

It is widely understood that to become a high performance athlete you need to have accumulated 10,000 hours or more of skill training along the road. We begin that skill training at this stage - How much time is lost with our complete focus on competing? How many more group lessons could we be teaching if less of the season were focused on competitions and more of the season focused on skating and learning? Certainly we are not saying no competitions – but competitions at this stage must support the acquisition of skills – not impede the skill development!

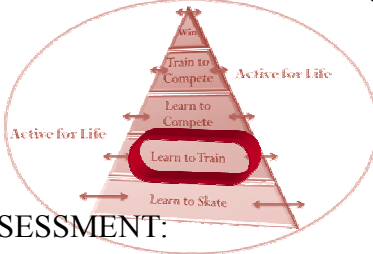
(2) Our second major problem with this stage is that we introduce external evaluation too soon. In CanSkate, athletes are evaluated on an on-going basis by the coaches that they work with on a regular basis. As soon as they finish CanSkate they move to a system where they are evaluated on a specific day, by the “big and scary” evaluator who they have never met before. Clearly we need to develop our athletes so that they can successfully deal with the stresses of the external evaluation that is inevitable.

What LTAD is saying at this stage is that we need to be gradually introducing external evaluation – and particularly introducing it in such a way as to not interfere with that rapid skill learning! We tried to address this problem when we introduced the evaluation system in 1990 – but it is still not 100% successful – and it is time to be looking at this question again.

(3) Finally – on the most important skills of skating: edge, turn and balance! Skating Skills were introduced as a replacement for figures in training these critical factors. Unfortunately the program is still not widely accepted in the country and therefore is not meeting the demands of the sport. We have the best skaters in the world – but in many ways that is despite the program, not because of the program!


Canadian Sport For Life

Learn to Train



HIGHLIGHTS - PROGRAM ASSESSMENT:

- Many skaters over-competing and under-training
- External evaluation at this stage is too early in the athlete development
- Skating Skills program is not meeting the demands of the sport



15

The BC Coast Region board of directors have discussed all the above concepts. In recognition of the notification on the Skate Canada “Members only site” that the national board has adopted the LTAD model and it’s philosophies and concepts, and in consideration of our skating family (athletes/coaches/parents & volunteers) here in the BC Coast Region we propose the following as a transitional pilot program for this year and perhaps a long-term bridge to assist our skating family in this change in our sport.

As stated previously: “Even though we know this is the best time to be learning skills, we have made competition SO important that children are being held-back from their skill acquisition for success in competition. This is the BIGGEST complaint that we have from coaches from across the country. Even those coaches who “hold skaters back” lament that they feel they have to do so.”

We recognize that there is an attraction to having a solo, dressing up formally and inviting friends and family to a performance opportunity, our proposal is aimed at meeting that need while still respecting the philosophies and concepts of the LTAD with regards to competition at this level.

Proposal

We propose the creation of a Performance Program to replace the category of Elementary competition this season in the BC Coast Region. We propose piloting this concept at the Victoria Day Interclub Competition. Skaters participating in the Performance Program register for the program and pay a fee of \$40.00. This fee covers costs of a recognition item for each participant as well as promotional costs.

Performance program members are then entitled to skate at each event again for a charge representative of ice costs only. There will be a feedback mechanism such as an adjudication/assessment providing feedback on three criteria:

1. Performance & Execution
2. Skating Skills
3. Transitions

Ultimately we envision everyone in the program receiving an additional item to add to their original recognition item...could be a ribbon with bars received at each performance opportunity. Perhaps a chance to win some additional item at the end of the season for those skaters that complete the collection of recognition items. It has been suggested that adjudicators could award a level for each performance – Gold, Silver or Bronze very similar to the dance recital system currently in place in Canada.

Why do this ?

As noted in the LTAD presentation: If we are to retain competitions as a part of our programming at this stage, then we must consider the rationale very carefully to determine if it truly does meet a developmental purpose.

We cannot justify the current elementary event as it flies in the face of the principles and concepts adopted by our association. We also feel that if we merely eliminate the competitive opportunity at this late juncture, then competition planning will be affected (ice bids are already out and about), coaching income will be affected, and our young enthusiastic skaters and their families will have a sudden negative change to their anticipated season – particularly if they have been previously skating with us and “finally” have made it into that special group of “solo” skaters.

When we look at skating in general and the marketing precepts as outlined at the CanSkate sessions in Edmonton (at the National ACGM), we are encouraged to use the words: Athletic, Artistic, Competitive –

we want to be different than other learn to skate options. A performance program would meet that goal and assist our grass roots programs in being competitive for that skating market.

If we remove the external evaluation piece from the elementary event we achieve several things....coaches will no longer feel the pressure to ie: cram an “advanced skating element” into a young skaters development path as it will make no difference what elements they have in their program. In fact their programs will be matched to their skill and development levels. We can schedule this performance program throughout a competition activity as we no longer need to work around Judges schedules...these could potentially take place during a judges mealtime providing a break for our hard working judges.

We have heard commentary on how hard it is to sit through 8 groups of elementary 8 & under and that understanding just exactly what some of those skaters are attempting can be difficult, it is also very disheartening for the skaters involved to see the obviously ‘held back’ athletes win the event. This new option will hopefully would make the performance program less attractive to those that are developmentally ready for actual competition.

Performing a routine to music is something that these children are familiar with in other areas of their lives, they have Christmas concerts at school, may perform in dance festivals or year-end recitals. This fits our skating world into their realm of understanding and into the LTAD as adopted by Skate Canada.

In conclusion

We are sharing this information with you as background in support of the planned pilot of this concept at the Victoria Day Interclub Competition – details of the event are enclosed in the VDI competition announcement.

We are excited to pilot this concept at the 2010 VDI competition and hope that skaters, coaches and parents will embrace this opportunity to try something new, acting as change agents in our skating family.

W. Martin-Stroyan
On behalf of the
BC Coast Region Board of Directors
Revised March 2010