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The Judge's Role

by Dianne DeLeeuw

What is the role of an ethical judge? An ethical judge must compare each skater or group of skaters to other skaters using the criteria on the judges sheet and assign a score to rank them. The judge must be absolutely fair, impartial, and totally knowledgeable to accomplish this.

One of the things I always try to instill in my students is that once you finish your performance, it's out of your hands. If you've put in your best performance and tried hard, the result doesn't matter. But guess what? It matters a lot! Every judge who picks up a pencil to write a score must realize this could change someone's life! The result of this competition is important, even if it is Tot Compulsories. Sometimes people judge the entire sport on the basis of this placement. Judges owe it to themselves, the sport and the participants to pay attention, be knowledgeable and informed, and be fair and impartial.

Take judging seriously and perform it professionally. The job is important.

Judging Problems Impact Competitions

Judges are crucial to the success of any competition, and competition results are only as good as their judges. All coaches who have students participating in an ISI competition are obligated to judge as volunteers. Each team of skaters is asked to supply one judge for every 10 events entered by that team. Participation by coaches as judges is an important balance for the success of these events.

Preventable problems arise when:

• A rink or team does not fairly supply qualified judges. This means there will not be an equitable mix of different rinks and some rinks will be asked to serve more than should be necessary. This is not good sportsmanship.

• Judges sit on a panel they are not qualified to judge. Unqualified judges may give credit where credit is not due, may not know the rules, or may not know the finer points to distinguish between placings.

• A judge is distracted, tired, or simply not paying attention. This judge may completely miss an element or not take care to reward each skater with deserved scores.

• Judges are personally influenced in their decisions. Sometimes a judge may not like a skater or a skater's coach and impartiality can be questioned. Other times a judge may simply not like the music or costume selection and allows this to cloud judgement.

• A judge intentionally (or even subconsciously) marks a skater from a certain rink or coach lower. This can happen and does! As a judge, you may not like a style or technique but your job is to score the result! An ethical judge also cannot mark a skater down for "sand-bagging"; they must be rewarded for what they do. (Perhaps you might speak to the Team Coach or Competition Director after the competition).

• Judges intentionally (or even subconsciously) award skaters they teach or from their rinks with a higher score. Sure your rink is great, your teaching techniques and creativity superior but keep an open mind when watching others. Yes, you want to win the overall Championship, but you must score fairly! It is not possible to have every panel full of judges from rinks not in the event,

especially at a local event.

No system is perfect. Every sport has its share of scandal, cheating and complaining. All we can do is try to make the ISI Competition program fun and fair for all. Remember it is Recreational Skating!