

# A SKATER'S GUIDE TO PRIVATE LESSON COACHING

## General Bullets:

- Any level skater can acquire a private lesson coach at any time (*see benefits for each level below*)
- Private lessons are strictly an agreement between Coaches and Parents and not the jurisdiction of the Massena Figure Skating Club unless Club policies are being broken
- Parents and skaters should NOT feel pressured or obligated by any Parent, Board Member, Coach or other Skater to work with any particular Coach or to take private lessons at all. If you feel this is happening, please let the Coach Liaison or the Club President (or other trusted Club Board Member or Coach) know immediately. The arena should be a place of enjoyment and opportunity to gather information. NEVER be afraid to ask questions!!
- You are entitled to change coaches. (*See below for proper procedures*) Coaches may decide not to work with a skater as well.
- Generally speaking; Once you have selected a coach that you are consistently working with, they become your primary coach and you should never work with another coach without first checking with your primary coach. Teaching techniques can and do vary and can cause confusion when they don't align. Most coaches will not work with you without asking you if you had gotten permission from your coach (they will often also confirm with your coach on their own when possible). Coaches will have their own policies regarding this – ASK before you DO.
- You do not have to enter into a set (permanent) lesson agreement with a coach. If you would like to have a few lessons to experience their coaching technique, you can ask for that. You can ask a coach for private lessons for a period of time to assist with getting ready for an event (ie. getting a music program together for our Basic Skills Competition) or help passing a Basic Skills test or element. Make sure they understand the purpose and time frame and for that time the bullet above applies. When that is done, if you would like to work with a different coach, you may. Keep in mind the possibilities of varied information in technique \*Doing this consistently and routinely will not allow for continuity, so this is best utilized sparsely or short term.
- Competitions can start at the Basic level and are much easier to navigate with a Private Coach.

## The Benefits of Private lessons:

At the Basic Skills level:

- Help with gaining those Basic skills quicker through one on one instruction.
- They can introduce you to/and help you prepare for Basic Skills Competitions (if your skater is interested in competing, or figure skating in the future)

**Things to know:** Basic Group classes must be covered first. Coaches will not always have time on the Basic skills ice to teach a private – They may take a skater up one level on Jr ice for a lesson, but it may mean staying a bit later to get a lesson in. Your skater may also get on the ice on Tues or Saturdays for an agreed upon lesson time if you and your coach arrange it. Coaches can explain the options and limitations further.

At the Junior/Senior Levels:

- One on One instruction on skills.
- You need a Certified USFS Coach in order to be a USFS figure Skating Tester and/or Competitor. They create music programs, and prepare you for Competitions and Tests.

**Things to know:**

Junior Skaters that are currently in the M & TH Dance and Freeskate group lessons. These groups are an introduction and bridge program into figure skating. This does not prepare a skater for USFS test sessions and competitions. If your child would like to skate to music, or compete – they will need a private coach at this time.

Junior Skaters who have completed all three levels of the Dance and Freeskate groups and all Senior skaters will not have any instruction unless they acquire a private lesson coach.

**How to go about picking the right coach for your skater:**

1. There should be a list of Coaches on the Club bulletin board located outside of the Ladies restroom. This sheet has each Coaches experience both as a skater and as a coach. It most likely is not a complete list as space is limited, but most important items are mentioned. Contact information is here for you as well.
2. Watch them coach.
3. And MOST important. TALK to them. This may mean arranging a time to speak outside of skating time if they are busy on the ice. Tell them what your skater is interested in. Examples of good questions to ask are:
  - What are your coaching philosophies and expectations.
  - What levels have you coached and what have your skaters accomplished
  - Do you have other fees associated with coaching outside of lessons (ie; some coaches charge for music cutting, or travel to events)
  - Do you have behavior expectations and what are your discipline policies
  - How have you stayed up on your sport
  - What experiences did you have as a skater, what do your Test levels mean
4. Remember that a coach that might be perfect for another skater may not be for yours. Getting others' experiences is fine, but only you know your skater and their goals.
5. Pick a coach that you feel you will be able to trust and believe.
6. Make sure your plans to meet goals are the same. If your coach doesn't want your skater off the ice during practice, but you let them get off every 5 minutes – you aren't on the same page.

## Procedures for Changing Coaches:

Sometimes goals change, personalities conflict etc. and you decide the coach you have been working with isn't the best fit anymore. This is OK and happens.

- First, talk to them about the problem. Often times you'll find it is something that can be worked out like a skater getting frustrated on a difficult element, bored with repeating the same thing (even if its in their best interest – like basic skating skills that are the base of all skating), age (ie; teenage years) and outside issues can be a factor.
- Make sure you and your skater know that the grass isn't always greener..... changing to a new coach simply because they have a skater that is moving ahead faster than yours doesn't guarantee quicker advancement. Try to determine the root(s) of why they have hit a plateau to rule out changes like practice habits, preparedness and interest/dedication.
- If you determine that a switch in coaches is the best decision let your coach know. You don't want them finding out through the rumor mill.
- If you still have a good rapport with your current coach it isn't unusual to agree to continue working with your student while you speak privately to the new coach you have an interest in working with.
- Start the process of selection again and ..... DON'T BURN BRIDGES. You never know when things might change and you might like to see about working with them again in the future.

## Other Info:

A coach may have an expectation/rules contract they want you to agree to.

Coaches need to be able to be honest with you. If you find yourself getting upset with or disbelieving your coach when they tell you something you don't want to hear (your skater is not ready to take this test, that is not a good music selection for them, etc) than refer back to #5 above.

ASK questions.....to anyone, to more than one person. Talk to more than one coach if you'd like.