sports like skating and gymnastics and also in dance or modeling, many eating problems arise, generally affecting female skaters more than males. Many of these problems are the result of the attempt to maintain a low body weight during the bone-building years, and low nutrient intake, which is generally responsible for poor metabolism and is a very serious concern at this time. In females, the onset of menstruation can cause an increase in body fat with the attendant weight gain and eating disorders appear. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia are both eating disorders, but disordered eating—involving irregular mealtimes or eating on the run (common among coaches) is not clinical. Anorexia only affects one percent of the general population while bulimia, one to three percent.

The main warning signs for anorexia are: dramatic loss in weight, a preoccupation with food, calories and weight, wearing baggy or layered clothing; relentless excessive exercise, mood swings and avoiding food related social activities. In bulimia, the signs to look for are a noticeable weight loss or gain, excessive concern about weight, bathroom visits after meals, depressive moods, strict dieting followed by eating binges, and increasing criticism of one's body.

Overweight is the opposite side of the coin in weight problems among skaters, although these are not usually classified as clinical. For these skaters, where there appears to be a constant need for food, grazing can be effective in weight control management.

A sensible diet would consist of 65% carbohydrates, 10% protein, and 25% fat in the form of cereals, breads, grains, fruits and vegetables, dairy and meat groups, avoiding the simple carbohydrates (sugars). Sugars incidentally are not a good energy source because after the burst of energy there is a serious drop in the body's energy level. High quality carbohydrates such as potatoes, pasta, chestnuts etc. provide timed release energy. The timing of meals must be related to this type of energy release— i.e. the skater should not train immediately after a meal.

Eating disorders and weight problems in athletes relate to cultural, psychological, and physiological factors. "You can't be too rich or too thin," perfectionism, competitiveness, internal and external pressures to succeed, inappropriate coaching or parental behavior and in females, the onset of menstruation as mentioned earlier may contribute.

You will discover a great deal about your student's eating practices by asking them to write down what they eat for a week. You will be surprised at what they (and their parents!) think is healthy. Remember, parents provide the majority of nutritional information to your students. Be prepared to change some entrenched ideas.

It is never too early to start a comprehensive nutritional plan, and it should be considered an integral part of your training program. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to develop a champion without establishing healthy eating habits.

Off-Ice Training

Off-ice training has become increasingly important in the last few years. The Olympic Training Center has provided a number of guidelines for training figure skaters that can be adapted to grass roots programs. This section will offer a few suggestions and sources to assist a coach in establishing such a program.

The many aspects and advantages of off-ice training should make it an essential part of every coaching program. Currently in many rinks, because of the competition for space, it is difficult to find a place to do this but if necessary, even a quiet corner in the main lobby will serve. There is usually some space where a small piece of equipment, a portable ballet bar or a video system can be set up. This type of work clarifies moves and positions for the skater, reinforces program and dance choreography, and is essential in working out and preparing lifts for pairs and dance. By focusing entirely on the body, it removes the distraction of having to control blades at the same time, and is invaluable in teaching and practicing group and precision programs. Either videos of the skaters themselves or training videos provide the necessary visual feedback (on-ice videos with their instant replay serve the same purpose in a slightly different way).

There are very inexpensive teaching aids that can be found with a little imagination and creativity and the skaters can be involved in the process of finding such items. A length of 2x4 wood does very well for teaching balance and the supermarket will provide cans of varying sizes to act as weights. Skipping is an excellent exercise for developing coordination. For a modest outlay, floor mats, spinners and slide boards are available. Most skaters have rollerblades these days and they also contribute to training and conditioning: they're very good for developing side pushes, endurance and crossover technique.

Free Skating Training

Determining the landing foot is one of the first things that should be done with a beginning skater, because it also determines the dominant rotation direction in spins. Have the skater walk, stop and turn and see which side the turn goes to.

