

World Skate International Seminar



Rome 2018

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World Skate International Seminar *Rome 2018*

I would like to firstly express my appreciation for being chosen to attend this amazing and prestigious event. Attended by 120 Judges and almost 300 Coaches from 30 different countries, all united by a love for wheels, made this an historic and inspirational event. My wonderful fellow kiwi travelling buddies, who were all much more experienced long-haul travellers than myself, made the long journey far easier to manage, even enjoyable.

On arrival in Rome, we shuttled from the airport (thanks to Pam's great organisation) directly to The Church Village - venue for the seminar and accomodation. At this point we learned that we were some of the lucky few who had been 'up-graded' to the nearby sister hotel, The Church Palace. This proved to be a quick and easy 5 minute shuttle ride away, and despite some initial reluctance to be away from the main centre, we were quickly relocated to our (rather glamorous looking) accomodation and checked in.



Registration and Dinner

The first night of the seminar was registration and welcome dinner. It was not hard to be slightly overwhelmed at the numbers in attendance, the sight of so many fellow coaches and judges from all over the world. There were only a handful of faces I recognised that first day - but by the end, I had met and



engaged with so many of these passionate people from the four corners of the world.

Day One

It was both a humbling and thrilling experience, to be sitting in the auditorium packed with so many people - including the most well known and experienced people in the sport. We had been issued headsets at registration, to allow us to tune in to the english translation channel. English is the new official language of World Skate, and many presenters spoke English, at least to some extent, however there were still some who preferred to present in their native language, and overall I feel the translators did an excellent job.

Nicola Genchi (Chairman Artistic Technical Commission of World Skate) opened by expressing his thanks and gratitude for the attendance of so many counties, some from places they did not expect to see. He then introduced and outlined the new system of Roll Art.

The three parts that make up this system are:-

- TUP - Technical Value of Programme
- TVE - Technical Value of Element
- QOE - Quality of Element

Nicola introduced **Sandro Guerra** who gave a presentation titled *Components - New "Artistic Impression"*.



Under the new RollArt system, the scores will be made up of:

- 1) **Technical Score**
- 2) **Component Score** (Artistic Impression)

The Component Scores consist of the sum of the following which make up the total score:-

a) Skating Skills

- Quality
- Carriage
- Difficulty
- Directional
- Team Skating

b) Transitions

- Variety
- Difficulty
- Complexity
- Seamless - Quality
- Team Skating

c) Performance

- Personality or Theatrical Skills
- Movement Skills
- Emotional intent
- Projection Team commitment

d) Choreography

- Design
- Choreographic intent
- Body Design & Dimension
- Musical Relationship
- Team Skating



Each of the four above components and sub-components will be evaluated by the **Judges** and a score for each is awarded, based on their Quality of Execution (QOE) - ranging from 'Extremely Poor' through to 'Outstanding'.

He emphasised that judges must understand the need to not just look at the jumps and spins, but take notice of skating skills and identify them separately. Sandro summarised by saying ***“the system is complicated but we are at a turning point in the sport”***.

The Seminar was held in two rooms, and the programme was arranged thoughtfully, so that there were very few times that any clashes occurred between presentations of the same discipline. Whilst Kylie, Pam and Tony attended the free skating sessions, I attended the **Basic Skating for Precision** session. It was interesting and informative and I felt it helped me bring my knowledge of precision skating up another level.

Throughout the entire seminar, there were many video resources used - some demonstrated on roller and others on ice. It is clear that there are many parallels between the ice judging system and the new RollArt system, however it was regularly emphasised that they are not completely identical. Several highly experienced ice figure skating coaches presented to us over the four days, and highlighted both the similarities and differences between the sports.

Dinner each night was held each night at 7pm, and consisted of hundreds of hungry judges and coaches and special guests converging en masse into the large restaurant/dining room at the venue. The food was simple yet tasty and completely adequate buffet and usually consisted of a salad, soup and bread, some type of pasta dish, a meat dish and antipasto, not to mention the obligatory bottles of wine and water on every table for both lunch and dinner. Most people that I observed were not willing to partake in wine especially at lunchtime, incase it clouded our already stimulated minds!

