

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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YEAR-END UPDATE - FIGURE SKATING JUDGING FOR THE 2002/03 SEASON AND BEYOND

The 49th Ordinary Congress of the International Skating Union (ISU) held in Kyoto, Japan in June of 2002 formally accepted all the Urgent Proposals for discussion and vote. The Canadian Urgent Proposal No. 29 authorizing immediate implementation of new Judging protocols for Figure Skating for all ISU Figure Skating Championships and possibly International Figure Skating Competitions for the season 2002-2003 was approved by the Congress.

The same Kyoto Congress also approved, without amendment, the ISU Council's Urgent Proposal No. 4 calling for a future New Judging System for Figure Skating and authorizing: (1) development and testing of the New Judging System based on the criteria stated in Urgent Proposal No. 4, and (2) full use of "*the New Judging System when the ISU Council considers that it can be implemented at the major ISU Events*". The Kyoto Congress passed Urgent Proposal No. 4 (now Rule 121, paragraph 3) by a vote of 81 in favor to 16 against.

The purpose of this Media Release is to provide information on the use of Urgent Proposal No. 29 protocols (the "Interim Judging System") to-date, to report upon the testing and development of the "New Judging System" envisioned by Rule 121, paragraph 3, and to up-date progress toward future ISU implementation of the New Judging System.

1. Interim Judging System

The Interim Judging System has been used in 2002 to determine the actual competitive results of the Nebelhorn Trophy (GER), the six competitions in the *ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating* series held in Spokane (USA), Quebec City (CAN), Gelsenkirchen (GER), Paris (FRA), Moscow (RUS), and Kyoto (JPN), as well as the ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in The Hague (NED).

The methods adopted in the Interim Judging System for random selection of Judges, and the applicable procedures for maintaining anonymity and enhanced assessment of the Judges are summarized as follows:

- Each country with a skater in any discipline has the right to enter a judge for that specific discipline (See Rules 382, 527 and 772).
- The panels of judges consisting of up to 14 judges are drawn at the site of the Event concerned on the occasion of the first official meeting of the judges.

- For Championships, from the panel of 14 judges, 9 judges are secretly and randomly drawn by computer, whose marks form the result.
- For Grand Prix events and the Junior Grand Prix Final from a panel of 9 or 10 judges, 7 judges are secretly and randomly drawn, whose marks form the result.
- The existing 0-6 marking system remains in place for the time being.
- There is always a new random and secret draw of judges whose marks form the result for each part of the discipline; e.g. Short Program, Free Skating, and Compulsory Dance(s), Original Dance and Free Dance.
- The marks of all judges on the panel are shown in ascending order (not paired) with no indication of which marks count towards the final score.
- Neither the officials, judges, skaters nor the audience know which of the judges are registering the scores that determine the result.
- The Event Review Meeting after the completion of each competition is held in a workshop/seminar format moderated by the Referee. The standard of skating and the range of marks given are discussed, without being assigned to a specific judge or placement, and the possible groups (range) of placings are determined.
- Three times during the current season (after the Junior Grand Prix Final, after the Four Continents Figure Skating Championships and after the World Figure Skating Championships) the marks and places of the judges at ISU Events will be anonymously evaluated. In previous years evaluation only took place at the end of the season.
- Anomalies in placings and the range of marks are identified based on the range of acceptable places and marks agreed at the Event Review Meeting.
- Only when evidence is found of clear and/or repeated anomalies is the name of the judge identified.
- If the performance of a judge is found to be unsatisfactory, in accordance with existing rules, the judge can be prohibited from acting as a judge in ISU Championships or the Olympic Winter Games with immediate effect.

For additional details please see ISU Communication No. 1197.

2. Development and Testing of the New Judging System

In June 2002 the ISU Congress, after intensive debate, approved a major project to develop and implement a New Judging System for Figure Skating, Ice Dancing and Synchronized Skating (Urgent Proposal No 4 / ISU Regulations Rule 121, paragraph 3).

Subsequently a team of ISU experts, including Technical Committee Chairperson Alexander Lakernik, Technical Committee member Ann Shaw, Council member (and former Technical Committee Chairperson) Marie Lundmark, and consultants Peter Krick, Ted Barton and Andreas Sigurdsson, developed the new system in conjunction with Don Laws and Krisztina Regöczy, Co-Chair respectively member of the ISU Coaches Commission. The new system is based on an original concept devised by the ISU President and follows the main criteria of ISU Rule 121, paragraph 3, as adopted by the Kyoto Congress.

The trial New Judging System is being tested during the 2002/3 season with a view to initial adoption for the 2003/4 season if the ISU Council considers that it is ready to be implemented at selected ISU Events.

A. Figure Skating

The new system has been successfully tested at three competitions so far, the Nebelhorn Trophy, MasterCard Skate Canada International, and the ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final. On each occasion the test was conducted in parallel with the Interim Judging System. Placements of the Interim Judging System only were used to determine the official results of the competitions. Data from the tests has been carefully analyzed and used to improve the system. Views of leading officials, judges, coaches and skaters have all been incorporated in the process of development.

Judges operate the new system via the latest touch-screen technology. Some of the key features of the New Judging System are:

- The panel of qualified judges (judges nominated by ISU Member Federations and subsequently trained/educated for the New Judging System) are selected from a published ISU list respecting a geographical region concept.
- The principle of a secret and random draw of the judges whose marks form the result applies.
- The underlying principle of the judging system is cumulative, giving credit for each performed element or for additional criteria, rather than deducting for mistakes.
- Each element of a skater's program is assigned a base value according to an agreed scale of difficulty.
- Each performed element is input into the system by a group of experts whose responsibility is to identify the element only, supervised by an assigned Technical Controller.
- Immediately following the performance of each element during a program the judges give each element a plus or minus score, from a range of 7 grades, for the quality of execution of that element.
- In addition, immediately after the conclusion of each program the judges enter a separate score for each of the following, using a scale of 0 to 10 with increments of 0,5:
 - Skating ability and speed in relation to the technical elements;
 - Transitions and entries into elements;
 - Performance with regard to easy movement and sureness in time to the music, carriage and style etc. or unison (Pairs);
 - Choreography with regard to the harmonious composition of the program and its conformity to the music chosen.
 - Interpretation with regard to the accents and nuances of the music and the expression of the character and/or theme of the music.