Another method is to have the skater jump in place and land on one foot. Whichever foot is selected is most likely the strongest foot, which in turn determines the landing leg. If the skater is not stable enough to execute this exercise on ice, it can successfully be done off ice. Repeat each exercise several times to determine consistency. If the skater has learned the ambidexterity taught in ballet, these methods might not work too well, however this ability should also be encouraged on the ice. ISI for example, requires jumps to both sides in the high freestyle tests.

Rotation positions can be taught using one of the Spinner designs; those that do not travel have the advantage of really teaching centering on spins. On the ice, traveling will compensate for lack of balance. Two of these devices can also be used for teaching clean back-to-front and front-to-back transitions as done in figures, dance and freestyle, and in teaching the close body positions necessary for multiple rotation jumps. Singly or in pairs, they can be used for teaching spirals, forward and back strike-offs changes of feet, turns in figures, and turns in the field. Three can be used

with the middle one on a box, having the skater jump on in rotation and then landing to teach slow-fast-slow spins as they occur in higher rotation jumps and the landings from these jumps.

Pair Skating

In pair skating, the largest weight differential between partners is desirable. Training starts on the mat with no skates then mat training proceeds with skates, and finally it is done on ice. Weight training is essential to pair skating with very young skaters using only their own body weight. The lady must have strong positions and can practice the basic arched split position of the overhead lifts on the mat. For the man, the feet must be separated by the width of the hips and the four-step Mohawk turn can also be practiced on the mat. On the ice, he must stay on the flat of the blades and avoid catching an edge.

The first lift is the press lift. The lady places her hands on her hipbones and offers resistance in order to come close to the man. This lift is done off two feet. In lasso lifts, the lady rotates a half-turn on the rise and everything is overhead. The man initiates the turn by twisting the lady and may not rotate more than three turns. His wrists turn in for support; he brings her to his chest out of the lift, and then bends his knees to set her down lightly. To save a collapsed lift, the man supports the lady on the back and then lets her down. The coach can "spot" lifts very much as in gymnastics. Young pair skaters must first learn to skate well mastering jumps and free skating. The lifts will come with strength. Weight training and lifting should not be started too young. In a poor partner match, project two years ahead for possibilities. The coach must concentrate on basics and not go into lifts.

In throw jumps, the lady initiates the rhythm of the jump and the man picks it up. In waltz position, the hips must be under. The person going forward tracks to the inside of the person going backward. In cross tracking, on the push, the forward stroke starts to the inside, and crosses to the outside.

Ice Dancing

Off-ice work in ice dance involves proper stretching just as it does in free skating and pairs. Again, ballet training is useful for extension and carriage, and ballroom dance contributes to the understanding of partner position, dance rhythm and presentation.

Compulsory dances can be walked out on the floor and counted to music. This can be done at home as well as in a studio, perhaps better than in the rink lobby. Visualization is a great help in becoming familiar with the dance. In all cases, the physical act of counting out loud is what really sets the rhythm and also the pattern in the skater's mind. Dance turns can be practiced off ice using a spinner, although since the emphasis here is on continuity in a strict rhythm, care must be taken to avoid making the turns an end in themselves.

The off-ice work on lifts done in pairs can also be applied to ice dance being careful to observe the rules for the man's hand and arm positions. In both pairs and dance, the woman can do strengthening arm and back exercises on the floor, and weight training is equally important in both disciplines. The general guidelines for the appropriate type of weight training with regard to the age of the skaters are the same, as are the considerations in a poor partner match.

Other Training

In all off-ice work, the value of working at home should not be short-changed. Practice in front of a mirror, using cans as weights and kitchen counters as stretch bars are all valuable.

A certain amount of formal training in both ballet and jazz, and for ice dancers, ballroom dance, can contribute tremendously to the performance of the skater. Dance classes are also never run without a complete series of warm-up exercises. This develops a positive attitude toward their value in skaters. Mirrors have very limited usefulness on the ice but in the dance studio they are indispensable. In working with mirrors, the dancers develop a feeling for line and position which can be achieved otherwise only with great difficulty. Reflections in the Plexiglas have their uses. Ballet training teaches the dancer carriage, extension, port-de-bras and balance, and incidentally, turned out feet, which are not always an advantage on the ice.

