



Referees and Judges HANDBOOK ICE DANCE

2026-2027



ISU ICE DANCE REFEREES & JUDGES HANDBOOK

Season 2026–2027

Professional Reference Guide
for Ice Dance Officials

Prepared by the Ice Dance Technical Committee
GOIDTC

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ISU Code of Ethics

Summary for ISU Officials

(ISU Communication 2702)

General Principles

The ISU Code of Ethics establishes the ethical framework for everyone participating in ISU activities. Its primary objectives are to protect the integrity and credibility of skating, promote fair play, safeguard athletes, and ensure that all participants are treated with dignity and respect.

All persons acting within the ISU are expected to:

- demonstrate honesty, integrity, fairness and professionalism;
- promote confidence in the impartiality of ISU competitions;
- respect all participants and contribute to a safe sporting environment;
- avoid any behaviour that could damage the reputation of the ISU or the sport.

The Code applies equally to all forms of communication, including social media. Officials must not publish comments about fellow Officials, Skaters, Coaches, ISU Members, assignments, judging decisions or competition results.

Discrimination of any kind is strictly prohibited. Harassment and abuse—including physical, psychological, sexual and online abuse—are not tolerated. Every participant has a responsibility to help maintain a safe environment and to report suspected misconduct through the appropriate ISU reporting channels.

The Code also prohibits fraud, corruption, bribery, misuse of ISU resources, inappropriate gifts or personal benefits, betting on skating events, competition manipulation, doping-related misconduct and retaliation against individuals who report ethical violations.

Responsibilities of ISU Officials

Because Officials play a critical role in ensuring fair competition, they are expected to maintain the highest level of independence, impartiality and professionalism.

Officials shall:

- perform all duties objectively, fairly and without national or personal bias;
- avoid both actual and perceived conflicts of interest;
- disclose any potential conflict immediately to the ISU;
- refrain from influencing or attempting to influence competition outcomes;
- report any suspected unethical conduct, manipulation or irregular behaviour without delay;
- maintain confidentiality regarding disciplinary matters and sensitive information obtained through their ISU duties.

Conflict of Interest

Officials must carefully assess whether any relationship or activity could reasonably create the appearance of bias.

Examples include:

- family or close personal relationships with competing Skaters or Coaches;
- coaching activities that conflict with officiating assignments;
- participation in national team functions when incompatible with ISU duties;
- attending team dinners or activities that may compromise impartiality;
- providing monitoring or technical feedback to competitors shortly before events where the Official is assigned.

Officials are responsible not only for avoiding actual conflicts but also situations that may reasonably be perceived as conflicts by others.

Independence and Neutrality

ISU Officials must remain completely independent throughout the competition period.

They must:

- make decisions solely according to the ISU Rules and Regulations;
- never favour or disadvantage any Member, Coach or Skater;
- avoid external influence, pressure or personal interests;
- preserve the confidence of athletes, coaches and the public in the judging system.

Social Media

Officials are expected to exercise caution when using social media.

They must not publicly comment on fellow Officials, Skaters or Coaches, ISU assignments, judging decisions, competition results or evaluations.

Professional conduct online is subject to the same ethical standards as conduct during competitions.

Key Message

Integrity is the foundation of the ISU officiating system. Every Judge, Referee, Technical Controller, Technical Specialist and other Official shares responsibility for protecting the credibility of skating by acting with honesty, impartiality, transparency and respect at all times. Ethical behaviour is not limited to decision-making during competitions—it also extends to communication, professional relationships, conflict management and personal conduct both on and off the ice.

CHAPTER 1

GOE EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

1. Purpose of GOE

Grade of Execution (GOE) measures the quality of execution of an element after the Technical Panel has identified the element and its Level. Judges evaluate the quality of execution using the ISU Set Criteria and then adjust the GOE according to positive and negative features.

2. GOE Evaluation Workflow

- Identify the element shown on the judging screen.
- Start the evaluation from the applicable SET CRITERIA.
- Evaluate Musicality/Timing and Falls/Errors/Loss of Control.
- Compare positive and negative features.
- Establish the final GOE.
- +4 and +5 can only be awarded if no negative feature(s) are detected
- If an "e" symbol appears on a Choreographic Element, reduce the established GOE by one grade (maximum +4).
- "e" symbol means technical error and might not be considered as serious error.

3. Fundamental Judging Principles

- Judge the entire element, not only one highlight.
- Reward quality, precision and effortless skating.
- Do not compensate technical errors with presentation quality.
- Positive features must outweigh negative features for positive GOE.
- GOE and Program Components are evaluated independently.

4. Practical GOE Decision Guide

Begin from the Set Criteria. If the element contains no significant errors and demonstrates numerous positive features, increase the GOE accordingly. If negative features dominate, reduce the GOE. Falls, serious errors and loss of control always have a significant influence on the final GOE.

