

## JUDGE'S MATERIAL FOR PSA SEMINAR

### A. SUGGESTIONS FOR JUDGES

1. Arrive at the rink at least 15 minutes, and preferably 30 minutes, ahead of time. Check with the test chair about the actual start of tests as compared to the start of the warm-up. ***Have a number to call if problems arise in travel.***
2. Ask for the test schedule. Inform the test chair if you are not eligible to judge some of the tests assigned. ***Ask about other judges who are coming to make sure that the tests can be run with those judges.*** Check to see if you are scheduled to judge tests that you may see infrequently. Review in advance all current and applicable rules prior to those tests.
3. Check that there is a test paper for each skater listed on the test schedule and consult with the other judges if there is a question as to whether the requisite sheets are there. Test chairs can omit sheets.
4. Know the time restrictions for tests. Is hockey or some other event scheduled after the test session? Keep track of the time during the test session.
5. Conduct yourself properly - you are representatives of U.S. Figure Skating. Perception is important! Note that, with current technology, judges' actions can be recorded on audio as well as video during test sessions and competitions.
6. Dress to reflect your role as a judge. The skaters deserve your respect. Both the skater and their parents form an impression of judges based on what they see.
7. Act in a dignified manner. However, your body language and demeanor should also convey an openness to skaters, parents, and coaches so that communication is possible.
8. Remember to sign **legibly** all judging sheets and to include your U.S. Figure Skating number. Write your comments legibly and concisely for the benefit of the skater and coach as well as yourself so that a discussion of the test is possible. At the completion of a test, total your marks and circle PASS or RETRY before handing your sheet to the JIC or test chair. Your paper should be checked for the accuracy of the marks by the test chair before the paper is given to the skater. However, it is best not to assume that this will be done, so double check the math before handing it in. This will avoid returning your papers to you for corrections, which can disrupt subsequent tests.
9. Make sure that **all trial papers** of trial judges are handed in after each test. They should not be selecting those tests that they want to submit. Either during a warm-up period or in the judges' room, sign the papers and ink in the marks and the results of the tests. If there is sufficient time, discuss the tests with the trial judge while the test is still in mind. Are their remarks consistent with their comments? Ask them why they wrote certain comments or why other aspects of the test were not mentioned. This process will help the trial judges develop into judges. Trial judges should discuss their marks

only with official panel members, and only for the purpose of evaluating their assessment of the test or event. They should not discuss tests with skaters, coaches, or parents. If approached to do so, they should refer that person to the judge-in-charge or the test chair who can ask a judge to address the question.

**10.** Be prepared to talk to the candidates, especially if the test has been marked as retry, and be prepared to explain the reason for your marks. If possible, the coach should also be present. Suggestions for improvement should be offered privately and only when requested. Arguments should be avoided. Praise may be given after a test or event. However, be sensitive to the possibility of showing a bias by appearing friendly to some skaters or coaches but not others.

## **B. ETHICS IN JUDGING**

JR 1.01 gives a very general statement concerning ethics in judging. This section describes specific ethical issues as they apply to judging tests. As mentioned previously, a judge must give a fair assessment of the skater's performance on the day of the test. Other factors, past or future should not intervene in the evaluation that day. Bias in judging - in either a positive or negative sense - must be avoided. To do otherwise is unfair and is evident to skaters, coaches, and parents. Most skaters and experienced coaches know how the test was skated and what marks might be expected. Honest, fair treatment by the judges will be respected, even if they had hope for a better outcome. It is vital that the reputation of a judge not be compromised because the effects can be long lasting and future marks the judge gives may well be viewed in that context.

**1.** The only specific rules indicating restrictions of judging individual are for family members. All other situations require that judges consider any special issues and as a result whether they should judge that skater. This is often the case when judging at your home club. The skater may be the child of family friends, who may live in your neighborhood, attend the same house of worship, or belong to an organization of which you are a member. This situation requires not only unbiased judging but the development of a separation of the judging of skating from other facets of a judge's life in social settings. In social settings, a judge should avoid commenting on tests that she or he has judged as well as tests not judged.

**2.** The judge should never compare a test with other tests in written notes on the test sheet or in personal communication with skaters or coaches.

**3.** Although a skater should be put at ease at the start of the test, a judge must avoid making personal remarks such as how nice the skating dress is. A skater could conclude that the test was passed because of the dress and that the dress actually played a role in the outcome of the test. If another skater whose dress was not mentioned does not pass a test, we want to make sure that she does not draw an unwarranted conclusion about what is being evaluated and why the test did not pass.

