

Strategies for Passing Moves in the Field

The Professional Skating Association (PSA) and the United States Figure Skating Association (USFSA) have worked together to produce a small booklet on MITF that many coaches and judges possess.

The idea behind the manual was condensing the information that everyone agreed on and to communicate a level of expectations for both teaching the elements by coaches with the evaluation standards used by judges.

The focus points are described as follows:

- **Continuous flow or Power** is representative of what an average free skater would be expected to achieve and maintain in a free skating test is also expected for the same level of the MITF test.
- **Edge Quality** assumes that the skater is skating round full or half circles while performing a series of steps and turns that continue to be part of a figure eight or serpentine move.
- **Extension** does not mean the free leg will be held in a spiral position. The forward and backward extension should be equally high, not strained nor resulting in lifting the hip.
- **Quickness** – A preferred term is the constant tempo in the performance of turns and steps as if the element was being skated to music with a steady/even beat, rhythm or cadence.

Some judges also include comments on several additional focus points:

- **Pattern** – does the first half end at the midline or extend past it causing the skater to run out of room at the end of the rink
- **Quality and Placement** - Turns should be performed on the proper

axis and deductions taken for early or late placement. Equal shoulders of the turns means the cusp of the turn is pointed on the axis and the angle into and exiting the turn is balanced.

- **Transitions** from lobe to lobe should be smoothly executed, equally balanced, and fully controlled.
- **Core Body Posture** should be erect with the head up. Hands should be held about waist level and shoulders should not be elevated
- **Body language and Presentation Skills** should reflect confidence and self-assurance compared to a robotic exhibition of the skating skills.

Judges marks are a reflection of the range of positive and negative performance of the focus points for each element skated clockwise and counterclockwise directions or on both sides of the rink.

Focus point comments provide feedback to the skater and coach as to the strengths and weaknesses the judge observed. However, there is not enough time to provide the kind of discussion that judges provide in individual critiques with coaches and skaters prior to scheduling a test.

Interpreting The Comments

A deduction taken for a poor pattern generally indicates the skater ran out of room and could not properly fit the element into the rink without crashing into the end barriers.

This information suggests that the error actually occurred earlier in the side pattern not being properly placed relative to the hockey lines on the rink or permanent reference points in the stands and vary from rink to rink.

As a skater progresses through the MITF tests, judges expect increasing technical and performance skills. What may have been tolerated at a lower level will be evaluated at a higher standard if the same error occurs on the next test level.

Allowances are made on the pre-preliminary MITF for poor technique caused by bad posture, toe pushing, or stepping over instead of properly performing crossovers. These errors result in a negative notation from the judge even though the power and/or edges might receive a positive encouragement comment.

If a skater is bent over at the waist, their extension component would receive a negative mark, but their edges might be steady demonstrating the lack of wobbles or sub-curves and thus earning a positive comment.

Every judge formulates their technical standard for evaluating the MITF, free skating, and dance elements. Evaluation of each of the various focus points would receive a plus, minus or acceptable ranking ranging from -3 to +3. "0" would be acceptable. It is a simple matter to add up the notations and divide by 2 if there were two sides or directions. The exception is the brackets in the field that has 4 items in that element.

When there are repetitions of similar items such as multiple spirals, each one can be scored separately for the height and flexibility, plus solid edges and transitions. It is important for judges to determine if the majority of the turns, spirals, steps, etc. are performed at or above the acceptable level and then mark the overall performance level.

Judges sometimes do not mark much higher when the element is performed at a good, very good or excellent level. Some judges use the IJS GOE rating system -

+3 for excellent; +2 for very good; +1 for good; -1 or -2 for poor to very poor, and a -3 for a total disaster.

The elements on each test have various degrees of difficulty, yet they are not factored. The easier elements should, if well performed, provide the skater with a cushion to compensate for an element that gives the skater a problem on the day of the test.

Skaters of school figures will remember that learning a new skill like loops were a major problem for some individuals. Coaches attempted to have their skaters perform the loops well enough to pass, but sometimes the knees stiffened and the result were "toilet seats" instead of the desired loop shapes.

Power to many younger skaters seems to be associated with a straight line from one end of the rink to the other. Power is not the fastest elapsed time, but involves skating a pattern that uses the width of the rink to maintain or add to the power the skater acquires from and allowed introductory steps.

Many skaters do not achieve the desired level of stamina to perform the entire MITF test from start to finish without a loss in performance. This is partly due to the fact that their training strategy did not involve starting from the end of the test when practicing on alternating sessions.

Skaters frequently have strong and weak directions or foot of an element. They should always start performing the weaker side or direction first so if someone on a practice session gets in their way, forcing them to stop, they don't neglect practicing their weaker side.