

COMPETITOR DIVISIONS

These forms should give you the flexibility needed to allow you to adapt to different contest situations. Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced descriptions are too vague when creating contest divisions. Generally speaking, age indicates the experience of a rider. We were swamped with entrants at the L.A. Barrio Games in 2001 and it was unfair for the 20 years of age skateboarders to compete against the 8 year old boys. The older boys wanted a guaranteed prize by entering the “Beginner s” division. That was a big mistake on the part of the contest organizers. Most amateur skaters, human beings, and wild animals by nature will choose an easier prey to kill when they have that option.

If someone wants to skate within the Pro ranks then age category is not necessary, unless there is room for a Masters or Grand Masters Division. Age separation in the Amateur divisions is the easiest safeguard to keep skaters from “sand-bagging” or holding out.

After the L.A. experience in the summer of 2001 we know now that we should always define our divisions AFTER the registration forms are filled out, and registration has been closed. We defined and filled our divisions this way at the St Louis, Gateway Classic. We had 31 skaters sign up. 6 of them were 11 years old. 7 of them were 13 years old. Then we also had a large block of 17 year olds. Our first division was 12 and under. Division II was 13-16 years of age. Division III was 17 and over. That gave us 10, 10, and 11 skaters divided fairly through 3 divisions.

REGISTRATION/WAIVER FORMS

The registration/waiver form is set up to be flexible so that divisions can be designed “on the fly”. When the registration period ends on competition morning, forms can be separated into the appropriate age divisions that promote fairness, and prevents overloading in any particular category. This process gives all skaters a more equally fair chance to win a prize.

When you have your entrance forms separated out, and the age brackets determined, which takes only 1-2 minutes, then the division age group can be entered in the open box at the top of the forms, and the skating order can be written in the Competitor # box. To determine the skating order I usually ask if anyone prefers to skate first. Sometimes you can get a volunteer to start off the division. If not, then just shuffle the forms for each division, and pick the order at random? If the skating talent is familiar to the organizers, a lot of times the skaters don’t mind skating in order of known ability and experience, graduating from least experience, to most. Or, a seeding round can be skated, time permitting.

THE RIDERS MEETING

A riders meeting prior to the competition, usually near the end of the morning registration and practice period is a great time to air out unresolved concerns. I’ve never seen a contest where the riders didn’t want to have a voice in how their contest was handled. Sometimes, as situations can arise throughout the day they can be quickly resolved by holding an “on the spot issue” meeting with all of the riders. If you ask them how they would like to resolve any concerns, you may be surprised at some great solutions they can give you. It is in your best interest to make competition day an enjoyable experience for them.

ROUTINE LENGTH

Professionals like to skate at least 2 minutes at contests today, and expect at least 2 runs. In years past routines were 3 minutes. The younger amateurs usually need only 60-90 seconds to show their bag of tricks. If time or weather is an issue, giving all divisions one run is better than trying to give 2 runs, and running out of time before getting through all of the divisions. Once the first run is completed and if the time or weather issue evaporates, then you can offer the second run for those eligible divisions. When time or weather is not an issue each divisional competition can be run in its entirety with as many runs as you see fit. If a contest has a very light turnout, then usually all divisions can have multiple runs, and/or a Best Trick Jams, High Jump Contest, and a 360 Spin-Off can be introduced.

THE SCORE SHEET

Each judge needs his own score sheet. Write the competitors names in their skating order as picked using the registration forms on each of the judges score sheets. If there is a copy machine near by, make one master sheet and then copy the rest. This may take a few minutes. Employ one of the skater's girlfriends to do this. They usually have better writing skills than the guys. Don't forget your pens and clipboards.

SCORING WITH ONE NUMBER USING THE OLD SYSTEM

When using the old forms where the judge gives one lump score for all the elements of freestyle, we have found in the past that scoring from 1-100 is just too wide a range, and one judge may start his scoring at 40, while another may score everyone above 80. I came home from New York and studied the scoring sheets, paying particular attention to the ties, and why we are experiencing so many? How could we have a more final result become our standard? While it is wise and orderly to keep the judges scoring within a block of certain numbers, i.e. 70-90 (allows for 21 possible choices for a judge), or 80-100 (also 21 possible choices for a judge), it may be that whole numbers can increase the chance of ties. Ice Skating and Gymnastics competitions employ a decimal system. When averaging 3 scores using whole numbers, the possible decimal results are .000, .333, or .666. Ties can be a common outcome. If we continue to keep judges together in the 21point block, but allow scoring to go to increments of .5 (i.e. 88.5), the judges would have 41 possible scoring choices in a 20 point block of numbers. Also, the possible decimals when averaging 3 judges scores would then be (.000, .166, .333, .500, .666, and .833). This could decrease our chance for ties and be especially helpful when unanticipated constraints, delays, or weather allows for only one run. Also, if a judge was running out of room at the top or bottom of the scoring block with which to fairly place a skater, he could implement .5 point scoring. Ultimately, I feel it would be best to minimize the chance of a tie.

MAKING THE NEW GRADE IN POINTS ACCUMULATED CATEGORIES

When using the New Era forms for scoring your contest (I feel it is the easiest and most thorough way to judge freestyle), they are basically self-explanatory. You just add the 5 categories of points together, and then add all of the judge's totals together for a Grand Total. Ties should become very rare and almost non-existent with this method of cumulative scoring. I have seen a case recently where each judge graded the skaters in only one of the element categories instead of each judge grading routines in all five of the element categories.

This method does allow the judge to concentrate specifically on his own individual category and may remove a certain amount of judge stress and responsibility. At the same time point totals go down and the possibility of a tie increases. The contest I point out employed only four judges and graded skaters in four of the five elements, excluding the Variety category. Each judge graded in only one of the four categories. The results were still acceptable and there were no ties that I heard reported, even though there were 14 competitors. This method of eliminating any one category increases each of the 4 remaining category point shares from a 20% share when 5 categories are used, to a 25% share of the overall point award when 4 categories are used. In doing this, Artistry weighed more heavily in the outcome, and tricks weighed slightly less in the overall results. Be mindful of this effect when tinkering with or customizing The “New Era” judging system.

ENTRANCE FEES

This helps you build your prize purse, to attract Pros, and/or pay volunteers. We may want to plan future contests with several Pre-Registration Deadlines that have increased entrance fees as the pre-contest deadlines expire. In my running contests I frequent, there is a mailing address and a treasurer who is responsible for early entrance monies. Entrance fees get more expensive as contest day approaches. With a contest to be held on December 1, fees received before Oct. 31 could be discounted to \$20, \$25 before Nov. 15th, and the standard \$30 on contest day. It’s a good way to generate a purse and find out what kind of a showing is to be expected.

PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEMS AND CD PLAYERS

Most contests have a PA system that is provided or loaned, and contest MC’s are sometimes hired by the promoters. At small contests purchasing a \$100 CD Player Boom Box before the event that can be used as the PA/Sound system, and can be given away at the contests end, as a prize. The newer CD payers can also serve as your timing mechanism for routines. If the portable PA/music system is not used or needed, then it could be returned to most stores for a refund. A good bullhorn is another worthy investment for the contest MC. Here is a small checklist that may help:

- Pens/Magic Markers
- Clipboards
- Registration/Waiver Forms
- Judges Guidelines & Score Sheets
- Sound System/Pa/Bull Horn/Power Source
- Stop Watch/Timing Mechanism
- Brooms
- Tables
- Chairs
- Canopy for shading
- Prizes/Trophies/Achievement Certificates
- Barricades/Ribbon/Rope/Tape to designate skating area
- Refreshments/Water Cooler
- Trash Cans