

Status Report to the 2018 ISU Congress on the Four Year Plan 2014/15-2017/18

Committee/Commission: Speed Skating Technical Committee

Area of Activity: Coaches/Skaters education & monitoring of Technical Rules

The SSTC has performed the activities as planned in order to achieve the specific results & benefits stated in the Four-Year Plan 2014/15 – 2017/18. The following areas have required and will require specific attention:

1. ISU Speed Skating Events structure and season calendar

The new ISU standardized calendar for speed skating which was implemented from the season 2014-15 has created a more balanced season structure, with focus on the World Cup series in the first part of the season and then on the ISU World Speed Skating Championships which are concentrated in a 3 weeks' period in the last part of the season. The World Cup series has got a more important role in the qualification process for the ISU Championships and Olympics, the importance of the series has been raised by the "Grand World Cup" concept.

The overall ISU Speed Skating Events program and calendar nevertheless still needs continued assessment and refinement to be attractive for athletes, fans and sponsors, and to make it financially viable for ISU Members to participate actively and to take the responsibility for hosting Events. The new standardized calendar makes the overall season calendar planning more manageable, allowing a multi-annual ISU Events schedule to be developed. This will facilitate the planning of the top sport programs of the Member federations and the Event preparations for Members that will be allotted ISU Events.

Since 2016/17 ISU Junior World Cup series includes competitions for Neo seniors not older than 23 years. Members showed big interest and number of entries increased in past season.

2. New types of competitions and new competition formats.

Racing rules, competition formats and race management logistics of Mass Start races have been developed and continuously elaborated during the last seasons, as the event has become an ordinary part of the competition program at World Cups, Junior World Cups and ISU Championships and the 2018 Olympic Winter Games program. New format with 2 Semi finals makes all races extremely important and interesting. Mass Start races have presented speed skating with new challenges regarding safety measures, definition and enforcement of (and compliance with) racing rules. These challenges need to be actively addressed in terms of rules and regulations, and will require special attention, education and training from officials, coaches and athletes. On the other hand, the basic competition format of Mass Start races has a simplicity and immediate attraction that can be used actively in promotion and recruitment activities at local and national level.

A team sprint event, based on a format combining relay and team pursuit race concepts, was immediately welcomed by skaters after successful demonstrations at ISU Events. It has now become a regular part of the World Cups and the ISU Championships program. However number of participating Members not enough to proceed with inclusion to OWG 2022.

At the Winter Youth Olympic Games 2016 an adapted version (with four team members) was successfully staged as a team event based on both mixed gender and mixed country team composition. Team competitions at ISU level give Member federations and athletes the opportunity to pursue international ambitions also through team-building efforts. This helps the sport to grow and gain attention, especially in countries with limited number of world class individual skaters.

3. Efficient organization and attractive presentation of Competitions

ISU Events are met with higher expectations on a streamlined presentation of the competitions. Venue production and key technical operations, like time-keeping and results presentations, need to be performed flawlessly and presented in a consistent manner across different Events. The interaction between Organizing Committees, hosting Members and ISU in the preparation stage has improved in recent years through joint planning on race schedules and introduction of more automated tools for entries, accreditation procedures, etc. Such tools and other ISU Event coordination and support functions must be further developed in close collaboration with the organizers to ensure a professional execution of the Events. Job of ISU Speed Skating Events coordinator in this field is very valuable and helpful both for organizers and Technical committee

An attractive presentation of the races and associated information that conveys the most exciting aspects of the competition is of crucial importance for the promotion and overall image of the sport. Tools and features which will enhance the experience of spectators, whether they follow the competitions on site in the venue, on TV or through other media, have to be developed on a continuous basis. Media coverage and attention need to be supported and reinforced by easy access to relevant sport statistics and athlete biographies, and new media must be proactively applied to promote the Events.

4. Education needs for coaches and athletes

Also coaches and athletes have to cope with a more demanding context of competitions at ISU level, and a professional attitude and cooperation from their side is needed for a successful staging of the Events. They need to be well informed and knowledgeable of technical rules and rule changes, of agreements with media regarding the coverage of the Events etc. Such knowledge is also essential as a basis for influencing future rule changes, competition programs and race formats. Team leaders at ISU Events have to be conscious of their key role and responsibilities around and during the competitions, including the responsibility for the proper awareness and appearance of their skaters and support staff.

For the future success of speed skating it is essential to find efficient means of transferring knowledge and experiences between coaches that have coaching experience with skaters competing at ISU level. Many ISU Member federations do not have the resources available to establish education programs addressing the latest developments in important areas like physical training, mental training and technical training, movement analysis, testing protocols, nutrition, talent identification and talent development. High quality education of coaches and access to state-of-the-art training programs is a key for Members to help their skaters reach a level of international success. It is therefore necessary to stimulate networking among coaches and to initiate projects to transfer best practices in the area of coaching and coach education.

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