

Synchronized Skating Operational Director Ice Skating Australia 2017 Annual Report

Once again it is my pleasure to present my annual report to Ice Skating Australia.

International Selection

This year several teams put in an early preference for international competitions; Mozart Cup, Reine Mathilde Trophy, French Cup, Trophy D'Ecosse, Zagreb Snowflakes Trophy and Spring Cup. Preliminary entries were put in for these events along with as always, the Junior World Challenge Cup and the World Synchronized Skating Championships. It is always quite a bit of work to put in preliminary entries and then more work to let organisers know if teams are not entering after all. Tied up with this is the juggling of team preferences after AFSC results and judges' availability but I am pleased to report that after a few weeks and lots of emails, everything worked out. Additional difficulties with international competitions is that apart from Championships, there is little consistency between the format of announcements, entry forms, information and time lines for submissions. I had to be very organised and very strict with what I could and would accept and my own deadlines to ensure I had time to check everything properly and send it in. Thank you to Jenny Houlahan for being my back up here when I needed it. I did my best to keep her in the loop and copied in for all the paperwork. In the end, most of the entry processes went smoothly although I did have to reject some forms and ask for them to be completed properly. I have spoken to the Chair of the ISU SyS Technical Committee and will be sending him an email outlining my experience with entries this season to see if they are able to have some positive influence on improving the information and entry process in the future.

This season Australia was represented by seven teams in six events:

- Adelaide Ice Magic Mixed Age (SA) 18th, Infusion Mixed Age (WA) 15th and Majestic Ice Mixed Age (NSW) 4th at the Mozart Cup in Salzburg, Austria in January out of 23 teams. This was the largest Australian team to have ever been at an international event and I would like to thank Team Leader Andrea Willis and team managers Pamella Swan, Vanessa Anderson and Lynda Paull for doing a fabulous job and giving all the skaters the best possible experience in this competition. It shows how teamwork is important off the ice too.
- Majestic Ice Mixed Age (NSW) placed 1st out of 8 teams at the Mathilde Reine Trophy in Caen, France in January.
- Senior Team Ice Storm (Qld) 5th out of 6 at the Zagreb Snowflakes Trophy in Zagreb, Croatia and 8th out of 9 at the Spring Cup in Milan, Italy.
- Junior Team Iceskateers Elite (Qld) placed 4th out of 7 at the Zagreb Snowflakes Trophy in Zagreb, Croatia and 5th out of 8 at the Spring Cup in Milan, Italy.
- Majestic Ice Junior (NSW) 16th out of 19 at the World Junior Synchronized Skating Championships in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.
- Infusion (WA) place 20 out of 24 at the World Synchronized Skating Championships, Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, climbing three places after the short program.

Congratulations to all the teams and coaches on your skating and great results at all these events. It was so nice to see so much support and encouragement for our Australian Synchronized teams on the ISA Facebook page and I for one am so proud of all of them.

International Teams

For the third year in a row, Megan Ramsey (Qld) has skated in Czech team Olympia. Saara Shepard, formerly in Fire on Ice (NSW) is in her fifth year with the very successful Finnish team, Marigold Ice Unity. Blaise Pearce, also from Fire on Ice has been training this season with Team Berlin.

ISU Development Seminar

In May 2016, Queensland coach Hayley Marcovich and four skaters participated in the Synchronized Skating ISU Development Seminar held in Vierumaki, Finland.

This year, coaches Amber Williams and Michelle Coetzee from Victoria and Adele and Christine Leghorn from NSW together with eight junior skaters will travel to Finland for the same seminar. We are very lucky that the ISU accepted these two mini teams from Australia as it depends on how many other applications they receive. The reports back are that the Seminar is excellent and well worth the time, distance and cost of travel, something that I reported to ISU via email when submitting the confirmation of our attendees and verbally to one of the organisers.

Officials

Our SyS officials' activity this season:

Rebecca Andrew (NSW) officiated at the Mozart Cup and Liz Alexandre (Qld) judged at both the Zagreb Snowflakes Trophy and Spring Cup.

Madonna Randall (NSW) was invited to be Technical Specialist at the Shanghai Trophy which unfortunately was cancelled and Angelique Clyde-Smith judged at the World Synchronized Skating Championships in Colorado Springs.