Ballet alone also can make for very stilted looking skaters. Jazz, in which work is done largely with parallel feet, relates much more closely to skating and also uses much freer body movement The jazz warm-up, with complete sets of isolations, floor work with increasingly more challenging stretch combinations, and jazz walk combinations of increasing complexity are all done to music. Then simply choreographed sequences built in segments are done to music, at first slowly and then at speed.

For quickness of feet, quick response to music and much drill in various musical time signatures, tap is also valuable. Modern dance is not as commonly associated with the training of skaters, but is also useful in the same way as the other disciplines. In school situations it is also more likely to be a part of the gymnastics curriculum. Ballroom dance, with its emphasis on partner work, is more generally oriented toward the ice dancer, but in all its forms, dance is very useful in teaching rhythm, coordination, a sense of bodyline, presentation, and musical interpretation.

An off-ice program should include the following:

- Strength training
- Flexibility
- Plyometrics
- Dance training
- Off-ice jumps
- Nutrition

Organizing Your Program

A ten minute general warm-up is suggested, such as cycling, jumping rope, or jogging. The goal is to increase the body temperature slightly. The body will be better equipped to work efficiently after this brief warm-up. The next warm-up period should be more specific including the muscle group to be used. For example, perform selected exercises at a lower intensity or with lower weights. The actual workout should be specifically tailored to individual skaters, dependent on level and age. A certified strength trainer is a valuable source for developing and implementing a strength-training program. Flexibility training should take place after a workout. Static stretching is recommended, allowing a minimum of 10 seconds per stretch, with 30 to 60 seconds preferable. Increasing flexibility reduces the potential for injury while improving the opportunity for optimal performance.

Fundamentals of a Resistance or Strength Training Program

Resistance training should be performed two to five times per week. Aerobic workouts can be completed before or after the resistance training or resistance training can be alternated with aerobic training on a daily basis. Care must be taken to increase repetitions over a period of time. Initially the repetitions should be fairly easy to complete. With time, both repetitions and weight should be increased. Emphasis should always be placed on good form and correct breathing. General and specific warm-ups are important. Emphasize excellent technique during each repetition of every set. Use moderate speed of movement; do not bounce or jerk. Use a full range of motion, so that strength is gained throughout the full range of the joint being exercised. Try to exhale as you lift the weight and inhale as you lower the weight. "Blow the weight up." Rest periods are important. Keep accurate records of each workout.

Dance Training

Dance training generally proves quite valuable in developing skaters and assisting in choreography. Ballet and jazz teachers are available in most locations, although you should scrutinize their credentials and be sure they know your skaters are training for figure skating and not interested in participating in dance recitals, etc. Cross training can be valuable, but should not interfere with a focus on figure skating. Dance training can be provided for all of your skaters as a group, either at the rink if facilities are available, or at a dance studio. Training at the rink can be much less demanding of your skater's time, even if the facility is not perfect. With the support of your rink, you can improve the off-ice training rooms which are available. For example, a ballet bar can be constructed with large dowels and wall brackets at a fraction of the cost of a professional ballet bar. Inexpensive mirrors can be wired so they are portable and can be moved from wall to wall.

Both jazz and ballet are helpful in developing body awareness, balance, presentation, and increased muscular control. With the decrease of emphasis placed on figures, skaters have more time available to develop body control and improve visual presentation through dance. Setting up such a program can be individualized to the skater.

Off-ice Jumping

Off-ice jumping can be an extraordinarily useful tool in understanding your skater's strengths and weaknesses in jumping, and focusing training on those specific areas. Many elite coaches such as Frank Carroll recommend working with skaters on off-ice jumps. This training can be conducted anywhere; at the rink, outside, at your home, wherever you can find adequate space and ceiling height.

