



Introduction to Figure Skating

Figure Skating is a sport with many dimensions. Some of the disciplines include: Singles, Pairs, Dance, Synchronized Skating, Figures, and Moves-in-the-Field. More about them later. But first, what about the sport in general?

Skaters normally begin to skate in a group lesson environment, such as a Learn-to-Skate program. Learn to Skate classes are taught on a regular basis throughout the year, and are a very cost-effective way to learn the basics of skating, whether your interest is in competitive figure skating, recreational skating, or hockey. When skaters have learned the basic elements of skating in this group environment they will be eligible for advanced lessons, private lessons, and hockey leagues. The following types of skating are available for testing and/or competitions:

Free Skating / Freestyle

This is the discipline in Figure Skating that most spectators are familiar with. In Freeskating, or "Singles Freestyle" skating, a skater performs a "program" that lasts anywhere from 1 to 4-1/2 minutes, is composed of elements such as jumps and spins, and is usually skated to music.

Ice Dance

Ice Dance emphasizes the techniques of edgework, flow, and motion of 2 skaters together in rhythmic interpretation of music. Ice Dancing has 2 main focus areas, the "Compulsory Dances", and the "Free Dances".

In compulsory dances, skaters are given a very specific pattern to follow. This pattern is shown in the form of a drawing which specifies the skater's moves right down to which foot is doing what particular step during every single "beat" of the music. Dancers are marked on their ability to skate the required pattern with demonstrated musical feeling.

In free dances, skaters get to make up their own "programs", within specified guidelines. These programs must demonstrate basic dance elements and steps in a musical, but not "theatrical" way. No jumps or spins are allowed, and dancers are required to stay close together throughout the course of the dance program.

Traditionally, dance has been a discipline in which 2 skaters compete as partners. In recent years the category of "Solo Dance" has become very popular. In this category skaters perform the same compulsory dances as they would in traditional partnered dance, however Free Dance programs are redesigned to suit the needs of single skaters.

Showcase / Spotlight

Showcase/Spotlight skating is a discipline in which competitors use the medium of skating to present a theatrical program designed primarily to entertain. Skaters in this discipline place more focus on the presentation or performance aspects of the program than on the technical difficulty contained. At many competitions Showcase events are offered in categories of "Light Entertainment" or "Dramatic", or "Duet". Props and costumes are used to enhance the theatrical nature of the program. This event is offered in both ISI and USFS competitions. ISI also offers a couples and family spotlight division.

Artistic

Artistic events are offered in ISI competitions. The focus of an artistic program is choreography, artistic impression, correctness of the elements, pattern, flow, posture, and musicality. Technical proficiency is not the main focus of this program but skaters will be judged on the correctness of the skills they choose to incorporate.

Interpretive or Improvisation

Offered at both ISI and USFS competitions. Similar to Showcase events, these events are designed to allow the skaters to focus on the expression or performance aspects of their program. However in this discipline the skaters must independently DESIGN (or choreograph) their own program to music preselected by the competition committee, and unknown to the skaters until the moment their

flight warmup begins. These events give the skaters the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to CREATE something new. Typically the skaters hear the musical selection twice on warmup then all skaters are sequestered in a "far away" locker room while other skaters from their flight perform their programs.

Pairs

Pairs skating is similar in many respects to singles freeskating, except that 2 skaters perform together. This adds all sorts of opportunities for new moves, such as lifts, throws, and pair spins and jumps. Pairs skating is available for both ISI and USFS skaters. USFS has both "long" and "short" programs, just like singles freeskating, and a test structure which includes: Preliminary, Juvenile, Intermediate, Novice, Junior, and Senior. ISI has Pairs 1-10 where skaters must test and then compete at the last test level passed.

Couples

Couples skating is available in ISI and is similar in many respects to pairs and singles freeskating, except that 2 skaters perform together. Couples skating blends elements of dance, singles skating, and pairs. Couples can be mixed or similar. Skaters must test levels to be eligible to compete.

Moves-in-the-Field

Moves in the Field is a test structure in USFS. Moves-in-the-Field, or "Moves" is a technical discipline, designed to help skaters improve their execution of the basic moves of skating. Edgework, turns, stroking, body control and extension are emphasized, mostly done with "power" as a primary focus. The Moves-in-the-Field discipline is primarily a test discipline, although some competitions are running Moves events. Moves-in-the-Field has test levels matching each singles freestyle level, and it is required that all skaters testing freestyle must pass the equivalent Moves test prior to taking the corresponding test in the freestyle or pairs disciplines. Skaters who pass ISI Delta or LTS-USA Freeski 2 are ready to start working on and testing Moves-in-the-Field.

Synchronized Skating

Synchronized Team Skating (once known as "precision skating") is a "team" event, with teams of 8 to as many as 24 skaters skating complicated routines similar to those performed by marching bands or drum corps. Large teams may execute patterns of incredible complexity and beauty. The teamwork and timing required makes this a challenging sport. Precision skating is another discipline where age is not a significant barrier, and adults nationwide enjoy and compete in this discipline. Synchronized Skating is available in both ISI and USFS

Figures

Figures (or "Patch", as it was commonly called) is the discipline that gave our sport its name but the discipline is no longer part of the mandatory test requirements for USFS. Figures primarily emphasizes body control and edges/turns. Figures are the famous "figure 8s" for which the sport is named, and there are dozens of different ways to modify the basic figure 8 for testing purposes. Each variant emphasizes a certain skill, and all require great concentration and stamina to perform. Figures tests are still part of the ISI test and competitive structure.

Solo Compulsories

Solo compulsory programs are a combination of skills for each level that a skater performs as a mini-program with no music. Competitions list the prescribed elements for each level on a competition announcement. This event is available in both ISI and USFS Competitions.

Other Team Events

ISI has many team events for skaters who may not be comfortable with solo skating or may enjoy participating as part of a team. This