

Compete USA Series Competitions

What is it?

The Competition Series concept has been a huge success for beginning skaters and their families in Florida, Colorado, Michigan and Wisconsin and while the growth of the Series has been important, it is the ease of how it runs that makes it so appealing. The general principle of a Series is at least three or more local competitions join forces, share one standard announcement, and all participating skaters earn points for their placements which are totaled up throughout the Series. During the last competition of the Series, the top three winners in each level receive an additional award for their participation.



Series. The official Basic Skills Competition Series of Colorado was born! In four short years, the Colorado Basic Skills competition series has grown from four to seven competitions. "The growth is the greatest testimonial to this effort," commented Alexander. "It was more than I could have hoped for."

Maureen Dalton, Michigan Basic Skills Series director, wanted to take the successful Colorado template and build upon it for her home state. "We started our Series in 2007 with seven clubs participating and jumped to 16 in 2008 with almost 700 participants! We have had positive responses from parents, skaters and coaches," Dalton remarked. The only requirement of programs interested in joining the Michigan Basic Skills Series is

Benefits

Some additional benefits have been the collaboration of the participating programs and clubs on the master schedule so skaters and their families can plan their travels as soon as the announcement is posted with all of the competition dates and locations within the Series. They all share one standard consistent announcement so skaters, coaches and judges know exactly what is expected of them in each level at each event. Programs and clubs advertise and support each other and hopefully earn a profit from a well attended competition.

Where it began

It all began in 2003 when Kent Johnson, skating program director for Kendall Ice Arena in Miami, FL started contacting the skating directors of local rinks who were operating U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills Programs. His idea was to use just one competition announcement that would advertise and promote a series of competitions equally to promote Basic Skills and arena cooperation in South Florida. At the time, cooperation between the local arenas was at an all time low and grass roots skating had degenerated into mostly in-house events. With the new Basic Skills competition Series concept, each arena hosting an event would agree to participate fully in all the events guaranteeing success and opportunity to all parties involved. Johnson soon realized that all the rinks contacted were very interested in participating and eager to give it a try.

Since starting the Series, the Kendall Ice Arena Basic Skills Program has seen steady growth. Skaters are encouraged to compete as much as possible and they are able to gain valuable competition experience in a fun atmosphere. In addition to the normal placement medals, the skaters are rewarded with points based on their placements. The shiny trophies that are awarded to the skaters at the end of the Series have proven to be a wonderful incentive for the skaters to work hard! Thus, the South Florida Basic Skills Series is in its sixth year and has been going strong ever since!

Development

In 2004, this idea caught on in Colorado when Linda Alexander, Honnen Ice Arena manager at Colorado College, heard that the Basic Skills Series concept was working so well in Florida. "I contacted Kent as I wanted to find out about the Series to figure out how we could sell this in Colorado," said Alexander. "I had never run a Basic Skills competition before so it was important for me to dive in completely."

When Alexander brought a few key people in the Colorado Springs area together, it was decided that the existing individual competitions would greatly benefit from being part of a



that the announcements are identical to everyone else's, making the process easier for everyone involved. Representatives from each participating program serve as directors, assistants and associates. "The greatest and somewhat unexpected result of the Series has been the way the direc-

tors, assistants and associates have worked together to help each others' Basic Skills Programs. They are sharing information, equipment and ideas while operating under the concept of helping each other so the Series is successful," observed Dalton.

Many volunteer contributions have been pivotal to the Michigan series. They put together the floral arrangements for the skaters, design the medals and flyers and create the banners on display at each competition. "Hours and hours of dedication and commitment have been instrumental in this being a success," Dalton said.

When Carolyn Clausius heard about the successful Series events taking place in Florida, Colorado and Michigan, she thought it was something that could work well in her state of Wisconsin. Since there were several programs around Madison, WI that were offering spring Basic Skills competitions, the Series concept seemed like a great way to bring those groups together, rather than having them compete to attract the same skaters to their individual events. "I pitched the idea to three area skating directors and they were excited to give this a try," said Clausius. The first Wisconsin Basic Skills Series wrapped up in August 2008!

With all of the success that the Basic Skills Series has had, other areas around the country are starting to catch on. Sue Clemente of Cleveland, OH got her area excited about their Series that started in November 2008 that will include five competitions. "We are excited to be offering our new young skaters an opportunity to compete and have fun with their new skills. Many sports have clinics and lessons where players learn the sport and then they have recreational and fun games for them to use their new skills in a fun and friendly competitive arena," says Clemente, adding "I think the Basic Skills Series offers that atmosphere to the new, young skater. Hopefully, the Series will encourage the skaters to keep working toward their goals and increase their skating skills while having fun!"

If you would like to learn more about organizing a Compete USA Series in your area, please visit www.usfigureskating.org and click "Programs" then "Competition Series" or contact U.S. Figure Skating at 719.635.5200. It only takes three Compete USA Programs to get it going and many, many benefits will be realized!