**4.** Avoid continuing a conversation when another judge, in violation of judging ethics, talks to you about a skater in either a negative or positive manner in the judges' room prior to the test. This is a violation of general judging ethics. You should ignore comments during the test as well. These circumstances and any other more serious

attempts to influence your judging are among the most difficult situations to handle in judging. Just remember - you must make independent and unbiased evaluations and come to your own final decision regarding a skater's performance. Do not make remarks about a skater or coach to other judges or discuss personal information about them. These types of comments may inadvertently influence the evaluation of a skater or at least be perceived as having done so.

**5.** The personal circumstances of the skater are not relevant to the evaluation of a test. Common among these is a skater who is taking a test for the last time before leaving for college or that the test is being taken right before the deadline for a qualifying competition. Although the judge can be sympathetic, the standard for passing a test cannot change. Although the skater may be disappointed, especially due to these types of personal circumstances, the judges will be respected for the honest and fair treatment of skaters.

**6.** Do not make comparisons between coaches with skaters and parents of skaters. Do not give any opinion about the teaching ability, pass record, or credentials of a coach. This may be very tempting under some circumstances but your opinion could be passed on and be regarded as a positive or negative bias. A simple statement that you are not allowed by the ethical codes for judges to comment is appropriate.

**7.** Never discuss another judge's marks for a test with a skater, coach or parent of the skater and do not try to discern what another judge has written on a test paper if asked to do so. Only discuss your own marks on your test paper with the skater, coach, or parent and then only when asked. **Do not seek out the skater or coach to provide unsolicited comments on the test.**

**8.** Judges may discuss tests with one another or with a trial judge for the purposes of education. However, the discussions should be guarded in the judges' room. Individuals such as hospitality volunteers or assistants for the test chair should not hear your opinions about the tests.

**10.** JR 1.05 specifically states that judges should refrain from publishing or e-mailing remarks or commenting in on-line chat rooms about tests which they have judged. Although not specifically stated, it is not advisable to comment about judgements of tests or events that you did not judge.

**11.** Remember that you are a volunteer and do not have to accept invitations to judge at a test session if there are past or current circumstances that may affect your ability to judge without bias or the appearance of bias. A judge should be comfortable while evaluating the test of a skater. It is not necessary to explain why you cannot do a particular test session. In fact, explanations may be passed on and misinterpreted and cause an even greater problem for you as a judge.

**12.** If during the review of your assignment list at a test session you find yourself assigned to judge a skater whom you prefer not to judge, seek a replacement judge. It may be best to have the judge serve as a replacement for several tests including the one of concern to you because the reasons for this change will not be evident. Inform

the test chair that you would prefer that another judge replace you. An explanation is not necessary. If replacement judges are not available, ask another judge to serve as the JIC. If the judges rotate in this responsibility then your concern will not be evident.

### C. COMMENTS ON TEST SHEETS

1. Avoid strongly negative words - develop a lexicon of alternative terms that articulate errors in a constructive manner. A skater who has not passed a test will feel bad enough without having carelessly chosen comments on test papers. Being honest about what a skater did incorrectly or if it is not at tests standard can be stated without being callous.
2. Comment on the positive aspects of a test so that coach and student knows what is correct and generally accepted and what they should continue to teach or perform. We want to encourage skaters rather than discourage or deflate them.
3. Remember that your comments on sheets may be widely distributed. It is important that any summary written be one that you can live with and one that has comments you can stand by.
4. Be very specific about which edges, turns, direction, etc. you have evaluated. General comments do not provide as concrete guidance as specific comments.
5. Do not use "I" as in "I feel", "I like" in your comments. Although judges are individuals, we must always indicate that it is the generally accepted standards of U.S. Figure Skating that we are using to judge tests.
6. Do not provide instructions in your comments as to how something should have been done. **Just indicate what was done.** It is the coach that does the teaching.