The seminar continued after dinner from 9pm each night. After our first group dinner experience, **Dario Betti** gave a presentation on 'Skating Skills, Ice practice for roller - the similarities and differences'. We viewed videos of Luca Lucaroni demonstrating skating skill exercises on roller skates, and Dario

himself demonstrate the same exercise on ice.

Dario concluded the day by saying, “It is easy to take ice skating as an example, but we have to remember that we are on wheels, and because of that we have to find out our way.”

Day Two

Day two started off with an amazing buffet breakfast and with a general feeling that the proverbial ice had been broken and more faces were familiar, more relaxed chatter filled the room and everybody felt well into the groove of learning and excited for the day to come.

The exception to this perhaps being the judges amongst us were clearly feeling somewhat stressed as they had recently been advised of their RollArt (technical specialist) exams being brought forward to Friday - earlier in the week than they had expected, and many spent every spare opportunity at the hotel huddled in groups studying for the exams. I felt it was somewhat unfortunate that they were not better prepared before the seminar as to the format and time-frame the examinations would happen in, and it was obvious that many were finding it rather difficult to manage this stress and uncertainty, and some sleepless nights were involved. Witnessing first-hand the pressure and difficulty of the exams that the judges were to sit, has helped emphasise to me the amount of study that will be required in future for all who are to sit such exams. There was a lot of tension amongst them as they endured the long wait to hear whether or not they had made it to the next stage of the examination. Out of the 68 officials who sat the exam for Free skating and Pairs, just 38 passed the written part of the test, which allowed them to go forward to the second section of the exam the next day.

Of those 68 who passed the written component of the exam, only 17 passed the oral part of the exam, receiving their RollArt Technical Specialist certifications for Free & Pairs.

Meanwhile, the seminar continued with Nicola speaking about RollArt Dance, and QOE.

There were many discussions throughout the seminar to do with wording of the rules pertaining to the dance section, which often resulted in Nicola agreeing that it was not yet clear in some places and there would be additions and amendments for the following skating year. He frequently emphasised that the Dance section of RollArt was still a work in progress, which is why the exams for technical specialists in Rome were for Free skating and Pairs only.

He said there would be the need for another RollArt Seminar in approximately 1 year, with a focus on Dance and Precision. There is much more discussion still needed over the next 12 months. Venue and date was not yet decided but was likely to be somewhere in the USA, perhaps in April 2019.

The message received time and time again over the seminar was that the trainers must try to make the job of the judges and Technical Panel easier to award the level, by 'keeping it simple' and aim to get positive QOE from the judges, rather than negative.

Precision Choreography was followed by Precision Technical Calls after lunch, with **Nicola** and **Elmar Obermeier** from Germany showing lots of interesting video demonstrations of teams executing elements and both on ice and roller. Robust discussions on the quality of execution made for another thought provoking session.



Before dinner, I attended Compulsory Dances for 2018, a session I had particularly been looking forward to, run by members of the dance commission - **Lorenza Residori, Marie Gaudy and Hugo Chapouto**. All three highly knowledgeable and respected dance experts, instrumental in the changes to compulsory dances and identifying the Key Points which will be used to call the levels in the RollArt system.

Frustratingly, there were many questions and comments from the floor from one or two people who were raising points every other minute during this session, which very much slowed down the presentation, to the point that there was not time to complete the entire presentation. While some of the comments and questions raised were valid, I felt that it would have been wiser for these to have been taken off-line as there was so much information to cover.

After dinner, we heard from **Gabriele Minchio**, a 3rd level coach of the Italian Ice Skating team. He spoke with assurance that ice went through a similar transformation 10 years ago, and he was here to share their experience with us.

He spoke about the need to train skaters to improve in skating skills, and showed video examples of various exercises to enhance power, flow, to teach and gain understanding of knee action and how to achieve this. We were shown exercises for warm-up and warm-down to encourage these skills.

