

# Responsibilities of Coaching

Passing tests and competing in various figure skating events does not automatically prepare anyone to become a coach. Anyone desiring to become a top coach in figure skating should acquire formal training in kinesiology, sports psychology, sports medicine, physiology, physics, business management, communications, etc.

The actual experience of being a skater provides actual learning experience through exposure to the technique and philosophy of the coaches that provided the skater with their training. However, not all students process the technical information and attempt to understand the underlying concepts that unify the sport into a combination science and art form.

Skaters who have excellent technique may lack the performance artistry necessary to win national and international events. Conversely, there are excellent performers that may be very successful in shows, but whose technical abilities leave much to be desired.

Anyone wishing to become involved in coaching should avail themselves of professional development opportunities. Each individual must develop a plan whose long-term strategy is to help the skater achieve his or her full potential as a coach.

Many coaches prefer to specialize in specific areas – recreational skating, MITF, Free Skating, Dance, Synchro, etc. – or test and test track skaters versus elite track skaters. Some prefer to exclusively act as a choreographer.

A choreographer may discover that they are spending a lot of time teaching

skaters how to do the movements which leaves little or no time to develop a theme and creatively fit the skating elements to the musical score

The duties a figure skating coach are far more complex than one might think when observing top elite skaters at practice sessions and competitions.

There is general agreement that proper training is important; however, many parents and skaters seek simplistic answers for complex and difficult problems. The worsening economic conditions may discourage the pursuit of solutions that are time-consuming or difficult to implement.

Too many individuals believe it is desirable and necessary to simplify complex problems to a one-size solution fits all. Simple answers rarely addresses all of the issues that exist in a complex sport like figure skating and thus are rarely effective in achieving a true and comprehensive solution.

Coaches must first understand the many factors associated with becoming a successful figure skater and then provide informed choices to parents and skaters. A good understanding of how the factors actual influence the problem allows the facts to be presented while avoiding unnecessary complication.

Inevitably an issue or problem occurs that is easier for the parents, skaters, and sometime coaches to blame someone else or the system. Making choices can be hard work and carries responsibility, but is essential if an individual is to develop their full potential rather than quitting when the easy successes cease.