A.1 Adding up the Marks

- The mean average mark of the judges' scores is used to calculate the mark for each element or additional criteria.
- The technical elements, including the quality of execution, skating ability, transitions, presentation, choreography and interpretation, are individually weighted according to the category and discipline (Novice, Junior, Senior).
- The sum of all 6 criteria as listed above is the total score of a skater/team in one part (e.g. Short Program, Free Skating etc.).
- The total score of the Short Program is added to the total score of the Free Program (and Qualifying Free Skating if applicable) producing the total competition score (the scores of the three parts are added in Ice Dance).

- The final ranking order of skaters/teams is based on the highest total competition score.
- Guidelines recommend a well-balanced program with an appropriate mixture of elements and include the possibility of individual expression, ideas and innovative developments.
- Information and major statistics such as personal best score, planned score to skate, performed score and current rank are made available to the media and the public.

A.2 Assessment of judges

To ensure the full accountability of judges, a process for the assessment of scores given for quality of execution and for the additional overall criteria has been adopted, similar to that devised for the Interim Judging System.

B. Ice Dance

The principles of scoring explained for Figure Skating are also valid for Ice Dancing.

- A base value is given to each required element and sequence of steps, according to a scale of difficulty.
- Each performed element is input into the system by a group of experts whose responsibility is to identify the element only, supervised by an assigned Technical Controller.
- The judges give each element a “Grade of Execution” for the quality of performance, from a range of 7 different grades, and also points for additional overall criteria.

B.1 Compulsory Dances

The technique of required elements/sequences is marked in a similar way to the elements for Single Skating. In addition, the following overall criteria are scored using a scale of 0 to 10 with increments of 0,5:

- Timing in relation to the music;
- Performance with regard to the balance between skaters, the unison and holds, body alignment, carriage and style etc.;
- Interpretation with regard to the expression of the character of the dance, the interpretation of the nuances and accents of the music etc.;
- Skating Skills with regard to the depth and quality of edge, flow, cleanness and sureness of steps, general skating technique etc.

B.2 Original Dance and Free Dance

The required elements and the sequences of steps are identified by the group of Technical Specialists. The values of these elements (according to an agreed scale) are credited to the skaters’ “account”, and the judges give credit by marking the “Grade of Execution” (quality). In addition the judges mark overall criteria using a scale of 0 to 10 with increments of 0,5 as follows:

- Timing in relation to the music;

- Performance with regard to the balance between skaters, the unison and holds, body alignment, carriage and style etc.;
- Interpretation with regard to the expression of the character of the dance, the interpretation of the nuances and accents of the music etc.;
- Skating Skills with regard to the depth and quality of edge, flow, cleanness and sureness of steps, general skating technique etc.;
- Technical Transitions with regard to the variety, difficulty and originality of dance footwork and pattern, the variety of speed etc.

The method for calculation of results is identical to the method described for Figure Skating.

C. Synchronized Skating

The Judging System for Synchronized Skating is very similar to the system for Ice Dancing:

- A base value is given to all performed elements such as circles, lines, wheels, intersections, blocks, moves in the field, pair elements, spins, jumps and step sequences according to their scale of difficulty, which the Technical Specialist identifies.
- The values of such performed elements are credited to the team's "account", and the judges give each element a "Grade of Execution" for the quality of performance, from a range of 7 different grades.

The other overall criteria, judged on a scale from 0 to 10 with increments of 0,5 are:

- Skating Skills
- Transitions
- Performance
- Choreography
- Interpretation

The method for calculation of results is identical to the method described for Figure Skating and Ice Dancing.

The first in-competition test for Synchronized Skating is scheduled for the international event in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, on February 20-22, 2003.

3. The New Judging System Test Results are Positive

The rapid and positive development of the New Judging System is encouraging. The ISU will continue to give the testing and development program top priority giving consideration to questions, suggestions and debate about the merits of the New Judging System before implementation

Unfortunately, certain unfounded criticisms and erroneous statements concerning the New Judging System have been circulated by a few persons and media outlets.

The ISU believes the proper response is an accurate recitation of the initiatives already undertaken and now underway by the ISU Congress, the ISU Council, and many dedicated experts and individuals in bringing essential reforms and modernization to the judging of ISU

Figure Skating competitions. The results so far obtained are beyond the most optimistic expectations.

Fine-tuning of the technical aspects will continue in the coming weeks, and increased efforts will be made to present and explain all aspects, tests results and developments respecting the New Judging System to the skating family. A plan for the education of skaters and coaches as well as all the officials who will be involved in the operation of the New Judging System has also been developed. Educational tools will include hand-books and CDRoms/tapes, as well as dedicated seminars.

At the appropriate time, possibly during the Council Meeting in Washington, D. C. following the World Figure Skating Championships at the end of March, 2003, further decisions will be taken by the ISU Council concerning the implementation of the New Judging System for Figure Skating. As stated in Rule 121, paragraph 3, sub-paragraph p), the ISU Council has the possibility to implement the New Judging System at mayor ISU Events. Implementation at ISU Championships is however not likely before the season 2004/05.

Of course, all decisions taken will be announced in an ISU Communication issued as required by the ISU Constitution in Article 21, paragraph 2.

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