5. Judges' Best Practice

- Be consistent throughout the event.
- Apply identical standards to every team.
- Use the complete GOE range.
- Evaluate quality—not reputation.
- Record the final GOE only after considering the complete element.

CHAPTER 2

GOE EVALUATION GUIDE

1. Pattern Dance / Pattern Dance Elements

Evaluation starts from the Set Criteria. Judges consider step accuracy, timing, required beats, falls/errors and then balance positive and negative features before assigning the final GOE.

- Correct edges, turns and timing.
- 100% required beats held by both partners is the ideal reference.
- Reward glide, flow, unison and musical character.
- Reduce GOE for incorrect turns, poor holds, spacing or musical errors.

2. Rhythm Dance & Free Dance Required Elements

All required elements follow the same evaluation philosophy: start with the Set Criteria, then evaluate execution quality using positive and negative features.

3. Choreographic Elements

- If an element receives the "e" symbol, reduce the established GOE by one grade.
- The GOE after applying the "e" reduction cannot be higher than +4.
- As a base, evaluate choreography, innovation, musical relationship and quality of execution.

4. Practical GOE Advice

- Judge the complete element.
- Count positive and negative features objectively.
- Do not reward reputation.
- Use the full GOE scale when justified.
- Apply the same standard throughout the competition.

Quick Reference

Always begin with the Set Criteria, then evaluate quality of execution, balance positive and negative features, apply mandatory reductions (including the "e" symbol when applicable), and finally assign the GOE that best reflects the total quality of the element.

CHAPTER 3

Practical Guidelines for Evaluating Program Components

Key Principles

- Build each Program Component mark from the quality actually demonstrated during the performance.
- Evaluate the complete program and consider both strengths and weaker sections.
- Account for gaps where quality criteria are only demonstrated occasionally.
- Differentiate couples according to what they actually performed rather than reputation or expectations.
- Base every mark on the published criteria and observable evidence.

Using Previous Marks on the same competition segment

Previous couple marks may be checked only as a consistency reference. They help establish appropriate differences between performances, but must never be used to predetermine ranking or placement.

Practical Advice for Judges

- Recognize each criteria while the program is performed.
- Understand every criteria before judging, unknown criteria cannot be evaluated consistently.
- Be fair to every athlete – an unjustified gift to one competitor disadvantages another.
- Do not hesitate to reward outstanding performances regardless of reputation.
- Likewise, do not hesitate to use lower scores when justified.
- Use the complete scoring range from 0.25 to 10.00 whenever appropriate.

Key Message

Consistent, objective and criteria-based judging provides clear feedback to athletes and ensures fair competition. Judges should compare performances only to identify the correct differences in quality, never to establish rankings.

Composition – Practical Evaluation Guide

Characteristics of Stronger Couples

- Easily demonstrate correct phrasing by starting and ending elements to match the phrasing of the music.
- Use a variety of holds with more closed positions and create interesting movement patterns on the ice.
- Demonstrate complex designs and equally share responsibility for creating a program that feels organic and complete from start to finish.
- Maximize reach and extensions while confidently using different levels and the full ice surface.

Characteristics of Weaker Couples

- Execute elements and movements without a true relationship to the musical structure.
- Skate predominantly side by side with mostly open holds and simple transitions.
- Place elements repeatedly in the same areas of the ice surface.
- Skate one-dimensionally without maximizing extensions or use of space.
- Leave noticeable gaps that reduce the clarity and continuity of the composition.

Judge's Focus

- Assess how choreography is structured in relation to the music.
- Evaluate use of space, movement patterns and variety of holds.
- Consider whether the program appears complete, balanced and organically connected.

Key Takeaways

- Composition should support and enhance the musical structure.
- Programs should demonstrate variety, balance and effective use of the ice surface.

Presentation – Practical Evaluation Guide

Purpose

Presentation evaluates how effectively the couple communicates the character, style and emotional content of the music through their performance. Judges should evaluate the overall impression created throughout the entire program.

Characteristics of Stronger Couples

- Equally embody the piece of music and radiate its character and style.
- Portray an organic feeling of surrendering to the music, as if the music itself is guiding their movement.
- Demonstrate a strong connection and intimacy between the partners.
- Establish meaningful eye contact with each other and, when appropriate, with the audience.

Characteristics of Weaker Couples

- Show an unequal understanding of the music, character and style.
- Skate through the music rather than to the music.
- Execute choreography mechanically without fully understanding its purpose.
- Avoid direct eye contact and demonstrate limited connection with each other or with the audience.

Judge's Focus

When evaluating Presentation, judges should concentrate on the quality of communication, the authenticity of the performance, the connection between the partners, and the ability of the couple to project the intended character consistently throughout the program.