A good jumping surface is needed and mirrors are extremely helpful. It is difficult to work off-ice jumps on the cement floor found in many rinks. Rubber mats provide some cushion, but are often not very clean. Firm tumbling mats are a good surface for jumping. Interlocking mats in various sizes are available at hardware stores and provide an excellent cushioned jumping surface. They can be matched together in different colors to provide clues to the skaters on length of jump, direction of free leg, etc.

Teaching a jump off-ice allows you to work in a non-threatening environment with fewer variables such as speed, fear, etc. A number of devices are available such as the spinner, jump tender, and jump harnesses to assist in working with skater's off-ice. Using a trampoline under correct supervision can be an excellent method of teaching rotation, air position, and landing form. Jump ropes and medicine balls also provide excellent training and can significantly improve vertical jump. Using a box (like those used in plyometrics training) can be very helpful on Axel takeoffs. Whatever method is used, jumping off-ice is an important tool.

There are numerous methods to measure your student's progress in jumping including various commercial tools or simply tape on the wall. However, measurement is important if students are to become motivated to improve vertical jump. Remember, the Olympic Training Center found a few years ago that among the athletes training at their center, figure skaters were out jumped by everyone but the table tennis players.

Fitness Assessment Percentile Ranks for Males and Females

Percentile Rank	Modified Sit and Reach [1]		Total Body Rotation [1]				Shoulder Rotation [1]		Trunk Extension [2]		Hip Abduction [3]	
			Left		Right							
Ages up to 18	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
99	20.8	22.6	29.1	29.3	28.2	29.6	2.2	2.6	0	0	90	90
95	19.6	19.5	26.6	26.8	25.5	27.6	15.2	8.0	2	2		
90	18.2	18.7	25.0	25.5	24.3	25.8	18.5	10.7	3	3	75	75
80	17.8	17.8	22.0	23.8	22.7	23.7	20.7	14.5	4	4		
70	16.0	16.5	20.9	21.8	21.3	22.0	23.0	16.1	5	5	60	60
60	15.2	16.0	19.9	20.5	19.8	20.8	24.2	19.2	6	6		
50	14.5	15.2	18.6	19.5	19.0	19.5	25.4	21.0	7	7	45	45
40	14.0	14.5	17.0	18.5	17.3	18.3	26.3	22.2	8	8		
30	13.4	13.7	14.9	17.1	15.1	16.3	28.2	23.2	9	9	30	30
20	11.8	12.6	13.8	16.0	12.9	14.5	30.0	25.0	10	10		
10	9.5	11.4	10.8	12.8	10.8	12.4	33.5	27.2	10+	10+	15	15
5	8.4	9.4	8.5	11.1	8.1	10.2	34.7	28.0				
1	7.2	6.5	3.4	8.9	6.6	8.9	40.8	32.5				
Percentile Rank	Modified Sit and Reach [1]		Total Body Rotation [1]				Shoulder Rotation [1]		Trunk Extension [2]		Hip Abduction [3]	
			Left		Right							

Ages 19 to 35	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
99	20.1	21.0	28.0	28.6	27.8	29.4	-1.0	-2.4	0	0	90	90
95	18.9	19.3	24.8	24.8	25.6	25.3	10.4	6.2	2	2		
90	17.2	17.9	23.6	23.0	24.1	23.0	15.5	9.7	3	3	75	75
80	17.0	16.7	22.0	21.5	22.3	20.8	18.4	14.5	4	4		
70	15.8	16.2	20.3	20.5	20.7	19.3	20.5	17.2	5	5	60	60
60	15.0	15.8	19.3	19.3	19.0	18.0	22.9	18.7	6	6		
50	14.4	14.8	18.0	18.0	17.2	17.3	24.4	20.0	7	7	45	45
40	13.5	14.5	16.8	17.2	16.3	16.0	25.7	21.4	8	8		
30	13.0	13.7	15.0	15.7	15.0	15.2	27.3	24.0	9	9	30	30
20	11.6	12.6	13.3	15.2	13.3	14.0	30.1	25.9	10	10		
10	9.2	10.1	10.5	13.6	11.3	11.1	31.8	29.1	10+	10+	15	15
5	7.9	8.1	8.9	7.3	8.3	8.8	33.5	31.3				
1	7.0	2.6	1.7	5.3	2.9	3.2	42.6	37.1				

(1) Source: *Lifetime Physical Fitness and Wellness, A Personalized Approach (4th Edition)*, by Werner W.K. Hoeger and Sharon A. Hoeger (Englewwod, Co:Morton Publishing Co., 1994). Reprinted with permission.

