

Defining who is an Amateur Skater

The last thing a parent thinks of when enrolling their child in group skating classes is what they must do to protect them against losing their amateur status that confers the ability to compete in World and Olympic Figure Skating Competitions.

The United State Figure Skating Association (USFS) has an established process to sanction ice shows, exhibitions, carnivals, and competitions. Every hosting USFS club posts the sanction for the duration of the event.

There are strict rules that have been formalized to protect the skater, but this does not allow someone to plead ignorance of the rules after a violation has occurred.

The difference between being an amateur or a professional skater has changed over the years. The distinction is very important since it will drastically affect a skater's ability to compete.

When I first started skating the act of trying out for the Ice Follies or Ice Capades would cause a skater to become ineligible to skate as an amateur for a period of 12 months. A skater could not work behind the skate rental counter at an ice rink.

Skating in an unsanctioned skating event or being perceived as endorsing any product, especially one that was skating related, would cause a loss of amateur status.

Skaters did not earn prize money by placing in international Grand Prix competitions. Gifts for skating as a guest in shows and carnivals were limited to a value of \$250.

Previously, a skater simply announced they had "turned professional" and they immediately could begin to take money for teaching and performing if a rink or show would hire them.

The rules have changed radically and the question now is, "What is the difference between being an "eligible" and "non-eligible skater?"

There is no excuse for being unaware of the rules that control the destiny of a skater's future in figure skating. Always consult a current USFS Rulebook and review the complicated rules that define who are an "eligible" and "non-eligible" skater.

Carefully read the Eligibility Rules (ER) and Sanctions Rules (SR) sections to see what actions might result in a question concerning your eligibility.

The definition of an "eligible" skater is "A skater who has honored all the rules of the USFSA and ISU, and is eligible to participate fully in the activities of the USFSA. This includes competing in USFSA sanctioned competitions, test sessions, and the right to hold office or appointed positions within the USFSA.

Under certain circumstances, eligible persons may receive pay for teaching, compete in USFSA-sanctioned competitions which offer prize money, and earn some other forms of financial gain."

After May 18, 1997, a rule change occurred that allows an eligible skater to teach skating for pay. Skaters who coached for pay, prior to that date, are considered ineligible.

The term "eligible" skater is what previously was referred to an "amateur".

The definition of an "ineligible" skater is, "A skater who has lost eligibility by performing an action not permitted under the rules. Ineligible skaters may not compete in most USFSA sanctioned competitions or the Olympics; however, they may test, and in minority numbers may serve on the Board of Directors of USFSA clubs.

Ineligible skaters may compete in "professional" competitions and in some ISU or USFSA sanctioned competitions designed especially for professionals or mixed professionals and amateurs."

Skaters who are thinking about starting to teach should obtain a Rulebook and carefully consider the provisions of the ER and SR sections, and those under 18 should carefully consider the implications of any "child labor" laws in their state.

Parents and skaters must check to see that a USFS Sanction is posted prior to performing in any competition, ice show, carnival, performance, or exhibition.

Eligible figure skaters should not skate in "half-time exhibitions" at amateur or professional hockey games.

There are cooperative agreements between USFS and ISI that allow USFS skaters to enter competitions and perform in shows that are sanctioned by the ISI. The skater usually must turn in a signed permission form that verifies you are a current USFS member.

Eligible skaters must carefully protect their eligible status by verifying the specific circumstances when they are involved in activities outside of their home club to insure there will not any impact to their eligibility.

Reinstatement

There is a process that allows an ineligible skater to apply to the USFS for "reinstatement". The process is time consuming and is not automatic, but if approved will restore the skater' to "eligible" status.

Twice a year applications for reinstatement are reviewed by the Sanctions Committee, and forwarded with recommendations to the Board of Directors for action.