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I wrote with great excitement about the publication of ISU Communication 1678 waaaay back in May, and had grand intentions of further dissecting and analyzing the new rules here...and then I blinked and all of a sudden it's October. It has only been within the last two weeks, however, that the final pieces of this season's rules pie fell into place. With the publication of the ISU Summary of Calls and Communication 1696, officials can finally become fully acquainted with the 2011-12 regulations, and subsequently provide comprehensive feedback to teams as monitoring season approaches. But it's not just officials who should have requirements and deductions and GOE guidelines dancing in our heads—**coaches**, you must be accountable to yourself and your skaters to get intimate with these documents, so you can provide training and choreography that will help your teams reach their full potential. The number of documents to keep track of can be overwhelming, so here's a snapshot of what you should be reading, and what purpose each piece serves (with a decidedly Canadian focus—apologies, international friends):

- **ISU Communication 1678** – Though it's an ISU document, the rules here still apply to Canadian categories. Communication 1678 outlines what teams need to do to get credit for the different levels within each element.
- **ISU Summary of Calls** – The Summary of Calls, comprised of four separate documents, outlines what will happen if teams *don't* execute the requirements described in 1678 correctly. In other words, 1678 tells you what the team has to do to get credit for a level, and the Summary of Calls tells you what happens if the team doesn't do those things properly—from receiving deductions, to losing credit for entire elements for incorrect attempts.
- **Skate Canada Technical Requirements** – (Skate Canada → Members Only → Technical & Programs → SynchroSkate → 2011-2012 Synchronized Skating Technical Requirements) – This document is crucial for coaches of Canadian teams. It outlines which elements may be attempted in each of the domestic categories, as well as age restrictions, maximum and minimum program lengths, and allowable team sizes.
- **Skate Canada Summary of Calls** – (Skate Canada → Members Only → Technical & Programs → SynchroSkate → 2011-2012 Summary of Calls for Synchronized Skating) – The most important aspect of this document is that it describes the consequences of attempting elements, features, or variations that are outside the prescribed levels for a given age category. Similar to the ISU documents, the Skate Canada Technical Requirements document tells you what teams are allowed to attempt in each category, and the Summary of Calls tells you what happens if teams attempt anything not permitted per the Technical Requirements.
- **ISU Communication 1696** – The most recently published of the ISU synchro communications, 1696 outlines the new GOE guidelines for 2011-12 (and there are important changes), as well as reductions and deductions taken by the judging panel, technical panel, and event referee. A notable change to this year's GOE guidelines is that some of the bullets are *mandatory* to receive a certain GOE level. While many teams are still focused on choreography and choosing element difficulty levels right now, this document should not be ignored. GOE guidelines have become clearer and more concise each year, and present an opportunity to empower your skaters to take ownership of the execution of the program that's been created for them. It's never too early in the season for skaters to start thinking about the importance of shape, line-up, carriage, etc.
- **ISU Communication 1636** – Appendix A, B, and C of 1636 have been replaced by 1678. However, Appendix D and E of 1636, which show the Scale of Values, are still relevant for 2011-12. The Scale of Values should be a critical part of your choreographic strategy. It's important to weigh the numerical advantages and disadvantages of attempting lower or higher risk elements, based on your skaters' abilities. This is where 1678 and 1696 meet—you can see how GOE will impact the base value of the level of difficulty of the element being attempted.

There's a lot of information contained in the documents above, but being familiar with all of it will increase the shared vocabulary between you and officials during monitoring sessions, and contribute to the competitive success of your teams later in the season. Happy reading!