

KEEPING SCORE

UNDERSTANDING THE INTERNATIONAL JUDGING SYSTEM

The international judging system (IJS) is used at all international competitions as well as at most U.S. Figure Skating qualifying events.

The IJS is based on cumulative points achieved during each skater's/team's performance. Under the IJS, points are awarded for a technical score combined with points awarded for five program components: skating skills, transitions, performance, composition and interpretation of the music/timing (ice dance). Penalties are given for falls, program length violations and other violations.

If a skater performs more than the defined "well-balanced program elements," there are no deductions, but the additional elements will not be calculated into the skater's score. If a skater performs less than the required elements, he or she receives fewer points, but not deductions. (The exception to this is ice dance, which takes a 1.0 deduction for each extra element.)

Judges do not compare skaters and rank them. Instead, they evaluate the qualities of each performance. As such, starting order does not impact a skater's score.

A maximum of nine judges make up the judges panel at a competition. Judges names are linked to the scores they give at U.S. Figure Skating and ISU events using the IJS.

The IJS also uses a trimmed mean method, where the high and low points are ignored, and the average of the remaining points is calculated.

HOW IT WORKS THE PLAYERS

A technical panel consisting of five people works as a team and has direct communication. These positions are a technical controller, technical specialist, assistant technical specialist, data operator and video replay operator.

During each performance, the technical specialist identifies the elements and the level of difficulty of each element, if applicable, as defined by the ISU. This allows the judges to concentrate on marking the quality of each element. Their marks are based on set criteria for each element and provide a comprehensive assessment of each skater's skills and performance.

The technical controller and the assistant technical specialist support the primary technical specialist to ensure that all elements are identified correctly. Any element can be reviewed either by the technical controller, the technical specialist, the assistant technical specialist or the judges.

Final decisions on elements and levels are determined by the majority opinion of the three technical positions. Both specialists and the controller are recorded with an audio tape during each program, and video is available to verify the calls. The elements can be reviewed after a skater's performance, and scores can be changed accordingly. The scores are final once they are posted and announced to the public.

Under the IJS, the judges focus completely on scoring the quality of each technical element and the five program components for each skater. The computer keeps track of scores, records results and calculates totals to determine rankings.

TECHNICAL SCORE

In the technical score, each element of the program is assigned a base value. A group of experts, including experienced skaters and coaches, have determined the base value of each technical element. These base values give the skaters credit for every element they perform.

Some elements, such as spins and step sequences, have levels of difficulty on which the base values are established. During the program, when a skater executes an element, the technical specialist identifies the element. The judge then grades the quality of the element within a range of +5 to -5, and the corresponding value is added to or deducted from the base value.

For instance, a double Axel's base value is 3.3, and a skater has the potential to earn 4.8 points for that jump or as little as 1.8. In this example, the positive and negative grades are 0.5 points each.

The sum of all elements with the grade of execution forms the technical score. The base values for all elements are included in the ISU's scale of values.

The judging panel's scores for each program component are multiplied by a set factor to ensure the technical score and the program component score are approximately balanced. The technical score is added to the program component score. Deductions are taken for rule violations. The result is the segment score. The sum of all segment scores (for example, short program plus free skate) is the total competition score. The skater with the highest total competition score is declared the winner. For more information about IJS, including a listing of element base values, visit usfigureskating.org/about/scoring-system.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

In addition to the technical score, the judges will award points on a scale from 0.25 to 10 (with increments of 0.25) for five program components to grade the overall presentation. For pairs skating and ice dance, there must be equal demonstration of the criteria by both skaters:

SKATING SKILLS

Overall cleanness and sureness, edge control and flow over the ice surface demonstrated by a command of the skating vocabulary (edges, steps, turns, etc.), the clarity of technique and the use of effortless power to accelerate and vary speed.

Criteria: Use of deep edges, steps and turns; balance, rhythmic knee action and precision of foot placement; flow and glide; varied use of power, speed and acceleration; use of multi-directional skating; and use of one-foot skating.

TRANSITIONS

The varied and purposeful use of intricate footwork, positions, movements and holds that link all elements. **Criteria:** Continuity of movements from one element to another; variety (including variety of holds in ice dance); difficulty, intricacy and quality.

PERFORMANCE

The involvement of the skater/pair/couple physically, emotionally and intellectually as they deliver the intent of the music and composition.

Criteria: Physical, emotional and intellectual involvement and projection; carriage and clarity of movement; variety and contrast of movements and energy; individuality/personality; unison and “oneness” (pairs and ice dance); spatial awareness between partners – management of the distance between partners and management of changes of hold (pairs and ice dance).

COMPOSITION

An intentional developed and/or original arrangement of all types of movements according to the principles of musical phrase, space, pattern and structure.

Criteria: Purpose (idea, concept, vision, mood); pattern and ice coverage; multidimensional use of space and design of movements; phrase and form (movements and parts structured to match the musical phrase); originality of the composition.

INTERPRETATION OF THE MUSIC/TIMING

ICE DANCE: The personal, creative and genuine translation of the rhythm, character and content of the music to the movement on ice.

Criteria: Movement and steps in time to the music (timing); expression of the music’s character/feeling and rhythm, when clearly identifiable; use of finesse* to reflect the details and nuances of the music; relationship between the partners reflecting the character and rhythm of the music (pairs and ice dance); skating primarily to the rhythmic beat for short dance and keeping a good balance between skating to the beat and melody in the free dance (ice dance).

***Finesse** is the skater’s refined, artful manipulation of music details and nuances through movement. It is unique to the skater/skaters and demonstrates an inner feeling for the music and the composition. Nuances are the personal ways of bringing subtle variations to the intensity, tempo and dynamics of the music made by the composer and/or musicians.