(2) *Extrapolated from Practical Measurements for Evaluation in Physical Education (4th Edition)*, by Barry L. Johnson and Jack K. Nelson (Edina, MN: Burgess Publishing Co., 1986) and based on scores of 100 men and 100 women at Corpus Christi State University in 1997.

(3) Extrapolated from the average hip abduction of 45 degrees in healthy individuals. Further normative data are being collected.

It must be noted that the scores and norms in the above chart are not sport specific

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

EDUCATION

Education Is Important

Teaching Techniques

As is apparent in all sections of this manual, a coach must be a psychologist, public relations expert, surrogate parent, communicator, fashion consultant and incidentally, a trained professional. This involves much more than knowing how to teach a turn or a jump. Coaching also demands lots of stamina, a tolerance for cold, acceptance of sometimes long and inconvenient hours, and a great deal of discretion and tact, combined with a healthy attitude toward discipline, and the ability to maintain the proper distance and discipline to avoid becoming a "buddy" rather than a coach.

For most coaches the bulk of the teaching load consists of beginners, the lower skill levels and usually group lessons with pupils in a wide range of ages. Teaching at this level is the most difficult because it carries the responsibility of laying a good basic foundation, making the experience enjoyable, and creating the proper attitude toward the various forms of the sport. Group lessons are a very necessary part of coaching and provide excellent experience in how to present material to different age levels. They are also the pool out of which private pupils come.

Guidelines to Follow

For beginning coaches there is a great temptation to justify exchanging information for money by attempting to include a resume of the training background in the lesson material and often by demonstrating personally the particular element being taught: i.e. don't teach an Axel by demonstrating ten of them, don't talk too much, don't talk down.

The most commonly occurring problems when teaching groups will become apparent in working with large numbers of skaters. Weight transfer, for example, is very difficult to teach, especially since many of the skaters will be in poor quality skates or broken down rentals.

Learn to recognize the difference between a lack of ability and poor equipment. Understand how to make tactful suggestions to the student and parent to correct the situation. Not every beginner is going to be a champion, and good quality rental skates may be sufficient to make the experience enjoyable, but it should be pointed out to the parents (or adult skaters) that if money is to be spent on lessons, the skates must be adequate to make it worthwhile. Discourage the top of the line syndrome, and emphasize that the equipment must be compatible with the age of the skater for reasons of both strength and growth.

There is a great deal to be learned from teaching skaters who are not so skilled, and selecting only the most promising pupils to take private lessons is not necessarily the most rewarding or the most enriching course of action.

With young children, learning skating skills can be made easier by counting aloud or reciting simple rhymes that can be repeated with the skill or element. Teaching tots is valuable because it presents a completely different perspective. Learn to use various approaches for conveying the material to different age groups—a "training vocabulary" will develop with experience. At any level, some fun material should be interspersed occasionally with the required work to avoid stagnation and boredom. Know when to move on, even if a move is still shaky and conversely, don't push too far ahead of the skater's ability so that a challenge becomes a defeat. Be creative in getting concepts across, and be open to new ideas and approaches. Encouraging skaters to express their conception of skills can often lead to a better way of teaching them.

In the matter of weight problems, it is important to be supportive and also to try to work with the parents who ultimately have the most control over the skater's eating habits. Getting involved in special skater programs and judging them is time well spent. It gives a coach a much broader perspective and sometimes is a surprising learning experience.

