



In the Loop

A Publication of the San Diego Figure Skating Club

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From the Editors...

Welcome to the electronic version of **In the Loop**, one of several changes coming to club communications.

The Board of Directors asked Ruth Sweet, Suzie Whitehead, Claude Sweet, and Bryan Keller, to chair a new Club Communications committee to review and manage all of the club's communications. The committee reviewed different methods of communicating with club members and came up with the following initiatives.

• **In the Loop** will evolve to a more magazine like publication that would focus on education, skating achievements, and club events. It is targeted to be published bimonthly and will be e-mailed to club members.

• San Diego FSC **E-News**, will be a new publication that also will be distributed by e-mail. It will provide club members with announcements, test results, and other time sensitive information. It will be e-mailed to our members in alternate months,. The first edition of E-News began on July 1.

• Information on Test Schedules will be provided to members, who have signed up for each Test Session, with an e-mail of the test schedule. Schedules will continue to be posted on the website and also at the SDIA and Kroc Center. Test Information E-Mails have been in use for several months and are sent out by the Test Committee.

• The San Diego FSC Website will continue undergo modifications. New pages are planned for our Special Skater and Adult Programs. The Newsletter Page will include archives of E-News. The electronic version of **In the Loop**. will be also be archived and will feature an Skaters Resource Page contain additional educational articles and links for reader to perform more in depth web research.

We hope you enjoy reading this month's edition.

*Suzie Whitehead, Bryan Keller,
Claude Sweet, and Ruth Sweet,*

Presidents Message

It's nearing the end of a very busy summer with the club running two Seminars at two ice arenas with almost 150 skaters participating. Feed back from skaters indicate that the program of combining Figures, MITF, Dance steps and Turns, and Free Skating has been well received by the skaters thanks to the planning and coordination of Terry Poletto, Claude and Ruth Sweet, Wendy Smith and Wanda Guntert.

Future events:

Annual Competitor Exhibitions and Reception

We hope to see club members and their families come out to wish our skaters well as they headed to competition

2008 Pacific Coast Sectional Championships

We hope many of our members will take advantage of Southwest Pacific Championships being hosted at Escondido to participate or observe and root for other club members.

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The Club will host the 2008 Pacific Coast Sectional Championships. We were awarded this competition due to our reputation for hosting good competitions, and that reputation comes from the willingness of our members to volunteer.

There are going to be many jobs to fill so we will need to identify many volunteers. So please be thinking of how you can help. Watch the newsletter for more information about the Pacific Coast Championships.

The Training of figure Skaters

Book Review By Claude and Ruth Sweet

Another summer is ending and skaters will shortly be returning to school. Most skaters took the opportunity to participate in an intense schedule of skating to work on preparing to take tests and/or qualify for fall competitions.

Skating more sessions accelerates the acquisition of new skills and refining of old skills. Throughout a skater's career, there is a need to polish their form/technique and add style/musical interpretation to all elements of figure skating.

It is sad how few skaters grasp that stroking and performing basic turns on two and three lobe figures are the underlying foundation for all forms of figure skating – moves-in-the-field, jumps, spins, pairs, compulsory dance, free dance, and synchronized skating.

Figure skating is not a sport whose skills can only be acquired by practicing on the ice. Off ice activities, including strengthening, flexibility, ballroom dance, ballet, etc., add to the array of skills test and competitive skaters whose skating appears to be effortless. Figure skating is a sport that also requires skaters to deliver an artistic performance if they expect to be successful in qualifying competitions.

Don't Expect the Impossible

Each skater and his or her parents must measure the possibility for success and balance it against the cost in time, energy, and money.

Most skaters and their families must prioritize activities on and off ice with other interests. Families with more than one child find this task to be even more daunting.

It is not realistic to expect the same progress from a skater who skates one 45 minute session a day, one to three times a week during the school year and compare their progress with a skater who is skating multiple sessions a day, five or six days a week.

A skater's personality and ability to focus are critical components in the formula to develop a successful skater. Each skater with average physical abilities can develop the mental confidence to achieve a gold medal in MITF and solo compulsory dance.

The lack of a partner may prevent some otherwise skilled skaters from obtaining a standard gold dance medal. It should be obvious that there are variables in skating, which are rooted in nature and nurture.

Raw talent is inherited from the skater's parents, but what the skater does with that raw talent is a product of the parenting environment, availability of ice time combined with instruction from a quality coach, plus the presence of talented competitors striving to succeed in National and International competitions.