We have also been able to secure the ISU Synchronized Skating Seminar to be held in conjunction with the Australian Figure Skating Championships this year in Brisbane. This seminar is for Australian international and national level judges however I have heard from a few people in other Federations that they will be applying to attend so we look forward to welcoming them too.

Non-Australian Citizens

This season there were 38 clearance requests from non-Australian citizens seeking clearance to skate in teams here from 18 Federations. They are so much work to collate, apply and distribute but some of them have come through as permanent clearances this time which will ease the future workload considerably. I have created a register of the clearances and added a column to the Proof of Age list for nationality and whether a clearance is required, has been received and if it is permanent. A big thank you to Susan Lynch for helping to finally get required clearances from the Chinese Federation for this season anyway. We have managed to get away without them before but it was essential this time as we had Chinese citizens in teams skating internationally and they must be presented at registration.

2016 Australian Figure Skating Championships

A new record of 36 teams across seven divisions lifted the roof at the O'Brien Group Arena in Melbourne last December. The trial division of Adult Basic was supported well with four teams including one new team but it was the Mixed Age division with 12 teams that blew everyone away. Not only was it the number of teams but the skating was of a good standard with entertaining programs the audience loved. It was great to welcome again teams from New Zealand – one in Adult and one in Mixed Age. The Organising Committee did an excellent job. Any issues were addressed as soon as possible and nothing was too much trouble. A big thank you to Jackie Gold and Peter Marcovich for the thoughtful scheduling of practices and the events which went a long way to ensuring that everything ran as smoothly as possible.

Discussions at the SyS meeting held during the 2016 AFSC brought up the following items to consider going forward.

- Rule changes to Advanced Novice to slightly increase the age to encourage some teams out of the Mixed Age Division. Since its introduction, it is the Advanced Novice division which seems to have been the most affected.
- Rule changes within Aussie Skate to allow skaters with the Preliminary test required for Synchronized Skating to still compete in the free skating divisions of Aussie Skate.
- A seminar/development program for teams on ice in at least three cities. This is proving to be very difficult to achieve. International coaches are all willing to come to Australia but not necessarily at the time it suits us or for the two to three weeks it would take to get around everywhere. Saving money by combining something with the New Zealand Federation is not the answer either – again because of timing. We will continue to work towards such a program but despite best efforts and intentions it is not likely to be in 2017. Teams are certainly encouraged to make their own arrangements where they can and share the experience as widely as practicable.

For the second year Synchronized Teams were included in the National Squad with Senior Champions Infusion (WAISA), Junior Champions Majestic Ice Junior (NSWISA) and Advanced Novice Champions Iceskateers (ISQ) were presented with medals for each team member at the SyS Banquet. Thank you to ISA Board for the continued support and inclusion of Synchronized Skating with the other disciplines. The recognition is important and very much appreciated.

Forms and Policies

The format of the policies and forms seems to have settled down well and with access to the ISA website I can quickly update these documents and other documents when needed. Thank you Judith Sivasubramaniam for your assistance with the SyS part of the website. It is so good to have all the information current and in one easy location. I just need to encourage more SyS people to regularly check and read the website information instead of emailing me for an easy answer. I think we might be ready to go to the next stage of having some of the forms also available for directly entry on-line.

Adult Basic

Only one year into the two-year trial and already I have received suggestions to changes in the division. The ONLY change for this year is to reduce the program duration to 3 minutes plus or minus 10 seconds in line with the ISU requirements. After the 2017 AFSC, there will be full review of the Adult Basic division to see if it is still viable. It is important that teams show their support for this division by entering eligible teams in the 2017 AFSC otherwise it may be included in future.

In Conclusion

Thank you to the ISA Board and other Committee Chairs for including Synchronized skating in your policies and plans where applicable and for allowing me to get on what I needed to do.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone else who has assisted me this year with in any way – particularly Liz Alexandre, Rebecca Andrew, Allie Flack when I have emailed you for your opinion on something I have dreamed up; and all the SyS judges and officials for your enthusiasm and the time you give in your States to this great discipline. One official who was always supportive of SyS and is sadly missed is Robyn Symons. My last memory of her is a wonderful conversation we had in Melbourne about all things Synchronized skating and her sunny, positive and supportive attitude on everything.

We could all do worse than to have the same wonderful disposition for SyS and every part of our very special and beautiful sport.

Angelique Clyde-Smith
Chair, Synchronized Skating Committee
Ice Skating Australia Inc.
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