In the continuing evolution of the sport, team teaching is becoming the norm, mainly at the higher levels, but it is wise to reassess one's own teaching periodically and recognize that doing it all may not be in the best interests of the skater. Becoming familiar with other coaches' teaching vocabulary is essential for successful team teaching. In a sense, group lessons are a form of team teaching and provide a quick way of learning to work with different modes of expression, and to recognize and accept different techniques and approaches. In general, when working with skaters

who have had training from other coaches, tact as well as open-mindedness is essential to being able to work with these skaters so that changes in method are acceptable to them (Never say "That's wrong; what are you doing?").

In fact, questions like: "Why are you doing that; Why can't you decide on one of the methods I've shown you?" and most other "why" questions are seldom a substitute for a good explanation.

Skaters should be encouraged to work toward their own goals instead of comparing their accomplishments favorably (conceit) or unfavorably (unproductive) to others. A difficulty that often comes up with regard to comparisons comes from the parent who asks, "Why hasn't Susie been taught an Axel yet? Mary does one and:

a) She hasn't been skating as long" or

b) They've always been in the same class", etc.

This kind of approach requires extreme tact and a hard shell on the part of the coach. One can only hope that talking to such parents calmly and sensibly will be effective. Another problem that comes up frequently is what might be called private lesson snobbery. Sometimes group lessons are more appropriate and the feedback is invaluable.

Don't underestimate the value of floor work or going back to something as basic as a two-foot glide to isolate a movement and correct it, or set it in the skater's mind. These are methods that are useful at all levels. Visualization is an important tool and can sometimes be taught effectively by relating a maneuver to another activity.

Since teaching almost never takes place in an empty rink, it pays to make even beginning skaters aware of dance patterns and jump approaches, and also to get them to recognize program and dance music, even if minimally, and to try to see who is having a lesson so they know who has the right of way. Courtesy and politeness, of course, should also be a part of the training.

With beginning skaters it is important to determine the direction of rotation as soon as possible.

At the lower levels for teaching spirals, spin entries and posture, phrases like "arch your back" should be avoided. This can lead to the gymnastic dismount position, which is then very difficult to correct. Ice dance and moves in the field can both be used successfully to develop spatial concepts and dexterity in footwork. It also pays to be aware of different modes of perception. Some skaters need "road maps" to utilize the ice properly and keep them from making a habit of using a postage stamp-sized space.

There is a great deal of floor work that can be done at home, like walking out dances or programs to music. Using kitchen counters for stretching, or working in front of a mirror; skaters very often need no encouragement to do this, sometimes to the dismay of their parents, but remember that parents are an integral part of the training program, and this is a good way of involving them in it.

Continuing Education

Continuing education should remain on your priority list for the duration of your coaching career. Seminars, conferences, workshops and everyday association with your fellow professional coaches will add to your growth as a teacher and coach. No matter how many years you coach, there will always be new things to learn. Your own teaching methods will be an accumulation of what you have learned from your own training as an amateur skater, what you will learn from your associates in the professional world, and what you will learn every day from your own unique students. A good coach is the result of years of experience. The process is never ending. You will always be learning to coach.

Continuing Education = Growth = Success

PSA Educational Programs and Events

One element of continuing education is building a comprehensive professional library. There are many excellent books, studies and other documents, several of which are referenced throughout this manual and at the end. It is important to have current editions of the U.S. Figure Skating, ISU, and ISI rulebooks/handbooks as appropriate. Many excellent DVDs are available and a great deal of current skating information can now be found online on the internet. You should ensure that you subscribe to the key magazines and periodicals, particularly those from the PSA, U.S. Figure Skating, and ISI.

PSA Mission Statement: Dedicated to providing continuing education and accreditation to ice skating professionals in a safe and ethical environment.

One of the truly exceptional benefits of the PSA is the delivery of educational events each year. PSA has the following performance goals:

- Upgrade the quality, speed and coverage of information from its source to coaches and skaters, particularly the elite and emerging talents
- Ensure access to high-level training including sports medicine, psychology, nutrition, biomechanics, exercise physiology, weight training, and related sciences
- Mentoring and apprenticeship experience with master-rated coaches available to all aspiring coaches and skaters
- Recognition and reward for exemplary performance and outstanding achievement

In support of these goals PSA has identified over a dozen avenues to continue your professional education:

Membership—PSA Membership provides the tools and resources to become a progressive professional dedicated to excellence in coaching.

