

## And your skater wants to compete.....HELP!

OK! Your skater has advanced to the point of considering entering a skating competition. How does this work? Who does what? What happens at a competition? What can be expected?

The step into participating in skating competitions can be intimidating for you and perhaps your skater. The information you will find here is general enough to be useful for most competitions. It will be important for you to stay in close contact with your skater's coach for more specific details.

You probably got the news about "the competition" from either your skater's coach or from your skater who heard it from the coach or from other skaters. Before you do anything go to your skater's coach and ask about the competition. If competition is being offered to your skater ask the coach for the competition announcement.

The competition announcement will have everything you ever wanted to know about a competition and most of it will be new and unfamiliar information. You will be able to get the basics down like the date, location, host hotel, and then there will be lists of events, Entry Forms, Practice Ice forms, other forms, and then it gets overwhelming. Don't panic.

Ask your coach what event(s) and Level your skater will be entering. If this is your first competition your skater is probably competing in a Basic Skills competition or a Standard competition at a no-test or Pre-Preliminary level. In either case it is time to know your skater's ability or test level. Once you get the level and event(s) from your coach sit down and do the math to calculate what the competition will cost.

Costs will include:

- 1) Competition Attire: For girls this means at a minimum a competition dress and tights. For boys, competition pants, shirt, and socks. Anything worn in

competition should be in excellent condition, clean, and more formal than casual. Ask your coach if he or she has any specific requirements for attire. Most coaches leave these decisions up to the skater and parent. Many skaters have numerous competition dresses or outfits but there is no rule that says a skater must have something different for each event entered!

- 2) Hotels: Most competitions require a hotel room for two or three nights. Skaters will tend to stay in the host hotel listed in the competition announcement but this is not necessary. You are usually responsible for making your own hotel reservations. Do this early!
  
- 3) Entry Fees and Practice Ice Fees: These fees are in the competition announcement. Your skater's entry fee is based on the events he or she plans on entering. Practice Ice is ice time your skater pays for to practice his or her programs during the course of competition. The general rule is to have one session per day. If the skater is competing that day the practice ice should be BEFORE the skater's competitive event. Ask your skater's coach if he or she has any preferences for the amount of practice ice needed. Entry fees and practice Ice fees are usually NOT refundable. In most cases you are responsible for filling out and mailing these forms with the appropriate fees.

Late entries are not always accepted so get the forms in the mail ASAP. NOTE: You will need to know your skater's Basic Skills or USFS number to enter a competition. Your coach should have the Basic Skills number. Contact your Club Membership Chair for the USFS number if you are a Club member. If you have an Independent USFS membership you will have to contact USFS for the number.

Your coach and a Club officer will need to sign your skater's entry form. Ask your coach or go to the Club website for a list of Club officers.

- 4) Coaches Fee: Coaches have different ways of calculating their fees for competition. In general their fees can cover the cost of their hotel room, food, transportation, time spent with the skater on Practice Ice and during competitive events, and lessons lost at the home rink due to being at a competition. These costs are totaled and divided by the number of skaters a coach is taking to the competition. There is no way to predict the Coaches Fee without speaking to the coach. Some coaches charge more, some less, it is totally up to the coach to determine the fee. Fees can range from \$25.00 to \$1,000.00 or more depending on the type of competition, the number of skaters the coach will take to the competition, and how the coach determines his or her fee. **ASK YOUR COACH!**
- 5) Food and Transportation for yourself and your skater: In general you are responsible for taking your skater to competitions or making arrangements for their transportation, food, and lodging. If you choose to have another adult take your child to a competition please be sure you give that adult a letter stating you gave your permission to that adult to transport your child, include any health problems your child has, any medication the child is taking, your health insurance company and policy numbers, and contact numbers for yourself in case of an emergency. This sounds extreme. This information will probably never be used but in the event of an emergency this information could save your child's life.

You have looked at the forms, asked the questions, done the math, filled out the forms, mailed the forms, your skater is going to a competition! Now what?

About two weeks before the competition you should get your skater's competition schedule and Practice Ice times in the mail. That is of course if you sent a self-addressed stamped envelope with your entry form. In either case find out what the competition and practice ice times are for your skater. With this information you can begin to plan when your travel to the competition.

Before you leave home make sure your skater has SKATES! Check this repeatedly and see the skates IN THE CAR before leaving. Don't assume they are in the bag. Also, check for all competition attire IN THE CAR. Bring a copy of the skater's music IN THE CAR. Don't laugh, these things have been Fed Ex'ed to the competition by neighbors and spouses more than anyone cares to admit.

Try to get to the competition with plenty of time to check in to the hotel and find the rink. Ask your coach if you are responsible for registering your skater or if the coach will do it. If you are responsible here's what you do:

To register your skater you need to go to the rink with your skater's music after you check in to your hotel. Look for the registration table. This is where you turn in your skater's music and pick up a goodie bag for your skater. That's it!

Now that you are at the competition here are some general things to be aware of:

- 1) Practice Ice can be as early as 5:00am or as late as 10:00pm. Your skater will need something to eat before and/or after practice. Bring something with you! You cannot count on restaurants or stores being open at these hours.
- 2) Plan on being at the rink at least half an hour before a practice ice session and an hour before a competitive event. Have water and snacks for your skater at all times.
- 3) Skating rinks can have nasty seating that is cold and hard. Bring blankets and something soft and with a backrest to sit on.
- 4) Once your skater is at the rink remember you are the parent and the coach is the coach. Check with your coach on what he or she expects from you and your skater during the course of the competition.

- 5) No matter what happens during a competition if your skater is to have a great time you must be supportive and look for ways to have FUN! This is easy to do when a skater does well and very hard to do if a skater has a difficult skate. Focus on the good things that happen and down play the negative.

Competitions are as awesome or as awful as you and skater make them. Most of the time competitions are fun and exciting events! They can be the best learning experiences a skater can have. Learning comes directly from competing and learning how to handle competition. It also comes from observing how other people behave during competitions. Everyone should always act and behave with courtesy and graciousness as an example to all to follow. If you do this you are a winner no matter what.