Young skaters lack the experience and maturity to control their lives. They are completely dependent on their parents to make decisions requiring financial expenditures for skates, costumes, ice fees, and lessons. Someone must also be available with the time and car to transport the young skater to and from the rink, often at inconvenient hours.

A skater must be determined, focused, and willing to make choices that frequently require prioritizing their daily schedule between education and studying, social opportunities (dating), and working (paying for driver's insurance, gas, concert tickets, dating expenses, etc.).

Preparation is the key to successfully skating an error free test or competition event.

Avoiding a fall does not Ensure Winning

A skater who acquires theoretical figure skating knowledge should be able to combine body mechanics and the science of physics as they acquire their skating skills. Figure skating as an esthetic or art form requires a skater to blend an artistic body-line with

required technical elements to express the program's music through choreography.

It is this extra burden that skaters share with synchronized swimming, rhythmic gymnastics, etc. that is not required in sports that measure performance with a stopwatch, tape measure, or goals scored.

Some skaters react differently to the stress of taking a test and/or competing. Preparation is key to successfully skating an error free test or competition event. Acquiring the skills to do each individual component must be achieved before a skater can develop the consistency to perform the entire MITF element or complete a program without tiring and having a noticeable performance drop at the end of a test or program.

Every Skater Needs Objective Outside Input

Someone needs to keep the skater on an even keel when they hit a developmental plateau. Changing the focus temporarily is a way to reduce the negativity when skaters do not feel they are making progress. Establishing short-term realistic goals that the coach and skater can achieve will provide a more positive training environment.

Coaches can arrange for judges to evaluate a skater who is having a lesson. Sometimes just having a judge's perspective aids a coach in the communication of a concept the skater has been struggling with. It is gratifying to see a skater's facial expression change when they truly understand. Involving a judge in this manner also helps skaters understand that judges are not someone to be feared, but an individual who deeply cares and wants each skater to do their best.

Sidebar

Training of Figure Skaters, written by Jack Curtis provides an excellent roadmap through the minefield of choices a skater and parents confront the challenges of the expense of figure skating and odds of being one of the 5% of skaters in the sport who qualify at Southwest Regional Competitions to enter Pacific Coast Sectional Competitions.

Jack Curtis is a National Judge who skated in pairs and dance events with Eleanor Banneck. They married and three of their four children skated. Two eventually became coaches. Eleanor Curtis is a National and World judge. The years of being involved in skating has resulted in the compilation of

personal experience and observations that is told in a clear, no nonsense approach in a classic Jack Curtis style.

Jack's book will help parents and skaters reach some conclusions about their expectations and establish realistic goals balancing the time, energy, and money allocated in pursuing short and long-term skating goals.

The age that a person starts to skate may affect goals to become an international competitor in singles, but is less important in pair, dance, and synchronized events.

This book is written for everyone who skates, regardless of their age or aspiration of a recreational, test, or competing in local competitions, not just the top tier of elite skaters.

Ordering information:

J. Wolfgang Publishers
6208 Whisper Ridge Dr. NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120
\$23.95 plus \$1.40 postage

Reflections on the International Judging System (IJS)

By Claude Sweet

This is part of series of articles designed to help skaters and parents understand the changes that are occurring in figure skating. The next article will discuss in depth the criteria used to mark Program Components in the new International Judging System competition events.

The impacts of the new International Judging System (IJS) are filtering down to Juvenile events in many Open Competitions and will be phased into future regional, sectional, and national events as more judges, technical specialists, controllers, and data input specialists are trained and certified. The transition to IJS poses an extra burden on accountants as they encounter multiple "glitches" in the evolving computer programs being tested and used.

The data that must be entered into the computer has increased by a factor of 10. In an ideal world IJS judges, while rink side, would be able to directly upload their scores of each skater to the computer server in the accounting room.

Unfortunately, the cost of acquiring and transporting the additional audio, video, and computer equipment necessary for automation of IJS events is a major obstacle. The current cost for a "mini-system" used at Regionals competitions this year is \$20,000. This is compounded by the need for trained technicians to setup and maintain the equipment throughout the competition.

IJS is a detail oriented system of evaluating skaters and it provides more specific feedback for skaters and coaches than the older "6.0" judging system. In smaller competitions, the cost of using IJS technology forces the use of the less costly back room method where paper and pencil is used to record judges marks. Marks are then sent to the accounting room to be entered into the computer by the accounting staff, thus the release of event results take longer than in the 6.0 System. This is frustrating to skaters, parents, and coaches, but please understand the delays are unavoidable and related to the additional data entry, requirements for review by the Technical Controller and Referee, and, unfortunately, occasional computer "glitches" in the new and still evolving software.