In his rink, each week anyone who wants to, can participate in a competition simulation. Each athlete gets their own technical sheet, as a way of getting a report of areas of strength and areas needing more focus. He suggested this can also be of use to show parents of skaters who insist that their child must do the 'hard' content. He concluded by saying "It is the quality that rewards", which sums up nicely the overall premise of RollArt.

I felt this was an excellent session and something to definitely take on board and utilise in New Zealand, as there is an all round lack of skating skills including knee action showing in all levels of skating here at home.

Day Three: Saturday

Day three started with the message that Nicola wanted to see the judges who sat their exams, so whilst they scampered off to the conference rooms, the rest of us ate breakfast wondering what was being said, who had passed the written section of the exam, and feeling quite nervous for our friends.

First up was Dance: New Elements 2018 presented by the Dance Commission. This time discussions were centred around Style Dance and Free Dance, and their score and factors.

Components were discussed again as a fundamental part of the score for dance skating.

Technical elements were also a feature of this discussion, and once again, members from the floor had many questions to ask and took the opportunity to disagree with wording in the RollArt documents, which hindered the flow of the presentation.

It is obvious that the next 12 months will see a smoothing out of the wording, rules and requirements of dance, and definitions are needed to be clear and concise so there is no chance for misinterpretation. If it were not for discussions such as the ones at this Seminar, and visiting coaches such as Lorenza to our shores, I am certain that we too would have been unclear on many of the rules as they are written.

I attended a presentation on Basic Spin Technique by **Sara Locandro** and **Gabriele Quirini**. This was very interesting as it broke down the method of teaching spins to children using a very precise and repeatable method. It is very much part of the World Skate vision that we establish a global technique for our sport, which is something countries such as Italy have been working to establish for some time now. It appeared to me that the coaches of Italy are united on their approach and an agreed technique and methodology to teaching. This has been tested, proven, and is repeatable - evidenced by their resounding success over many World Championship titles, many years over. It is something we would be remiss to ignore.

One of the most fun and enjoyable sessions came after lunch on day 3. The presenter was **Prisca Pricano**, first dancer at the San Carlo theatre in Naples, synchronised swimming coach, and teacher of ice skating. Her highly interactive session covered “Movement as an Artistic Language” and her group exercises were both an interesting (and somewhat entertaining) challenge to our own beliefs and understanding around experiencing movement to music in several different forms. The end of her two session presentation got a standing round of applause from all in attendance.

Dinner on the final night was relaxed and jovial, with an atmosphere of celebration and friendship, yet sadness that it was coming to a close amongst the attendees. Many tables who sat tightly in country groups to date now mixed and mingled, and **Sabatini Aracu** (President of World Skate) was in attendance, coming to each table to drink a toast to the future of World Skate and RollArt. Nicola gave a brief speech in which he congratulated the 17 successful officials who passed the rigorous examinations, and thanked everyone for their attendance and work at the seminar. We popped champagne bottles and toasted this historic moment - the 1st World Skate International Seminar.



Day Four: Sunday

The final day was a chance to see the RollArt software in situ. We were given an overview of the software itself step by step, from the Technical Panels interface, and the Judges interface.

Nicola (by far still the most experienced and confident technical specialist in calling a programme) demonstrated to us the job of the Technical Panel and how this worked in practice with the software. When an element is called as a level, it will pop up on a judges screen to award a QOE. If a level is not called, there is no element for the judges to mark. Several example videos were shown and it was great to see the connection of the various roles of the skater, Technical Panel and Judges come to a final score under this new system.

Finally **Sara Locando** gave a talk directed to the trainers of the world, where she stated the goal of World Skate was to build strong foundations with coaches in all corners of the world, all countries, not only Italy out on their own. She expressed a desire that every coach needed the same material and the opportunity to get together with one another to mutually help one another. She feels currently the sport has one or two good skaters, but not yet enough that she personally would want to go to the Olympics. The ultimate goal is to have many good skaters.

She continued to say that both coaches and judges have to improve together, working in parallel, sharing all material. “If we don’t give judges the tools, we will go in two different directions.”

