

# INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Figure Skating:** **New Judging System on the 2004 ISU Congress Agenda**

The first issue of the agenda for the 50<sup>th</sup> ISU Ordinary Congress has been distributed to ISU Members. The agenda will be finalized by mid-April and the 2004 Congress will be held from 7-11 June in Scheveningen, the Netherlands, at the Kurhaus Hotel where the ISU was founded in 1892.

The biggest decision for the Figure Skating Session will be related to the adoption of a New Judging System for Figure Skating, Ice Dancing and Synchronized Skating, which is being presented unanimously by the Council and all three Figure Skating Technical Committees.

The New Judging System is being proposed for use in ISU Championships, the Grand Prix of Figure Skating (senior and junior) and international events from 2004/5 onwards, including the 2006 Olympic Winter Games.

During two years of development and testing, valuable input has been received from Members, skaters, and more than 50 respected international coaches and other individuals in response to requests for suggested improvements to the New Judging System used to judge the 2003 Nebelhorn Trophy and the 2003 Grand Prix of Figure Skating (senior) series. The majority of the improvements proposed have been wholly or partially incorporated into the agenda proposal.

The New Judging System used at the Grand Prix events requires extensive computer technology. In order to make the New Judging System affordable for all international competitions (if approved by the Congress) considerable work is being done to develop a PC based version that would be available to ISU Members at a very reasonable cost. Software would be provided for free by the ISU. ISU Members themselves could decide whether to implement the New Judging System at national and club events.

The ISU Council has identified an adequate budget to ensure that all ISU Officials could be trained in time for the new season if the New Judging System is adopted for 2004/5.

The full agenda is available from [www.isu.org](http://www.isu.org) .

### **About the New Judging System**

The New Judging System was developed following a decision of the ISU Congress in June 2002 but studies started in February 2002 and therefore technical experts were involved and tests were made over more than two years. It is a revolutionary step forward in the judging of figure skating. Skaters receive points for each element of their program according to an agreed scale. Points are added or subtracted based on assessment by judges of the quality of execution of each element, according to strict criteria. At the end of the program judges also give five marks for presentational aspects of the performance, such as interpretation of the music. Scores for each of a skater's programs are added and the highest score wins.

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Full technical details and the rationale for the New Judging System are available from [www.isu.org](http://www.isu.org). See in particular Communications 1207 and 1224 about the point scores and Communication 1238 about assessment of judges. See also Communication 1242 concerning Synchronized Skating.

## **Anonymity of Judges**

The ISU is conscious of the ongoing discussions on whether the anonymity of judges' marks/scores should be maintained if the New Judging System is adopted by the Figure Skating Section of the 2004 Congress.

It is a fact that as long as the marks/scores awarded by judges could be specifically identified the risk of external pressures and influences inevitably existed. Pressure might be implicit or explicit and the response to it conscious or sub-conscious. Anonymity (before, during and after the event) reduces the risk of judges coming under external pressure. This does not mean that there would be no control; on the contrary assessment of judges' performances will be more accurate with this new system.

The previous judging system and assessment process proved insufficient to prevent and correct repeated judging problems which occurred over a period of years, culminating in the controversy surrounding the 2002 Olympic Pairs event.

With this in mind, a proposal was made by Skate Canada to create an interim system, i.e. between the traditional 6.0 and the New Judging System at the 2002 ISU Congress. The Figure Skating Section approved with 39 votes in favor the adoption of anonymous judging for the "Interim Judging System" that is presently used for ISU Championships. Only 8 Figure Skating Members voted against this procedure.

It must be added that the ISU Council has also taken the necessary steps in order to ensure full accountability. These procedures (see ISU Communication 1238) are far more efficient and democratic than before. The assessment process for the season 2002/03 was been completed and the findings were published in ISU Communication 1217. The assessment process for the season 2003/04 is underway and the outcome will be published as soon as it is available.

Arguments have been that the pressure of immediate scrutiny by the public and the media is essential to guarantee fair judging. It must be said (and this is not intended as any kind of criticism) that the objectivity and technical knowledge of the audience and media vary from one event to another and it is evident from the experience of the previous judging system that pressure from those within the arena and the media does not necessarily work in favor of fair judging.

Anonymity allows the judge to assess skaters objectively, free from possible pressure from his/her National Federation, parents, coaches and media of the "home country", skaters and other officials. The judge knows that he/she is creating an auditable electronic record that will permit comparative evaluation for significant mistakes and/or bias.

Under the New Judging System some claim that anonymous judging is no longer necessary since the element values determined by the Technical Specialists and the Technical Controller constitute the substantial basis for each total score. Nevertheless, the judges' scores for quality of execution of elements and program components comprise a large part of the total score. When two skaters or

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couples have a similar technical standard the judges' scores are likely to be the deciding factor. For these reasons the New Judging System proposal on the Congress agenda specifies that the scores of the judges shall remain anonymous.

However, it can be affirmed that one of the many advantages of the New Judging System would be ample documented statistics that would allow for an even more comprehensive assessment based on a larger number of marks. Such objective statistical analysis is not possible under the previous 6.0 system or the current Interim Judging System.

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