Methods of Teaching Figure Skating

Many coaches use classroom teaching techniques to improve the lines of communication with their students. These coaches are thinking “outside the box” and understand that skaters and parents are strongly motivated by results.

The traditional figure skating instructional paradigm is individual (private) lessons, which are very expensive, and coaches have increasingly not spent as much time on the theory/application of physical forces and the application of basic concepts necessary to perform edges and turns across disciplines:

- Figures
- MITF
- Free Skating (jumps and spins)
- Dance – compulsory dance turns, steps and tempos

Presentation of information can be easily accomplished to groups of skaters. Coaches of Synchronized, Showcase, and Theater On Ice Teams frequently take videos of practice performances from several angles. The goal is to see if team members are in the proper positions and the degree of unison in lines, block formations, wheels, and other elements.

Judges prepare to judge Synchronized Skating, Free skating, Pair, and Dance competitions by reviewing DVDs of elements in competitive programs as practice for the new competition season. Judges also take note of changes in the rules and both required and discretionary reduction sheets for specific element mistakes.

Competitive coaches may order DVDs with all of the skater/teams in an event so they can use them for training purposes for the next season.

Some clubs show videos of club members, who qualified to skate sectional and national championships, at their annual club meeting.

Some coaches arrange a special viewing of skating tapes and DVDs at their home or other site that provides an affordable way to socialize and share good food with their skaters and parents.

The lower cost of quality video camera equipment allows many coaches to incorporate videoing skater’s programs and to illustrate and discuss in “real time” parts of a skater’s lessons.

There is a sizable increase in the equipment expense of a video camera equipped with a slow motion lens and computer running special “stop motion” software that allows stepping through an element “frame” by “frame”. The equipment cost, the learning curve to use the software, combined with the time to setup and break down the equipment has slowed the adoption of Stop Motion Video.

Some coaches require their students to bring a notepad to the rink to record comments about their lessons and keep a record of what and for how long they practiced between their lessons.

Some parents ask their coaches to use a small hand held recorder to tape their child’s lessons. The tapes are used as a reinforcement tool that are played back in the car on the way to the rink.

Parents may also purchase instructional books, CDs, and DVDs to serve as references for older children who are used to having reading assignments requiring them to read several chapters a week in order to complete a writing assignment.
There is a benefit to organizing a skater’s technical understanding of how to perform technical elements and communicating that information in written form.