The 2007 Competition Season for Singles, Pairs, and Dancers

The Southwest Regional Championships have concluded and those who intensely trained and skated well are continuing on to the Pacific Coast Sectional Championships or U.S. Junior Figure Skating Championships. A well deserved congratulations to those skaters who qualified for Pacific Coast and Junior Nationals. The benchmark of skating is increasing at all levels as more coaches focus on the requirements of "well balanced technical program presented in well choreographed, interpreted, musical presentation".

To skaters who did not compete or did not qualify for Pacific Coast, I offer the following observations:

- The true competition is not an external competition against other skaters, but is achieving the expectations each skater has established as their own personal goals. There is a lasting satisfaction derived by performing in a

test or competition situation at the same level demonstrated in practice sessions. The inconsistent practice performance of a skater, combined with setting expectations too high, usually produces undesirable stress levels that become an obstacle to performing up to expectations.

- A good way to reduce stress levels is to incorporate only those jumps and spins in the test or competition that are consistently performed at a high level in practice.

Competition Strategies

It is a major mistake to increase the level of difficulty of jumps, spins, and footwork without the skater demonstrating an enhanced performance level of the more technically demanding elements. Judges recognize and downgrade elements that are poorly performed. The strategy of attempting to increase the level of difficulty also increases the risk of a fall, which is severely penalized in competitions by a -3 GOE and a full point deduction by the technical controller. A higher level of technical difficulty combined with negative scores will generally produce a lower total Grade of Execution (GOE) than a lower degree of technical difficulty performed at a positive GOE (+1 to +3).

Some of the factors resulting in a negative GOE are:

Jumps

1. Under rotated jumps - cheated take-offs
2. Under rotated jumps - cheated landings
3. Incorrect take-off edge
4. Incorrect landing edge
5. Inadequate speed into take-offs
6. Inadequate speed out of landings, especially in combination jumps
7. Poor form, wrapped free leg positions
8. "Popped" jumps

Spins

1. Falling out of spin
2. Failure to center spin
3. Failure to hold position for two revolutions
4. Failure to hold spin for total required revolutions
5. Failure to center spin (traveling)
6. Establishing a second center when changing feet
7. Loss of speed in spin
8. Loss of balance when exiting spin

The Technical Panel downgrades jumps to a lower revolution that do not meet the IJS criteria. For example a cheated double Lutz would be reduced to a base value for a single Lutz. A double or triple jump that is "Popped" and the skater does not complete a clean full revolution will not receive any base value and a -3 GOE score.

Competitions are designed to rank skaters by performance in that event on that day. The competition environment relates to the mental toughness of the skater's ability to perform demanding physical skills. In many cases the skaters/coaches choose to include skills that are not perfected and polished so the actual winner might be the skater whose program is less demanding, but relatively error free.

Putting Competition Placements into Perspective

It is important for a skater to understand that if they just passed a test this summer to qualify to enter the Southwest Pacific Championships, that many of the competitors have actually competed for one or more years at the same level.

These polished performances are reflective of the added experience the skaters have acquired in front of an audience. They may also have achieved a higher degree of technical skills that only comes from the extra time to develop and perfect their jumps and spins so they may be consistently performed in a competition setting.

It is a mistake to think that winning a competition is based on acquiring a specific double jump or increasing the level of difficulty in a step sequence or spin combination.

The GOE marks for required elements range from -3 to +3. The high or low mark for each component is discarded. The "trimmed mean" score of the judging panel is then calculated for each GOE element and becomes the score for that component and added to the technical value for each element.

The computer program adds 10% extra value for jumps performed in the second half of the program. The Technical Panel deducts a full point for each fall. The GOE scores are added to a skater's "trimmed mean" Program Component scores. The total combined scores determine a skater's placement in an event.

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The Planned Element Sheet

All skaters who compete under the new International Judging System (IJS) are required to complete a Planned Program Content Sheet (PPCS) as part of their entry into competitions. Juvenile and Intermediate skaters competing at regionals must also fill out the PPCS even if competing under the 6.0 system. Even if you have a bye through regionals, you must file a PPCS by Sept. 1, 2007. It is essential not only to file this form, but also to do it correctly.

The Planned Program Content Form serves to:

1. Help the technical officials and the judges know what element is coming next so that they don't miss anything. This is especially beneficial to you if your program elements are choreographed close together.
2. Speed up the event by making the review process faster. Knowing what element is coming next helps the video replay operator capture it from start to finish. When the program is over and the technical panel needs to review an element, a precise video clip allows the technical panel to review it at top speed, without having to fast forward or rewind to find the element.
3. Help the data input operator enter the elements quickly and accurately, which also speeds up the review process, allowing the focus to be on your skating, not on the computer screen.