Key Takeaways

- Evaluate the overall quality of communication rather than isolated moments.
- Strong presentation combines musical understanding, emotional commitment and partnership.
- Connection between the skaters is a key indicator of quality.
- Presentation should remain consistent from the beginning to the end of the performance.

Skating Skills – Practical Evaluation Guide

Purpose

This chapter summarizes the practical evaluation principles for the Skating Skills Program Component, focusing on the characteristics that distinguish stronger and weaker performances.

Characteristics of Stronger Couples

- Both partners demonstrate equal skating ability and quality.
- Easy balance, secure one-foot skating and confident multi-directional skating.
- Clear and precise skating with deep edges and effective knee action.
- Quiet, effortless flow and glide across the ice.

Characteristics of Weaker Couples

- Unequal skating abilities between the partners.
- Predominantly two-foot skating and limited skating directions.
- Shallow or flat edges with reliance on simple crossovers.
- Skating appears laboured, loud and scratchy, lacking effortless glide.

Judge's Focus

- Assess the overall quality and equality of skating skills throughout the program.
- Observe edge quality, balance, control, flow and glide.
- Evaluate efficiency of movement rather than difficulty alone.
- Consider whether both partners contribute equally to the skating quality.

Key Takeaways

- Strong skating skills provide the technical foundation for all other program components.
- Effortless skating, deep edges and equal partner quality are indicators of higher marks.
- Visible effort, shallow edges and imbalance between partners should reduce the mark.

CHAPTER 4

DEDUCTIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Referee Responsibilities

- Program time violations.
- Tempo violations in Rhythm Dance.
- Late starts and interruptions.
- Lift duration deductions.
- Verification and application of referee deductions.

2. Majority Deductions (Referee + Judges)

- Music requirement violations.
- Costume / Prop violations.
- Violations of choreographic restrictions.

3. Technical Panel Responsibilities

- Identify Elements and its level
- Identify Falls.
- Call Illegal Elements / Movements / Poses.
- Identify Extra Elements (ExEI).
- Authorize symbols and technical calls.

4. Responsibility Matrix

Situation	Referee	Judges	Technical Panel
Program time	✓		
Tempo Specification	✓		
Interruption	✓		
Up to three (3) minutes interruption	✓		
Late Start	✓		
Part of the costume / decoration fall on the ice	✓		
GOE	✓	✓	
Components	✓	✓	
Illegal Element			✓
Fall deduction			✓
Music violation	✓	✓	
Costume / prop	✓	✓	
Choreo restriction	✓	✓	
Lift duration	✓		

5. Practical Competition Guidance

- Know which official is responsible before applying a deduction.
- Do not duplicate deductions.
- Separate GOE decisions from mandatory deductions.
- Apply identical standards to every team.

Quick Reference

When in doubt, first determine WHO is responsible (Referee, Judges, Technical Panel), then apply the deduction or evaluation according to the responsibility matrix.

CHAPTER 5

SYMBOLS & PROTOCOL

Official Symbols

Symbol	Meaning	Judge / Official Action
<	Level reduced by 1	Recognize interrupted Pattern Dance Element
<<	Level reduced by 2	Long interruption in Pattern Dance Element
>	Extended Lift	Referee applies deduction
ExEl	Extra Element	Technical Panel identifies; deduction applied
*	No value	Technical Panel applies Element not according to the requirements
F	Fall	Technical Panel identifies; deduction applied
Fx	Multiple Falls	Each fall deducted
S	Level reduction for hold/contact error	Technical Panel applies
e	Error in Choreographic Element	Judge reduces established GOE by one grade (max +4)

Practical Interpretation

- **e:** Do NOT change the quality assessment. Establish the GOE, then reduce it by one grade.
- **ExEl:** Extra elements receive the prescribed deduction in addition to technical identification.
- **F / Fx:** Falls influence both deductions and GOE evaluation.
- ***:** The element receives no value but no deduction.
- **S:** Always verify if hold/contact requirements were fulfilled.

Officials' Reminder

The protocol symbols are not only technical annotations; they directly influence GOE evaluation. Judges should immediately recognize every symbol appearing on their screen and understand its effect on the final score.

CHAPTER 6

COMPETITION QUICK REFERENCE

Silent Stand Protocol

- Digital isolation – all electronic devices must be switched off
- Mark independently
- Do not discuss with another judge
- Do not indicate errors by action or sound
- Do not look at marks inputted by neighboring Judges
- Do not use previously prepared marks or notes from past scores

Dos and Don'ts – the Judges' objective filter

- Judges must disregard public applause
- Do not show bias on any grounds
- Always be completely impartial
- Protect the integrity of the Event
 - Through knowledge of current ISU Rules, Handbooks, Communications and Q&As
 - Adherence to the ISU Code of Ethics
 - Maintaining satisfactory eyesight, hearing and general physical condition
- Strict prohibitions
 - Serving as a TV commentator or communicating with Media
 - Acting as a Team Leader
 - Discussing marks with anyone except the authorized personal
 - Making negative public comments regarding the Event