PS Magazine—A full color, bi-monthly publication, PS Magazine focuses on coaching issues. From training techniques, to sport science and medicine, to rule changes, PS strives to keep coaches informed on the latest (and greatest!) trends in the skating industry. Look to PS for seminar and conference information, rating sites, competition dates, and skating events.

Seminars & Clinics—The PSA offers seminars and clinics throughout the United States. These one-day and half-day events feature on and off-ice presentations on topics ranging from singles, pairs, dance, group, choreography, sport science and medicine, ratings preparation, moves in the field, alternatives to figures, and off-ice training. A keynote coach, a sport scientist and a technical specialist are invited guests to speak at the seminar along with other guests.

International Conference—A multi-day event typically held the week preceeding Memorial Day, the International Conference offers presentations on all disciplines, sport science and medicine, motivation, goal setting, rule changes, etc. Keynote presenters, as well as featured guest speakers highlight this extraordinary educational experience. It also offers professional coaches the opportunity to meet other professionals from not only the U.S., but around the world.

PSA Coaches Manual—This is the manual that you have here, which can be expanded by adding articles, notes and information accumulated throughout a coach's career. Topics covered in the manual include selecting your specialty, preparation for the job, the first day, creative teaching, scheduling, business practices, recommending skates, building your music library, ethics, technique and sport science. This manual is an excellent source for new coaches.

Accelerated Coaching Alliance—As defined in the dictionary, an apprentice is "one who is learning by practical experience under skilled workers in a trade, art or calling." The Accelerated Coaching Alliance offers all PSA members the opportunity to work under a Master rated coach and gain a wealth of knowledge. Master rated coaches are involved in the Accelerated Coaching Alliance giving generously of their time and expertise to the betterment of new coaches. Apprenticeships are offered in all disciplines. Guidelines, applications and appren tice agreements are available through the PSA Office or on their website www.skatepsa.com. A certificate is awarded at the conclusion of the program and eight educational credits can be gained.

Ratings Prep—A program developed by the PSA, Ratings Prep is designed specifically to prepare coaches for rating exams. Ratings Prep covers all disciplines and levels of ratings. Ratings are available in all disciplines and range from the registered to master level. As ratings are an important facet of the Association, more and more coaches feel the need to become rated. Many do not know what to expect as they enter a room and are presented to a panel of three master-rated professionals. This program reduces the anxiety which often accompanies the unknown.

Audio Visual Aids—From the Moves in the Field DVD to various audio CDs from past and present PSA International Conferences, these aids are available for professionals to continue their education. The Moves in the Field DVD provides clarification of the field moves and defines the teaching techniques involved with these tests. A two volume set, tape one features levels Pre-Preliminary through Juvenile; tape two features levels Intermediate through Senior.

Ice utilization and class concepts are also covered. A third supplemental DVD covers the new and changed moves as of 2009.

E-learning Series Courses—Online courses are becoming more and more popular. The PSA has a number of courses that are available online. A pre-requisite course is EL100–The Vocabulary of Figure Skating. This course must be completed before taking other courses in the E-learning Series.

Webinars—PSA produces online webinars for coaches and judges to receive valuable education without the need to travel to a site. Webinars offer the chance to ask questions of the speakers during the live broadcast, and the ability to re-watch the webinar at a later date. Webinars are generally up to 60 minutes in length.

Live Stream Events—Live stream events are available online and consist of a live event, often with multiple speakers and both on- and off-ice sessions. Live stream events are generally several hours to a full day of education. Live stream events are offered for replay for a limited amount of time after the event.

Endorsed Events—An endorsed event is held by an individual or group that adheres to the PSA policies in regards to speakers and agenda, and has had the agenda approved by the PSA Senior Director of Education and Accreditation ahead of the seminar. As part of the agreement, PSA assists in marketing of the event.

