

Synchro Skating Report

a/ Scottish Festival of Skating October 2009

The Festival broke all records with no fewer than 30 synchro teams and nearly 450 team skaters taking part and Dumfries Ice Bowl was literally “bursting at the seams”. Once again, the Ice Bowl staff, under the watchful eye of manager Colin Freeman, rose to the occasion, and all the temporary changing rooms were up and running in good time for the event. With so many teams and skaters, it is no mean feat to provide 14 different changing facilities to accommodate them all – boys, girls, adults, males, females. We are grateful once again to West Skelton Services in Dumfries for their help and sponsorship in supplying the portakabins and electrical generators.

The Synchro event itself presented a major organisational challenge. It was extremely important to run the event under the full IJS marking system, but with a great shortage of qualified officials in the UK, the organisers and Synchro Technical Committee had to look abroad to secure the required panels. Grateful thanks must go to Chris Buchanan for all his assistance, and the Scottish was honoured to welcome Joanne Shaw from Canada as Technical Controller for the event. Joanne is an ISU Technical Controller and a member of the ISU Synchronized Technical Committee. She was supported on the Technical Panel by International Technical Specialist Thomas Hopman from Holland. The referee for the event was Graham Perrin, and the distinguished judging panel included Sandra Barker (UK) and Cynthia Alepin (Canada) .

With not a seat to be had in the Ice Bowl, the audience was treated to the most colourful afternoon’s competitive entertainment, with all teams a credit to the remarkable development of this discipline over the past three years.

Following the competitions, all teams moved to the adjoining Bowls Hall (soon to be the new curling pad) for the presentation and medal ceremony, where a massive podium had been erected. If the Ice Arena had been “bursting”, the Presentation Hall was literally overflowing, and the atmosphere was nothing short of electric. The ceremony began with a surprise presentation to event organiser (a very embarrassed) Bryan Morrice, to thank him for his work on behalf of Scottish skating over the past 9 years. Although Bryan had recently resigned from Sk8scotland, he was determined to see through his commitment to the event. A beautiful pair of cut glass tumblers and water jug set engraved from Sk8scotland was presented by the current Sk8scotland Chair Archie Marshall. This presentation was immediately followed by another – this time to an overwhelmed Judy Clinton, who has also recently resigned from Sk8scotland and her role as Synchro Development Director. She too received a crystal tumblers and engraved water jug set presented on behalf of the Synchro Technical Committee and Sk8scotland, in recognition of the fantastic work she has undertaken over the past few years to develop synchronized skating both in Scotland and the UK.

The Presentations then proceeded for the Teams, with trophies and medals presented by Dumfries & Galloway Councillors, ably assisted by Joanne Shaw, Graham Perrin, Noel Grimshaw, Sandra Barker, Cynthia Alepin and Cyril Yates. The giant podium erected in the hall proved highly successful, as the entire teams could be accommodated on the platforms.

In the audience watching the events was guest synchro coach for the two day Sk8scotland Synchro Development Camp, Vicki Korn from the USA.

Vicki is a three times US PSA "Coach of the Year" and had recently retired as head coach to the Miami University "Redhawks" Synchro team, several times US National Champions and 2006-7 ISU World silver medallists. Nearly 100 skaters and coaches had registered for the two day Sk8scotland Camp, all very eager to work with Vicki on and off the ice. Following on from an actual competition, this camp offered a unique opportunity for top level feedback on their programs under the new IJS system, and with Joanne Shaw also kindly agreeing to stay on and offer detailed feedback, there could be no better or more valuable learning experience for teams and coaches alike. In addition to Vicki and Joanne, the teams and coaches attended varied seminars from Thomas Hopman (understanding IJS), Graham Bunting (ballroom & dance coach), Melissa Galvin (on-ice exercises and off-ice team building), and Richard Lambert (understanding fitness and music beats and rhythm). A most valuable seminar was also given by Joanne Shaw and Thomas Hopman. All in all, a top level seminar and feedback suggests its value was second to none!

b/ Scottish teams swept the board at the 2010 British Synchro Skating Championships and National Opens at iceSheffield in February 2010 taking gold medals in 3 categories in addition to a well deserved silver medal in the Elementary section. Every single Scottish Team won a medal at the 2010 event which attracted 36 UK teams.

In the Preliminary section, Aberdeen's Team Pizazz, took a commanding lead over Wight Gems and Rocking Robins. In the Intermediate 1 section, Inverness Moray Dolphins beat off Altrincham, Lee Valley, Basingstoke and Sheffield to win Gold for the Highlanders, while Aberdeen Team Zariba scooped a third Scottish Gold in the Intermediate 2 competition. In the Elementary competition, with 10 teams competing, Ayr Gael Force took silver just 1.14 points behind winners Altrincham Silver Blades.

To round off a brilliant event, Inverness Moray Dolphins were not only awarded Synchro Team of the Year, but also the coveted Helen Volgushev trophy for Most Entertaining Performance of the Championships. Well done to Moray Dolphins and their coach Amanda Clinton and all the Scottish contingent.

c/ Scottish International success saw Dumfries came back with two silver medals from their event in Holland in February.