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Dear Danny

I have been thinking too much about our sport, and must present what I think is a possible cure to part of the downward direction our sport has been directed to for sometime. I have read and listened to all the explanations and possible cures and changes. I think that Bill Spooner and Dave Merell have helped with the financial problems, as they are both well educated in the financial processes. But, that is only one part of the equation. With all the changes that have been implemented, I cannot think of any that have helped. My greatest concern is, who is going to implement all this information? We have all heard the statement it's the coach. I have searched my mind and wonder what is being done to advance the education of the coach. If I remember correctly, it is the responsibility of the NGB to educate the coach's knowledge on all the important aspects of our sport.

Mentoring, coach education programs, coaching behavior, technical seminars, what importance the coach is to the RSA rink and operator; these are just a few key words to what a coach is, and what is needed to evolve as a useful employee and director of roller skating in a rink operation. As I was beginning my journey as a coach and operator, I was lucky to have had the best possible mentors of our era. These mentors knew that if I was able to increase the base of roller skating, the sport and organization would prosper. When we went to seminars to improve our ability to grow in our sport, we went to a seminar that was prepared and set into motion by these mentors. They included all the information I needed to improve my class system, the importance of operator coach relationships, and how the coach can help build the session and class programs.

Mentoring is acknowledged to be a dynamic, reciprocal relationship within a working environment, with a more experienced mentor and a less experienced individual, often a beginner. The mentor would try and develop the respective skills while the mentoring arrangement exists. It has been demonstrated that attendance at coach education courses increases the knowledge of the coach. Coaching involves a practical element; In order for a coach to become more effective, they must be able to apply the knowledge from courses specific to their coaching environment. I think that the best method to help the coach is through an apprenticeship program. If you can remember, that was how our programs started. Remember the tests that a coach must take to continue up the ladder of success; Sports Science, dance, figures, free-style, hockey, speed.? This was very important information to becoming a successful coach. The information given to a coach now days is poor, non informational, and not prepared in a professional manner.

Today, a competitive skater may win a couple of events turns pro by taking a couple of test, sending some money to USA Roller Sports, then steps out on the floor and receives the same compensation as all the seasoned coaches. This same coach only teaches a couple days because he/she works and does not want to put that much time in. They help with classes maybe, they may pay a percentage of their lessons to the rink, but do not want to stay for sessions. This is not a good prognosis for making a better coach. We must remember that the grass roots is the beginning of everything; However, 70% of the coaches spend most of their time with skaters who can already skate. This means that amateur card sales will be down; which means USA Roller Sports grows slower and slower. There needs to be some

readjustment to the training methods. I think that most rinks do not have the mentor factor to help a new coach into the system. So the system is weakened. Mentoring is designed to develop coaches at all levels; However another potential more serious problem is, there is no overarching body that can or has suggested a formal qualification process that is necessary to mentor coaches. Secondly, if there is no one in control of this scheme, how does this affect the enforcement and administration of this proposal. It is important that we include sport-specific information, coaching theory, and include a practical element in their coach education program; which contains mentoring. These are useful benefits in such a structure for the mentors and the student coach that the mentors feel that the coaches are useful within their organization, and the coach feel's that they have the opportunity to learn within this type of environment.

Although there are many factors to the problems that are facing our sport, we always knew that the people making decisions were from the roller skating society and some rink operators. Sport knowledge is crucial in making monumental decisions. Educated sport advisors have moved within the structure, they are making the decisions. After sitting in on conference calls and seminars, I feel that there needs to be a more diversified sport-orientated professional thinking process; We are a shadow of what we once were, and no matter how you look at it, serious mistakes have been made which should not continue to destruct our sport. We are at the lowest phase of our existence and we need to move forward. The association need to address the bottom of the barrel which needs to grow fruit rather than mediocrity.

Regards

James Pringle CMT