### D. MARKS ON TEST SHEETS

1. The marks awarded to a skater must reflect what the skater does **on test day**. Judges must avoid a positive or negative bias based on the reputation of a skater or coach or previous strong or weak performances.
2. Skating on edges, which requires strong curves, is fundamental to good skating. Prescribed features, such as turns are to be completed on well defined edges. Indeed, MIF elements can provide for the development of spiral sequences and step sequences in short and long programs. Judges and technical panel members must see the turns done on true edges to give credit. In addition, MIF elements can contribute significantly to several of the component marks of the IJS system. **Judges must maintain the standard of MIF tests to ensure the development of quality skating which is more than just multi-revolution jumps.**
3. Going above the passing average is a reward for the skater who performed above the test standard and is a requirement in that case. That skater should be distinguished from another skater who has not skated as well. As an example, there are times when a

skater may have delayed taking a MIF or FS test and skates well above the standard for the level they are testing. The performance must be recognized and the mark should be consistent with the level of skating. A skater is a Novice FS test could be skating at the Junior level and should receive marks indicating that fact.

4. Going significantly below the passing average may be required. It is not fair or correct to give the same mark to a skater who is only slightly below the standard as to a skater who struggles throughout the test and is not adequately trained. The marks should indicate that considerably more work is required. Otherwise, the skater, coach, and parents may conclude that it is merely a matter of waiting 27 days and it is likely that the test will pass. As an example, if a candidate for a Junior FS test misses most jumps and is skating at the Novice FS test level then marks for the lower level are in order.

5. Read pages 23 and 24 on technical and presentation marks for FS tests in the Judges' Manual for Singles and Pairs. Technical marks should reflect more than just jumps and spins accomplished. Skating skills and transitions are important. The IJS components can serve as a great checklist against which to determine a presentation mark as these are fundamental to what we are asking our skaters to accomplish in this mark. The Presentation mark box should contain some information about the program - both positive and negative - but often this is not the case.

## E. TEST RULES

1. Although you may have concerns about certain rules, we are all judges in the same organization and the rules must be applied consistently until such time that they are modified by Governing Council. The avenue for any concerns that judges may have about rules should be addressed to the Test, Singles, Pairs, and Dance committees. Developing local options for the rules is not acceptable.

2. Serious errors, quality errors, and mandatory errors are clearly defined and the presence of such errors must be reflected in the mark by **decreasing it below what would have been given in the absence of an error.**

3. The deduction for the two mandatory errors **must be applied** in all MIF tests. Count introductory steps! Do not allow moving starts when standing stationary starts are required!

4. The JIC must tell the skater to stop if the element has been started incorrectly or if he or she starts an element out of the prescribed order even if you disagree with the rule which is very clear. The JIC should be attentive at the start of a MIF element to be able to stop the skater promptly. There is no penalty for the first false start. However, a second false start necessitating a third start requires a deduction of 0.1 points below that which would have been given for the element.

5. **A reskate cannot be requested by the skater or the coach but only by a judge of the panel.** A reskate is not required even if the test has not passed by a small number of points. The reskate is the result of a conscious decision by at least two

judges that there is a chance that the test can pass if the skater can correct some element of the test. The reskate, if performed well, could then bring the total score for the test up to the required passing average, and constitute a passing test.

**6.** If a reskate is requested, the JIC or a designated judge should explain to the skater what element(s) needs to be reskated and the reason for this selection. No instruction as to how to fix the error can be given - that has to be done by the coach. The JIC should tell the skater to consult with his or her coach before repeating the element and to return to the JIC to state whether a warm-up is to be done first or whether the plan is to skate the element without a warm-up. This decision must be clearly expressed. Do not allow a skater to leave the discussion with the coach and start skating to do a jump or spin without designating whether it is a warmup or the official reskate. Tell the skater to stop and ask whether a warmup or reskate is planned.

**7.** A brief rest and warm-up is permitted before the reskate is performed. The rule does not limit the number of practice attempts. It is a good practice to not watch the attempts in the warmup period. If a skater successfully completes the element during the practice time, that element **cannot be accepted**. The choice has been made by the skater and the coach and communicated to the JIC as to which attempt "counts" as the official reskate. If the official reskate then is unsuccessful, the test must be marked as retry. If no warm-up is requested and the reskate is unsuccessful, a request by either the coach or skater for a second attempt must be denied.

**8.** If there is only one serious error in a free skate test a reskate may or may not be required depending on the overall quality of the other aspects of the program. The presentation mark for **substantially above average** skating may be used to balance the lower technical mark. Be judicious in the use of this option. Skaters are seldom that accomplished in the features of the second mark. Think about the comparisons that will be made between those skaters who have a serious error and those who are marked retry. However, if a reskate is requested and a serious error occurs during the reskate **the presentation mark cannot be used to pass the test**.

