

NEW COMPETITIVE CHALLENGE: Compulsory Free Style Elements Competition

by Cecily A. Morrow

What sort of jumps and spins are mid range competitors doing today . . . and how are they doing them? How are the takeoffs and landings? How clean are the edges in and out? How does the skater look during the maneuver and overall?

Some of us were asking ourselves these questions, and felt discouraged, uneasy. Today's skaters, for good reason, are rushing into doubles and triples and flashy combination spins to perform in a highly competitive environment.

After some soul-searching and practical planning, a new competitive event emerged this summer as part of the Lake Placid summer Free Style Competition. I got together with Carol Vaughn, Director of Figure Skating for the Olympic Regional Development Authority, and we sent a proposal to Frederick LeFevre, USFSA Chief Referee of the competition. With his assistance, a Free Style Elements event was initiated.

Six Novice level competitors took to the ice, each to perform the same five compulsory moves. In the silence we expect in figure competition they were judged on the purely technical aspects of their spins and jumps and on the manner of their presentation.

The new event was met with enthusiasm. Afterwards, Mr. LeFevre discussed modifications of this year's format which could be incorporated next year with Gustave Lussi, the 87 year old expert in jumping and spinning, and myself.

Among these modifications was a definite and challenging limitation on the amount of space to be allowed each competitor for the execution of the maneuver; the three of us agreed that a skater's control of a jump could best be demonstrated on an ice strip approximately twenty feet wide. This would allow for maximal ice utilization, since the rink could be divided into warm-up areas and strips for conducting the competition.

Mr. LeFevre suggested that we use the Lussi rink for next summer's event in Lake Placid. (It was dedicated to Gustave F. Lussi for his contributions to figure skating). The surface, smallest of the four in the Olympic Complex, is generally used for figures and would lend itself particularly well to an event in which freestyle elements are skated in a compulsory figure setting. Since the rink has no barriers, judges can stand at rinkside and easily observe skaters' tracings and other subtle details of execution.

We expect that this plan will provide an exciting and appropriate incentive to young, developing skaters who come to Lake Placid's summer competition.

It is also our goal to see more of this sort of competition, where spins and jumps, the athletic aspect of figure skating, are subjected to close scrutiny . . . tracings, posture, flow in and out . . . so that we may, as pros, rink management, and USFSA officials, encourage the highest quality in United States figure skating. ■