The Coach's Guide to Sport Science & Medicine—The study guide for all levels of the Sport Science & Medicine exams, this guide is a must-have for coaches of athletes at all levels. Subjects covered include:

- Safety
- Physical and mental conditioning
- Injury prevention and return to play
- Biomechanics
- Nutrition
- Disordered eating
- Travel health and safety
- Growth and development
- Phases of learning

Rankings—The PSA Ranking System is becoming recognized world-wide. The criteria to qualify for this program is directed toward the career accomplishments of PSA coaches based on the performance of their skaters at various levels of competition. In this program, the career coaching record of a PSA member is established only through the accomplishments of a skater under his or her direction. A coach can receive a ranking from a Level I to a Level X with X being the highest.

Ratings—One of the benefits of the PSA is its Rating System which confers qualifications on its members. Ratings are offered in all disciplines—Figures, Free Skating, Pairs, Dance, Free Dance, Group Instruction, Moves in the Field, Program Director, Synchronized Team, and Choreography. Ratings consist of two components—a sport science written exam and an oral rating exam in a discipline at registered, certified, senior and master levels. The Basic Accreditation (BA) written exam, introduced in 1996, is a prerequisite to all rating exams. The exam consists of multiple-choice questions pertaining to teaching techniques, equipment, ethics, skating, organizations, safety, nutrition, psychology, first aid, test and competition procedures. The objective of the BA exam is threefold: 1) introduces coaches to the official PSA Rating System; 2) familiarizes coaches with types of questions that may be asked during an oral exam; and 3) provides a certificate of introductory rating to all coaches.

An oral exam is given by a panel of three master rated coaches. An application requiring background and teaching experience is submitted to the PSA office. For some exams a written presentation of group programs or a videotape with a sample of choreographic works is required. During the oral exam, questions on background, theory, technique, and ethics are asked. The examinee is encouraged to give short, concise answers and may stand up to demonstrate moves if they wish. Ratings are for any skating professional coach who wants to validate their skating skill and teaching experience. They are assurance to clubs, rinks and the general public that the professional coach they hire is technically qualified to instruct at the level they are rated regardless of their background and achievement in skating.

Obtaining a rating will increase the growth of a coach. It adds credibility to a professional coach's resume and is recognized by management, peers and students around the world. A rating also signifies that a coach has taken the time and effort to validate their teaching credentials. Upon passing an oral exam, a Rating Pin is presented to the

newly rated professional. After the Basic Accreditation (BA) written rating exam is attained, coaches must obtain a total of 28 educational credits every three years in order to maintain an active rating.

In addition to the PSA Rating System, it is a very good idea to ask yourself on a regular, periodic basis if you are doing all you can to enhance your professional status. Pick out your own set of standards to measure professional growth and evaluate yourself in a disciplined manner. Identify those areas, technical, administrative or others where you need to focus your continuing education. Then take action—keep learning!

Going Back

Take some time now to go back over your own skating. Teach yourself how to skate, beginning with the most basic concepts. Go over everything from basic stroking on up. Think hard about what you are doing and how you are doing it. What technique are you using? Try other techniques. Evaluate yourself and your methods. The more you coach, the more you learn about your own skating. After having taught for a while, you should be much more aware of what your body is doing as you perform basic elements. Some techniques you may never have noticed or thought about during your own training, but now you must be conscious of everything!

Rate Yourself as a Professional Coach

Are you the best that you can be? Rate yourself in the following areas. As the year goes on, see how much you can improve in the areas you have marked low. Rate yourself at the end of the season. Keep your chart and look back at it after several years of experience. It should be helpful and interesting.

	Mark from 0 to 10
Patient	
Dependable	
Responsible	
Prompt	
Conscientious	
Organized	
Pleasant	
Working on self-improvement	
Cultivating my own students	
Inspiring	
Cooperative	
Neat in appearance	
Friendly	
Mature in judgment	

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