## **F. NEW/REVISED MIF**

A separate document detailing the current status of the level of expectations for the new and revised MIF is available. This document is dated as will be future versions based on continued discussions and feedback from the current series of judges' schools. This document can be used with the PSA document detailing expectation levels and common errors. That material will eventually be available in booklet form from the PSA.

## **G. THE 6.0 JUDGING SYSTEM**

The traditional 6.0 system is used in standard competition levels below Juvenile, in special events, and to some extent in higher level standard events at some competitions. The 6.0 system is also used to mark MIF and FS tests. Although we have two systems (IJS and 6.0), the 6.0 system utilizes many of the same criteria that were articulated and formalized under the IJS system. The following applies to the 6.0 system.

1. For MIF tests, one mark is given for each element of the test. Marks are added together for an overall test score. The score must be above the “passing average” for the test to pass. Otherwise, the test is marked as “retry.”

2. For free skate tests, two marks are given - 1) for technical merit, and 2) for presentation. These marks are independent of each other and the two marks may differ significantly. The presentation mark is very important and correlates closely to some of the component marks in the IJS system. In 6.0 competitions, judges use this mark, independent of the first mark, to reflect the presentation of the program. If presentation marks are not used properly, the lower level 6.0 events will be nothing more than jumping contests. Some of the IJS terminology that can apply to help a judge to determine the second mark include:

**Performance/Execution**

- carriage
- style and individuality
- projection
- variety and contrast

**Choreography/Composition**

- ice coverage
- unity of movements
- a sense of purpose
- phrasing of movements to music

**Interpretation**

- effortless movement in time to the music
- expression of the style and character of the music
- variations to the intensity, tempo, and dynamics of the music

3. For locally defined specialty events, a 0.1 point deduction in the first mark is required for the addition of each disallowed elements. Disregarding this requirement coupled with rewarding the skater for performing it unfairly distorts the resulting placements. A 0.2 point deduction should be used for omissions of each required element.

4. A list of 0.1 and 0.2 point deductions found on the top of worksheets for standard free skate events is given below. Deductions are taken from points that would have been assigned in the absence of the indicated items. Judges should have the requirement list on the judging stand to check for such things as limits on number of combination jumps and “repeat” rules for jumps as well as the requirements that spins be of a different nature. Note that a timing deduction called for by the referee results in a deduction in both marks.

- 0.1 in first mark for insufficient revolutions in a spin
- 0.1 in first mark for incomplete step sequence
- 0.2 in first mark for elements exceeding the maximum
- 0.2 in first mark for missing “required” element
- 0.1 in both marks for illegal elements
- 0.1 in both marks for time violation

5. Reward well performed single revolution jumps based on preparation, take-off, rotation, and landing. Don't overvalue multiple revolution jumps that do not have elevation, have incomplete rotation, or don't flow out on the landing. See pages 24-25 in the Judge's Manual for a discussion of this issue. If skaters receive high placements for poorly done multiple revolution jumps in lower level competitive events, that will encourage this type of skating and we will continue to see it in competitions. Furthermore, it is good training for the skater to develop quality jumps for eventual entry into IJS events.

6. Spins should be evaluated based on controlled entry and exit and have distinct positions and consistent speed. Distinguish between rotations in position and total rotations. Note the degree to which the spin exceeds, meets, or falls short of the requirements. See page 33 in the Judge's Manual. Value spins as important components of a program.

7. Unlike the IJS system, the judges in the 6.0 system make a decision to place or rank the skaters in an event. In addition, notes may be retained so that comparison can be made between the programs for each skater. The sum of the two marks is usually noted on a judge's worksheet. In order to properly rank the skaters, a constant review of previous marks for other skaters is made during breaks between skaters as well as during warmup periods. It is useful to decide early in the program whether a skater will be in the upper third, middle third, or bottom third of the skaters provided that impression holds up through the program. Then a more careful comparison can be made between skaters within these groups. A range of marks should be decided in advance such as 2.0 to 3.0 for each of the two marks of Juvenile events with the proviso that substantially below average skating could be below 2.0 and superior skating could be above 3.0. The important thing to note is that for large groups of skaters, it is important to have a wide range of marks so that there is always an available mark to assign to a skater.

8. For the same number of total points in the 6.0 system, the higher valued presentation mark determines the higher placement for numerical ties in the free skate. In short programs it is the first mark that determines the higher placement in the case of numerical ties.

