

Don't be too quick to celebrate that 4.1 from Judge Number One. Didn't this same judge mark other skaters at 4.2 and 4.4? So, even with a respectable 4.1, "our girl" has actually been ranked Third by Judge Number One. Perhaps her competitor received a mark of "only" 3.9 from Judge Number Two; but if that 3.9 was the highest mark he awarded to any skater in the group, then Judge Number Two has placed that skater First, while ranking "our girl" Second on 3.8. Note also that Judge Number Two ranked her higher using a mark of 3.8, than Judge Number One did awarding her a 4.1!

But wait - there's still more to do before we can start handing out the medals! Because each programme contributes a different percentage to the final championship score, placements for the two programmes must be "weighted". In Singles, the short program counts for one third of the final score; the long programme counts for two thirds. So each skater's placement is multiplied by a factor that reflects that programme's share of the final score. This product is called (surprise!) the *factored placement*. The final step in deciding the championship is to add the factored placements of the two programmes together and compare them all. The skater with the lowest total factored placement wins.

Let's look at some examples: in Singles, the short programme factor is 0.5 (representing 33.3%) and the long programme factor is 1.0 (representing 66.7%). The top three skaters in the short programme will therefore have factored placements of (1 x 0.5), (2 x 0.5) and (3 x 0.5), that is: 0.5, 1.0, and 1.5, respectively. Remember, at this point, lower is better. This means that if any one of these skaters also wins the long programme, that skater will win the competition, no matter how well the other skaters do. For example, if the 3rd-placed skater in the short programme also won the long, she would have a total factored placement of 2.5 (1.5 in the short + 1.0 in the long = 2.5). The best the 1st-placed skater could do would be to finish 2nd in the long, which would also equal a factored placement of 2.5 (0.5 + 2.0 = 2.5). But ties are broken in favour of the skater who wins the long programme, so the skater who came 3rd in the short would also win the championship. *Q.E.D.*

On the other hand, if a skater comes 4th or lower in the short programme, that skater cannot win the overall competition without "help" from the higher placed skaters. For example, a skater who came 4th in the short, but then went on to win the long, would have a total factored placement of 3.0 (2.0 in the short + 1.0 in the long). In order for that placement to win the competition, the skater who came 1st in the short programme would have to place no higher than 3rd in the long (0.5 in the short + 3.0 in the long = 3.5). Or, as Scott Hamilton once remarked, "You may not be able to win a championship with your short programme, but you sure can lose it!"

After the last Winter Olympics, scoring methods and the mathematics of scoring are still very much under review. Just last month, three mathematicians published an article in *Math Horizons* titled "The Canadians Should Have Won!" It can be read on the Mathematics Association web site <[www.maa.org](http://mathcs.muhlenberg.edu/~rykkes/skating-full.pdf)> or downloaded as a PDF reprint from <<http://mathcs.muhlenberg.edu/~rykkes/skating-full.pdf>>. The ISU has recently proposed a revolutionary new system of judging which would be based on awarding points for skating elements and aspects. In

theory, this should lead to an absolute score that would be comparable between competitions, and could be used to determine a personal best, or compare a personal best with a world record score. Each skater would receive a detailed report after each competition which would point out areas needing improvement or more attention. (Scott Thode recently attended a presentation on this new proposal while he was in Europe and may have more to tell us about it, soon.)

Meanwhile, you may well be thinking that only a math whiz or a masochist would ever try to keep track of the placements for every skater, even in the smallest event. But if you should find that you just can't wait for the results to be posted, it is certainly possible to work out the relative standings for several skaters within a grade by simply following the steps set out above. You can even download blank worksheets from the Figure Skater's Website <www.sk8stuff.com>. (Look under "basic reference", "OBO".) But unless the marks you're looking at are yours, you're likely to find that watching paint dry is considerably more exciting.

