

# Preparing to Compete

When practicing for a test or competition, a skater should focus on doing everything correctly; however, there are some things that must become so familiar with that an automatic response occurs without losing control of the situation.

Coaches usually discuss with their skaters about the possibilities of common problems so they can be fully prepared to avoid becoming stressed out.

In a competition the event referee will handle anything that goes wrong during the event. The referee will be sitting with the panel of judges. In some rinks the referee may be seated next to the people in charge of the music and the announcer. If not, they have a way to communicate with the music and announcer. The referee is a highly trained individual who has the experience to interpret rules and handle problems if they occur.

If a problem occurs, the referee will blow their whistle and/or the announcer will instruct the skater to report to the referee. The referee will answer your questions, and will tell you what to do.

If something goes just a little bit funny, your pro might be able to signal you what to do about it, but the referee will have the official "last word". The referee will be at the judge's table, usually seated at the end closest to the music or sound people. He/she will usually have a stopwatch in hand.

The USFS Rulebook covers the following possible problems. Your coach should check to see if there are any changes from the possible contingencies listed below:

## **Wrong Music:**

If your CD starts, and you realize the music is somebody else's, or your CD, but for a different event, signal the referee immediately. It may take a second or two before you realize it and signal the referee. Skate directly over to the referee and explain what is wrong.

**Your coach should have a replacement CD ready. The music staff will quickly check it and then ask you to go back to your starting position. The announcer will again introduce the skater to the audience.**

If a skater misses their start because the music was too soft, they should follow the same process as listed above. Coaches can avoid this problem by adjusting the volume of the music when the master CD is made.

Sometimes putting a very short "beep" or "click" a second or two before the music starts will help you know when the music is about to begin. There's no time penalty for the beep since the referee doesn't start timing the length of the program until the skater starts moving and ends when they stop moving.

## **The sound quality is distracting or unrecognizable:**

The practice sessions are where the CD should be tested for sound quality, volume or any other problem. Most CD players lack a control to make adjustments if the CD is running way too slowly or way too fast.

## **The music skips or keeps repeating:**

This type of problem usually is due to a surface scratch and requires the CD to be replaced. The skater has to use their judgment since it is risky to stop skating

without an obvious cause. It is best to continue skating until the referee stops the music or blows the whistle and asks for adjustments to be made or the CD replaced.

### **Music stops in during the program:**

If the CD stops playing during your program, you should continue to skate until the referee signals you to stop skating to correct the problem.

Your coach should take care to avoid any long silent part(s) that might cause confusion resulting in the referee stopping your program when the music is really "ok".

### **CD doesn't start**

As soon as it appears that the CD doesn't work, the referee will signal the skater to "relax". The music people will attempt to fix the problem if they can or request a new CD. The skater can skate around to keep warm and loose while a determination is being made.

When the problem has been corrected, the announcer will introduce the skater again. The skater will pick up the program at the spot where the music problem occurred.

### **Equipment Malfunction**

If the laces become loose or untied while skating, the skater should immediately stop, then skate to the referee and explain the problem. If the referee is aware of the problem before the skater, the referee will signal the skater to stop to avoid endangering your health or safety.

The referee will give you 2 minutes to correct the problem then you can restart from the point you stopped skating. If you cannot fix the problem within the 2 minutes then you will be withdrawn from the event as a rule change does not allow a skater to restart at the beginning of the

program, or wait until the remaining skaters in the group have skated and then restart the program.

### **Outfit becomes Unsafe**

On more than one occasion a zipper, clasp or snap fails and the costume is in danger of disrobing. The referee will allow the skater 2 minutes to make appropriate repairs prior to continuing the program from the point of interruption.

Male skaters are likely to have the straps, that fit under the boots to keep tension on the pant leg, become undone.

### **Hair Ornaments**

Pins, broaches, and hair clasps that are not properly secured can fall off during program. A single hair pin may not be noticed, but still is a hazard if someone skates over it. The loss of a hairpiece is rather obvious and usually can be avoided. The referee will likely signal the skater to stop if it is only partly undone and is, in their opinion a hazard.