Many nonqualifying competitions are also taking advantage of this online service. Online program content forms can be found by logging into www.usfsaonline.org with your membership number and password. Once logged in, select "Program Content" under the event registration menu, and follow your cues from there.

List your elements in the order in which they will be skated. You only need to include the name of the element. The level and any details of how you plan to achieve the level are not necessary.

Computer Codes for Men and Ladies Programs

There are only three types of elements in singles skating – jumps, spins and steps. Spirals are considered to be steps. Any elements that don't fit these categories are considered transitions.

Solo jumps: A solo jump is any jump done by itself and not in combination or part of a sequence. The official IJS codes for jumps are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Jump Codes

Jump Element	Code	Number of rotations precedes the jump code
Toe loop	T	Examples:
Salchow	S	single toe loop = 1T
Loop	Lo	double toe loop = 2T
Flip	F	triple toe loop = 3T
Lutz	Lz	quadruple toe loop = 4T
Axel	A	

Jump combinations

A jump combination can be made up of two or three jumps. Combinations use the same codes as solo jumps, but the jumps are combined with a '+' sign. For example, the code for a jump combination consisting of a triple toe-double toe is 3T+2T.

Jump sequences

The code for a sequence is the same, except that SEQ would be added at the end. A double Lutz-double flip sequence would be entered 2Lz+2F+SEQ.

Solo spins

By definition a solo spin doesn't change position; however, a change feet may occur. There are three types of spins:

- Sit "S"
- Camel "C"
- Upright "U"
- Layback "L" - a modified upright spin

Each spin will end with the code "Sp". Each specific spin has its own descriptive code appended. See Table 2.

There are three basic types of flying spins:

- Flying camel "FCSp"
- Flying sit "FSSp" (flying front sit, flying back sit, death drop or any other variation of a flying spin that lands in a sit position),

- Flying layback "FLSp" or flying upright "FUSp".

All flying spins are defined by the spin's landing position. A flying entry into the spin requires an "F" to be added in front of the basic landing position of the spin.

A change of feet during the spin, without a change of position, is considered a solo spin. A sit spin with only one change of foot would indicate the basic position and then precede the code by a "CSSp". See Table 2.

Table 2:

Solo Spins	Code	Examples of combinations
Upright	USp	Flying entry—letter "F" precedes the element code. Example: "Camel spin, with flying entry" = FCSp
Layback	LSp	
Camel	CSp	
Sit	SSp	Change of foot—letter "C" precedes the element code no matter how many changes of feet occur. Example: "Sit spin, with change of foot" = CSSp Change of foot and flying entry—letter "F" precedes letter "C". Example: "Sit spin, with change of foot, flying entry" = FCSSp

A spin combination by definition is any spin where you change position. You may or may not change feet, so that means you only have two possible options for combination spins in your program – a spin combination with change of position and no change of foot (CoSp) or a spin combination with change of position and change of foot (CCoSp).

Combination spins do not require the positions. The code for a camel, sit, layback/back camel, back sit is "CCoSp" (the extra C is because of the change of feet). The code for a forward camel into a layback without changing feet would be "CoSp".

Steps:

The step category includes any step/footwork sequences and the spiral sequence. The code for a spiral sequence is "SpSq". Details of the pattern, number of positions, edges, whether

they are forward or backward, etc. are not included in the code.

In step sequences, the pattern of the sequence is part of the code. See Table 3 for the correct terms and codes. A diagonal step sequence is considered a straight line step, while an oval sequence is considered a circular step.

Table 3: Steps

Step Sequence	Code
Straight Line Step	SlSt
Circular Step	CiSt
Serpentine Step	SeSt
Spiral Sequence	SpSq

Filing Planned Element Sheets On Line

If you are entering the Planned Element forms online, be sure to save your form by selecting 'Add Planned Element Form.' Do this often! You can always come back and complete the form at a later time. You can also delete the form at anytime and create another one.

If you fill out the form by hand, be sure to make a copy before you send it in. This allows you to know what changes your form you will have to make if you revise the order or content of your program.

Whether you complete the form online or by hand, bring a copy with you to the competition as a backup.

Program Changes

It is common for programs to change during a season, but it is important to have a complete program content form turned in by the deadline for each competition. If your program changes after the registration deadline, bring an updated program content sheet with you to the competition, and ask at the registration desk who should receive your form.