- Larry Timberlake

Happy Birthday

January

| | |
|------|------------------|
| 3rd | Caitlin O'Connor |
| 6th | Thomas Niu |
| 7th | Beatrix Kirkman |
| 22nd | Tao Yuan Lin |

February

| | |
|------|-----------------|
| 4th | Joanna Cornwall |
| 6th | Michelle Frost |
| 7th | Dee Pulman |
| 11th | Katie Brown |
| 11th | Simon Thode |
| 16th | Julianna Niu |
| 22nd | Christina Liang |
| 24th | Caitlin Haynes |

March

| | |
|------|-----------------|
| 5th | Joel Watson |
| 11th | Ara Marinkovich |
| 31st | Emma Wofendale |

April

| | |
|------|-----------------|
| 6th | Hannah McAvoy |
| 10th | Rebecca Liu |
| 13th | Teresa Graham |
| 19th | Graeme Sullivan |

For Sale

Figure Skates: Graf Galaxy Extra Light: Ladies size 7 medium (Good condition ~ only worn for 9 months): \$450.00
Ph: 828 4742

Auckland Ice Figure Skating Club Trackpants
Age 10 - 12 : \$20.00 Ph: 828 4742



AUCKLAND ICE FIGURE SKATING CLUB NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2003

Address label

Committee:

Dael Haynes (President)
Ph 272 3536
E-mail d.haynes@auckland.ac.nz

Chris Pulman (Vice-President)
Ph 834 6686

Delwyn Watson (Secretary)

Nick Winspear (Treasurer)

Keith Darvill
Allen Kuo
Ray Pulman
Lenore Thode
Scott Thode
Susan Timberlake

Postal Address

AIFSC
P O Box 15 540
New Lynn
AUCKLAND

Web site

www.nzisa.com/pages/clubs/auckland.htm

In this Issue...

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- Keeping Score

NZISA AGM will be held in Christchurch on Saturday 5 April.

For those of you who have had a break from skating over the summer, welcome back for another action-packed year! Only a month remains until the first competition of the year, The Autumn Championships on 27th April. Here are the competition dates for the rest of the year so you can mark up your calendar:

AIFSC Autumn Champs: Sunday 27 April 7:30am to 11:45am

AIFSC Club Champs: Saturday 12 July 7:30am to 11:45am
Sunday 13 July 7:30am to 11:45am

North Island Championships: Sunday 24 August 7:00am to 9:15am
(NI committee to confirm.) Monday 25 August 6:15pm to 10pm

National Championships: Monday 6 October to Thursday 9 October

Australian Competitions 2003

Hollins Trophy, Sydney Friday 6 June to Monday 9 June
WinterSun Trophy, Brisbane Wednesday 9 July to Saturday 12 July

Skaters are reminded they need to get permission from the NZISA to enter these overseas competitions.

Organisation for the Autumn Championships is now underway, and so it seems an opportune time to remind competitors of the music requirements. All competitive skaters should have **at least two** (and preferably, four) **copies of each piece of music:** the original and/or a best copy for competitions, another copy for their coach, and one of their own for practice. All of these should be **clearly labelled with their name, grade and whether it is their short or long programme.** If the beginning is very soft or very loud, this should also be noted so the volume can be adjusted before it starts to play!

For the Autumn Championships only long programmes are required, but all tapes and CDs must be labelled as above, and handed in to **Chris Pulman or Dael Haynes by 20th April 2003.** As you are now aware that you must have more than one copy of your music, please take on board that saying that you can't hand in your music until after the figure session on Saturday 26th because "I need it for practice" **IS NO LONGER ACCEPTED AS A GOOD EXCUSE!**

Results from Recent Competitions

Congratulations to members who recently competed overseas:

Tivoli Cup, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Allie Rout, Cubs Girls 93 1/12

Hellmut Seibt Memorial, Austria
Allie Rout, Cubs Girls 93 1/28

Four Continents 2003, Beijing, China
Ricky Cockerill 16/21 (16SP, 16FS)
Tristan Thode 19/21 (17SP, 19FS)
Imelda-Rose Hegerty 26/27 (SP26)

Junior World Championships 2003, Ostrava, Czech Republic
Tristan Thode 41/46

Two members write about their recent competition experiences

Australian Nationals

To me the words "Figure Skating" mean ...long hours of training, and more training, then competitions with a few minutes of the music of your choice, playing through speakers reminding you of past skating memories, some happy and others sad. Your mind goes blank and then the story begins....