9. The numerical values assigned by the judges are not displayed in non-qualifying competitions. Only the ordinal values - 1, 2, 3, etc. is shown and those values are used in conjunction with ordinal values of the other judges to obtain the final placement based on accounting rules of U.S. Figure Skating.

## **H. THE IJS SYSTEM**

A detailed discussion of the IJS system would entail an entire school. The goal in this school is to familiarize those who have not done IJS events with the basics in case they are placed on a panel at a non-qualifying competition as well as a review of new rules for all judges. A review of the GOE reductions and the features of positive GOE is given currently in ISU Communique 1557. Always check for the most recent communique.

## Screen Indicators

1. Due to a change in the ISU rules, some changes have been made to the program elements shown on screens such as for the mini system. For example, the downgrade indicator (<) will not be shown on the judge's screens even if the technical panel calls a downgrade which will eventually appear on the protocol sheets for the event. Judges must be able to identify under rotated jumps and reflect this in the GOE.
2. Edge mark indicators are still shown. There is an "e" for a clear edge change as noted by the Technical Panel and an "!" for an edge change alert. These require a reduced GOE as noted on the ISU notification.
3. The "\*" on the screen indicates that the element will receive no value. This is usually the result of a violation of the rules such as jumps in excess of the repeat rules. A GOE is still entered but it doesn't result in any increase in the total points for the skater.

## Grade of Execution (GOE)

1. The GOE (from +3 to -3) is used to mark the **quality** of each element of the program. These values are unrelated to the "level" (1 through 4) assigned by the technical panel for spins, spirals, and footwork. Judges should not give a high GOE because they have a feeling that the element has many facets that will result in a high level. In many cases the skater's attempt to increase the level of the element and negatively affect the overall quality of that element. In some of the judges stand set-ups, judges may hear the assigned level being called. However, a high level element may be performed badly and a low level element may be performed beautifully. Judges must evaluate only the quality of the element as it is skated.
2. Understand that a zero GOE is **not a baseline mark** from which you increase or decrease your GOE. Mark each element using the entire 7 point scale (-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3). Know as many of the features as possible that contribute to positive GOE.
3. The GOE required reduction guidelines have three distinct categories.
  - Errors requiring a specific GOE such as a -3 for an jump element completed with a rotation less than the required revolution. An example is a single axel skated when a double axel is required.
  - Errors requiring a GOE reduction and a GOE mark that is negative. An example is three turns between jumps of a combination jump.
  - Errors requiring a GOE reduction which could still result in a positive or zero GOE if the quality of the element is high and would otherwise merit a positive GOE. An example would be a touch down of a free foot.
4. Absolutely know the rules for short programs where there are several required elements such footwork leading into a specific jump or the required number of positions in a spin combination.
5. The final GOE is the result of considering the positive quality or GOE of an element and then taking reductions in the GOE as required. The result is the final GOE. Thus a small reduction could still result in a zero or even positive GOE.

## Component Marks

This portion of IJS system is the most difficult to assign without continuous study of the various aspects of the components. There are five components evaluating very different features of the skater's performance and the program. The component scores range from 0.25 to 10 in increments of 0.25. Only if the components are regarded as separate items can a skater and the program be properly marked. The component marks in total provide a "second mark" which can strongly affect the overall final place for the skater.

There are extensive details and description of the features encompassed within each component of the IJS system. However, a brief listing gives an idea of the items to consider for each mark.

- Skating Skills
  - Cleanness and sureness of edge
  - Flow and effortless glide
  - Varied power, speed, and acceleration
  - Balance, knee action, and foot placement
  - Multidirectional skating and one foot skating
- Transitions / Linking Footwork
  - Linkage and threading of elements
  - Variety
  - Intricacy
  - Minimum of cross-cuts
- Performance / Execution
  - Carriage
  - Style and individuality
  - Projection
  - Clarity
- Choreography / Composition
  - Meaningful arrangement and design of elements
  - Proportion of all parts
  - Unity of elements resulting in a composition
  - Pattern of ice coverage
- Interpretation
  - Movement and phrasing with the music
  - Expression of music's style and character
  - Use of finesse to reflect nuances of music
  - Expression without obvious effort

Judges must understand the separation of what constitutes features that are marked as GOE and those that are part of a component mark. **Skating skills is completely unrelated to how many multi-revolution jumps are done.** The five component marks may differ greatly for a skater. For example a skater could have wonderful skating skills but show no interpretation.