She spoke of the present day as ‘starting from zero’. We do not yet have a ‘World School’ but that it was a desire of the World Skate Artistic Committee to build one. She presented a draft proposal which is in its infancy, of a World Commission of Coaches.

After her presentation, Sabatini concluded the seminar with some closing words, and then the 1st World Skate Artistic International Seminar was over.

People lingered and chatted, and said goodbyes while shuttles began returning people to the Church Palace accommodation. I felt rather exhausted, excited and

a little daunted at the huge amount of work ahead. Most of all I felt eager to get home and pass on this amazing amount of knowledge and enthusiasm I had gained from the experience.

Next steps?

So where to from here? Here are some of my thoughts.

- It is clear that it is a time of huge change and transformation in our sport, globally. New Zealand is not unique in this. Coaches I spoke to from all around the world feel the same as us, and many face similar challenges to those we do here down-under. It is natural to feel overwhelmed and think maybe we are too small to take all of this on in New Zealand. From here, we can either all come together to embrace this change for what it is – a new opportunity for New Zealand skating to make a better future for itself, or carry on as normal, and slip further and further behind the rest of the world. It is a time of change, and a new opportunity to rebuild from the grass roots up, ensuring that skating skills are being taught throughout New Zealand with the same fundamental techniques, so that we build that strong foundation of Skating Skills that is such a large part of what RollArt is about.
- It is imperative that Judges and Coaches work together to continue their education and for self-improvement. We need to work, as Sara said, in parallel with one another, and in particular I would like to see judges in New Zealand fostered and mentored and helped to grow into this new system with support from the Artistic Committee and those who have already begun their journey into RollArt.
- In order to insist on precise skating skills, I propose the HPCC in conjunction with the Artistic Committee overhaul the Patch Test and Medal Test system, and work towards a new National standard 'Learn to Skate' programme that can be provided to clubs with resources such as videos and diagrams with suggested teaching methods and techniques.
- We need to look at other successful models from around the world on ice and roller, of long term athlete development, and learn from them. It is a 10-15 year road road to see real change, and I strongly believe it needs to start from

‘ground zero’. This is something I am passionate about and am currently researching further.

- We need to continue to seek new participants in our sport, and not only focus on the small percentage that have the ability to make it to the top, but fostering the love for wheel sports and hopefully a life-long passion for the sport of artistic skating.
- We need to support and foster growth of our officials and show our appreciation for the many volunteers we have in this sport. We need more hands to share the huge amount of work ahead of us, but we must look after the ‘old faithful’ who continue to work many hours for this sport, and make them feel our appreciation. It can not be an expectation for our volunteers to simply ‘give more’ of themselves - we need to recruit more volunteers to help spread the load.
- We need to ask questions, and encourage open communication. If we don’t have the answers, we have begun to build a network of experts where we can find them. The visiting overseas coaches to New Zealand have each time come with a wealth of communication and knowledge around interpretation of the written rules that has not made it’s way down-under. I am grateful for the opportunities to work with the best coaches in the World, and gain so much from them each time, I feel we must continue to build these relationships with such coaches as another vital step in our long term athlete development programme.
- Being as geographically isolated as we are, traditionally our two steps to international level competition begin at Oceania Championships and then to the World Championships. We must encourage skaters to attend other competitions offered around the globe, open to more than just the ‘most elite’ to gain exposure and valuable experience. With the recent changes brought in by World Skate, it will be more difficult for small countries like New Zealand and Australia to gain entry to the World Championships. There is a lot to be said for encouraging skaters to make use of intermediate steps in between, for example: German Cup, Americas Cup, Chapatim Cup (Portugal), Issy Paris Dance competition, to name a few.

Finally, I would like to once again thank Skate NZ and the Artistic Committee very much for this wonderful learning opportunity. Also thanks to my fellow kiwi travel buddies and especially Pam Peters, who did a lot of the organisation in regards to our flights and travel arrangements. The experience was immensely fulfilling and I am ready and eager to pass on the knowledge I gained to the benefit of the skaters, coaches and officials of New Zealand.