Knowing I was a South African (in the past tense), receiving my New Zealand colours was one of the greatest ever events that had happened to me. One of my dreams had come true, but there are plenty more I would like to come my way.

The night the selectors announced the skaters to represent New Zealand at the Australian Nationals will always be remembered. Hearing my name being announced made me realise that hard work does eventually pay off and so does perseverance. When asked if I was "happy" – I could only answer "yeah" – it was still a dream.

Arriving in Brisbane in December was a shock to my system, not only the weather, but the skaters as well. They all were talented girls and seeing the standard in Novice Ladies acted as an adrenaline rush. The days, hours and then the minutes to the competition flew by. My mother's advice was to "just do your best and enjoy". I took this advice and went out and tried to conquer my nerves (which I do not normally feel).

My short programme was little short of a disaster. I had to put it behind me and try again in the free programme. I had waited for so

many years to wear my Black and White colours and now this. I could not let myself, my coach, my family and NZISA down like this, but unfortunately it happens. We have to learn to put it behind us and if at first you don't succeed, try and try again. The free went a little better than the short.



Stephanie Zhang of Australia with Caitlin

Thinking back to the Australian Nationals 2002, it was a wonderful opportunity and a great experience. It got me setting goals for 2003 – realistic goals.

A lot of friends were made within the New Zealand skating team, some old and others new. Getting to know the South Island Skaters was also very good for team spirit. Getting to know the North Island skaters better was also good for morale.

Most of our skaters did very well, and for those who did not make it onto the podium, we all tried our best and we will have to try and try again.

The return trip is yet another story as, wait for it, yes we were aboard NZ132. That sure broke the ice at Brisbane airport.

Caitlin Haynes

- Flight NZ 132 suffered a major engine failure at 11,000 feet. The pilot was forced to make an emergency landing only minutes after taking off from Brisbane.

Slovenia ... and an unexpected trip to Vienna

When we arrived in Slovenia it was snowing heavily. It was the first time I had seen snow on the ground in a city. We toured Ljubljana and it looked unusual, with old buildings, and an outdoor ice rink in a nearby park.

The rink was the same size as Botany, but had much more seating, like a stadium. The ice was excellent and people were very welcoming. I skated in my age group, Cubs '93, at the Tivoli Cup/Dragon Trophy, and won decisively. At the victory ceremony, I was invited to skate in the closing gala, at which I did the New Zealand haka. The spectators particularly liked it when I poked out my tongue in the challenge.

Whilst in Slovenia, I was invited to skate in a European Criterium event in Vienna, (the Hellmut Siebt Cup). We traveled for six hours by train to Vienna. The glass sided rink was particularly beautiful at sunset. I skated in a group of 28 girls, from many countries including Russia, Ukraine, Italy, Germany and USA. I won again and was awarded

a very nice cup. All the skaters were very friendly, and I met a special friend, Ellie from Alaska.

Apart from the skating, the most exciting thing we did was to see the Lipizzaner horse stud, at Lipica in Slovenia, and to visit the Spanish riding school in Vienna.

It was a great experience and I really appreciated the help from AIFSC and NZISA.

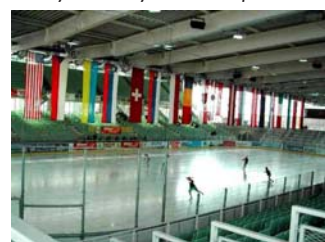
Allie Rout



Ljubljana



Victory ceremony at Tivoli Cup



The rink in Vienna

Keeping Score

(or How Her 3.9 Beat Your 4.1)

If Figure Skating amounted to no more than landing the greatest number of jumps in the shortest possible time, then anyone equipped with a counter and a stopwatch could determine the best skater. But the essence of Figure Skating is artistry. Artistry as defined by an athlete's ability, not only to accomplish remarkable feats of strength, balance and timing out there on the ice, but to do so with the rhythm of a musician, the grace of a dancer, and the flair of a true entertainer. Just how well a skater manages to accomplish all this on any given day will always be a matter of opinion. On competition days, the opinions that count are those of the judges.

