

Creating Power

by: Garrett Krug

In a sport dictated by one's jumping ability, it is amazing that so many forget the importance of good skating skills, especially with the introduction of the international judging system. Basic skating skills include good turns, crossovers and stroking, and one must do them with ease, fluidity and power.

In order to reach their power potential, skaters must demonstrate sound skating skills executed with good technique. So now we must ask ourselves a few questions in regards to power: what is power, how is it created/maintained and why is it necessary?

In the case of Moves in the Field, power means ending a move with more speed than one started with, or at the very least, maintaining that starting speed. In strength training terms, it is the combination of speed and strength.

It has always been said that in order to be powerful, one must possess the necessary strength. However, all the strength in the world does not guarantee that an athlete will be powerful; one must actually use that strength to be able to generate a force quickly and explosively against the ice.

Remember Newton's Law: for every action there is an opposite and equal reaction.

This means that if skaters push against the ice slowly, they will skate slowly; if they push against the ice forcefully, then they will skate faster.

As force of push increases, so too will the speed of the skater.

When looking to increase speed, it is important that the force of the push be coupled with good technique. One should focus on upper body control, knee bend and sit into the hips, surface area of the blade, extension and explosiveness of the push.

While keeping the upper body under control with minimal unnecessary movement, the skater should also keep the hips square for increased hip power. When a skater has good knee bend and sits into her hips, she is able to increase her stride length, creating more power.

The skater should also utilize the full surface area of the blade; the more blade in contact with the ice at the moment of the push, the more power created through the blade. As the athlete pushes, she must fully extend her free leg in order to increase skating speed.

If the athlete does not fully extend, he or she wastes the potential power created from the hip. At the same time, for a fully extended leg to have any effect, the push and extension must also occur quickly and explosively.

All of these motions must occur simultaneously to generate the most power, so, to summarize, athletes must maintain a good upper body position while sitting deep in the knees and hips as they fully extend forcefully through the whole blade to create a powerful push.

So the last question to answer is: why is power so important?

Power is important because athletes who display good skating skills and power while completing the necessary technical elements generally find themselves on top of the podium. I have seen athletes who have placed higher than other athletes with more difficult jumps because of the power they displayed in their skating programs.

The recent changes in the judging system that emphasize the need for skating skills and transitions as a judged component have made power that much more important for many skaters. Skating with power is now a mandatory mark that makes an even greater difference in one's placement whether for the good, or unfortunately for some, for the bad.

A final and important benefit of increased power is the effect that it has on one's jumps. When an athlete enters a jump with more power, the results are increased height, greater ice coverage and flow from the landing.