**Don't forget to pick up any lost hair pins after you finish skating.**

### **Fall during program:**

If you fall, you should first do a quick evaluation of how you feel. If you're injured, stop skating and wait for help if you need it. If only your pride is hurt, get up and continue.

Put the fall out of your mind and focus on making no more errors for the rest of the program.

### **The Wrong Short Program Element:**

You made a major error, but resist the urge to add in the correct one later. In the Short Program you may only try each element once. Besides the deduction for doing the wrong element, there is a penalty for adding elements.

Just take the deduction for doing the wrong thing, you will get an another deduction for the "extra" element. The same thing applies if you fall during a Short Program element.

### **Long Program - Wrong Element or fall:**

A fall in a long program is a negative GOE. Repeated or additional elements in a long program usually violate the restrictions on jump repeats or the total number of jump elements.

It is important that you demonstrate the overall quality of your skating than attempting to repeat one special element at the expense of your choreographic theme.

### **Fall on approach to element, or abort takeoff in Short Program:**

If you clearly haven't started into the element you would receive the 1 point automatic deduction for the fall, but can fall attempt to pick up and jump or spin in a short program. A lot depends on the call made by the Technical panel.

You might be charged with an extra element. It is a judgment call so there is no right answer to this one. The problem is how TC decides the question " Was it an attempt, or wasn't it?".

Spins are tougher to generalize, but once you've entered the edge and fall on the obvious hook to start the rotation, the technical panel and judges will say you committed to the spin – so its best not to repeat it.

### **Forgot program**

Most skaters can attest to at least once when they have gone blank and forgot their program. The trick is not to wander around looking blindly at your coach for help.

Improvise and attempt to make it look like you know what you are doing. It

helps if the music has distinctive places that are uniquely recognizable. If the music sounds similar from start to end, its really easy for you to get confused.

If you can listen to the music and visualize your skating to it enough, you should associate the music with the different parts of the choreography As part of your practice sessions you should start the program at key changes of the music..

### **Distraction Loud Noise or Camera Flash, etc.**

Sometimes a rink light explodes and showers debris on the ice. The referee will stop the program and determine what corrective measures need to be taken. It is a judgment call by the event referee if a light suddenly goes dark as to the disruption, if any, to the program.

There's no specific rules about loud noises. This again is a judgment call by the referee and would depend on the circumstances surrounding the event. If this happens, as a skater you probably get up and continue skating your. If a reskate is justified, the referee will call the skater to come over and talk about it. Most judges will be aware of the distraction, and thus be more lenient in the marking of the affected element.

A skater may approach the referee after they finish their program without a reskate and discuss the problem. In general, it is best to just chalk it up to experience.

### **Didn't bring Music**

The rules do not allow skating without music except in special events listed in the announcement that state it is a "no-music event". There are two options – 1. withdraw from the event, or 2. borrow someone's music of the proper length.

In most lower level events there are several skaters that seem oblivious to their music, so you can improvise and learn a lesson for next time to make sure you have all the equipment you need to perform.

Depending on the age of the skater, mom and dad should not accept responsibility for any equipment that was left at home.

### **Coach unable to Attend Test or Competition**

Sometimes your primary coach will not be able to be present at the rink to put you on the ice. The USFS and PSA rules do not allow a non-certified coach to put a skater on the ice. Usually the primary coach will make arrangement for another coach to substitute.

If it is necessary to warm up for an event without your coach's guidance, just

imagine that this is like any other practice session or at a previous competition.

You should have a planned warm-up routine, so just follow that plan. Be sure to pay extra attention to the "1 minute warning" announcement. Make sure that someone is prepared with your backup CD in case its needed.

### **Exceeding Program Requirements**

At one time the referee would blow their whistle at the end of your program if the skater exceeded the allowable time limits.

Referees no longer blow a whistle if the skater exceeds the allotted time. They do announce to the judges how much the program was under of over the time limit and the judges take the appropriate deductions from their marks.