A panel, composed of an odd number of judges, ranks the skaters' performances on a six-point scale. A mark of "6" represents a flawless, "perfect" programme which (literally) couldn't be better. At the other end of the scale, a "0" means that (for whatever reason) the skater didn't even manage to put a blade on the ice. In most competitions, most marks will usually fall between 2.5 and 3.5, because "3" means "average" and, by definition, most programmes will be "average". A mark of "4" is "good", and "5" is "excellent". On the other hand, "2" is "poor", and "1" means the skater might want to think again about joining a pony club instead. As best they can, judges attempt to award universal marks; that is, it should be just as easy (or difficult) to obtain a 4.0 in the local club competition as it is to earn one at a national or international event.

Two sets of marks are awarded after each of the skater's two programmes. In the short programme, the first set of marks is for "required elements" and represents a base mark (for the technical standard of skating) LESS any deductions for technical faults or omissions; "- 0.3" for a two-footed landing, "- 0.4" for a fall on a spin, or "- 0.5" for leaving out a required jump, for example. In the long free skate programme, the first set of marks is for "technical merit" (read: difficulty). For both programmes, the second set of marks is for "presentation"; these reflect the judges' assessments of the skater's artistry, flair and originality.

What happens next with all these marks? Contrary to some popular myths you may hear at competitions, a skater's marks are NOT all just added together, NEITHER are they averaged, NOR do the highest (or lowest) marks get thrown out, as in some other sporting events.

Here's what really happens: Look at the results of the short programme. Find the mark that Judge Number One awarded to Skater A for required elements; now find the mark he awarded Skater A for presentation and ADD these two marks together. For example, a "3.4" for required elements, plus a "3.9" for presentation, would result in a total mark of "7.3" from Judge Number One for Skater A's short programme. Now do the same for Skaters B, C, D, E, and so on, until you have added together the technical and presentation marks given to each skater by Judge Number One. The skater with the highest total is obviously Judge Number One's

choice for First Place, the skater with the second highest total is Judge Number One's choice for Second Place, and so on. What could be simpler?

Indeed, if Judge Number One were the *only* judge, that could be the short programme all decided! But, as it happens, there will be at least two other judges — perhaps as many as eight other judges, if it's an international competition. So you must repeat this same step, but now adding the technical and artistic marks for each skater from Judge Number Two; then all the skaters' marks from Judge Number Three; and so on, until you know which skater has been ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc., by each respective judge. I'll wait... Okay; now do the same thing again with all the marks from the long programme! Are you beginning to understand why competition officials use a computer and an accountant to keep track of all this?

It gets better: Up until a few years ago, the majority of ordinals (1st, 2nd, 3rd) would have been used to determine the skaters' placings in each event. (This majority method is still used for many local events in the USA, so you may see it explained on American web sites.) But following the ISU's 47th Congress in 1998, New Zealand competitions (and all international events) have used what is called the One-By-One (OBO) method to determine how judges have ranked the skaters. The OBO system needs fewer tiebreaker rules and reduces the number of "swaps", (when Skaters A & B swap relative placings after Skater C's results become known.) Using OBO, the mark for each skater is compared with the mark for every other skater awarded by the same judge to determine "Points in Favour". Ties are decided by counting "Judges in Favour". While all this may sound rather complicated, the actual comparisons are quite simple and easy to do; most Intermediate School pupils would have no trouble at all. Their parents, however, might well be driven to distraction by the sheer mind-numbing tediousness of the exercise, which provides yet another reason to leave the number-crunching to the computers.

The important thing to remember is that *it is the ordered ranking of the skaters by the judges that actually determines the outcome* of the competition and *NOT* the relative numerical value of the original marks. A judge can award marks which are consistently higher (or lower) than those of the other judges without having any perverse effect on the overall scoring of the competition.

Friends and family members often react to marks as announced *horizontally*: "The first Judge (rightly) awarded our girl a 4.1, but Judge Number Two (who must be blind in one eye) only gave her a 3.8! We wuz robbed!" But this comparison is meaningless! The only thing that really matters is where "our girl" was ranked by each judge in comparison with the other skaters. In other words, the only useful comparisons are *vertical* - how did her marks compare with the marks awarded *by the same judge* to the girls who skated before her and after her?