Mandatory Meetings

- Initial Judges Meeting (IJM)
- Pre Segment Meeting (Pre Event Meeting – PEM)
- Round Table Discussion
- (RTD)

Judging

- Possessing thorough up-to-date knowledge of all ISU technical rules and regulations
- Apply the evaluation tools – GOE and Program Components – comprehensively
- Demonstrate flawless ethical conduct, total neutrality and absolute independent evaluations

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Mistake	Best Practice
Judging one highlight only	Assess the complete element.
Mixing GOE with Components	Evaluate independently.
Ignoring protocol symbols	React immediately to symbols.
Overusing middle GOEs	Use the full GOE scale.
Different standards	Maintain consistency.

Quick Reference re GOE evaluation

Remember: Start from the Set Criteria → Evaluate quality → Balance positive and negative features → Apply mandatory deductions/symbol adjustments → Award the final GOE.

CHAPTER 7

Responsibilities of the Event Referee

Pre-Competition Responsibilities

- Bring your whistle and stop watches with you
- Verify eligibility requirements and ISU clearance certificates – in competitions where ISU Event Coordinator is not present
- Check the correctness of the calculation setup when applicable – in competitions where ISU Event coordinator is not present
- Approve medical appliances containing metal or hard plastic together with the medical advisor.
- Conduct draws when necessary for the starting order and, in Ice Dance, the Pattern Dance(s).
- Conduct the Initial Judges Meeting and pre-segment Judges Meetings.

Management of the Officials

- Manage the Judges' panel and ensure compliance with judging protocols.
- Act as the spokesperson of the Officials when required.
- Moderate the Round Table Discussion according to ISU guidelines.

Competition Responsibilities

- Monitor compliance with warm-up procedures and starting times.
- Manage delayed starts, restarts and music interruptions.
- Determine whether ice conditions are suitable for competition.
- Time programs, interruptions, Dance Lifts and Pattern Dance/Rhythm Dance tempos, late starts.
- Judge the complete event.

Decision-Making Authority

- Rule on protests.
- Apply Referee deductions within the Regulations.
- Together with the Judges' panel decide majority deductions relating to costume/props, choreography and music restrictions.
- Suspend competition when necessary and restore order.
- Exclude competitors or remove Judges when justified.
- Forbid coaches from entering the ice during competition.
- Decide matters concerning breaches of ISU Code of Ethics, Constitution or any ISU Regulations.

Post-Competition Responsibilities

- Prepare the official Referee Report according to ISU guidelines.

Remember!

Have your Whistle and Stop Watches available!

Warm-up periods based on the Sport Rule:

- Pattern Dance(s) – 3 minutes. The first 30 seconds without music followed by 2 minutes and 30 seconds of the sixth (last) tune of the ISU Ice Dance music – maximum six Couples
- Novice Free Dance 3 minutes, – maximum five Couples.
- Rhythm Dance, Free Dance (Junior/Senior) – 5 minutes, - maximum five Couples;

Key Takeaways

- The Referee is responsible for the fair, safe and orderly conduct of the competition.
- The Referee combines administrative, technical and judging responsibilities.
- Deductions may applied solely by the Referee, while others require a majority decision with the Judges' panel.
- Professional leadership and consistent application of the ISU Rules are essential.

Useful links

- <https://isu.org/figure-skating-rules/?tab=Forms%2C%20Reports%20%26%20Seminars>
- <https://isu.org/isu-medical/>

CHAPTER 8

PATTERN DANCE CHART

All Novice categories		All Pattern Dances will be skated in the order listed and must be performed with the first sequence executed in front of the judges' stand. If not, the Referee will stop the couple and instruct them to restart on the correct side without deduction. The first Step of the dance must be on beat 1 of a measure. Couples shall provide their own music for all Pattern Dances. Tunes 1-5 of the ISU Ice Dance music may also be chosen. Each team's music for the official practice will be played for both Pattern Dances (Each couple skate the first Pattern Dance to their own music and then each couple skates the second dance to their own music) Warm-up 3 minutes, max 6 couples. The first 30 seconds are without music, followed by 2 minutes and 30 seconds of the 6 th tune of the ISU Ice Dance music to be played					
		Pattern Dance	# of sequences	Music	Pattern	Components/ Factors	Warm up Music
Basic Novice No Key Points, Called to max Level 2	Pattern Dance 1	Willow Waltz	2 Sequences	Rhythm: Waltz ¾, Tempo 45 measures of 3 beats (135 beats per minute) plus or minus 3 beats per minute	Set Pattern	Timing Presentation Skating Skills Factor: 0.7	the 6 th (last) tune of the European Waltz ISU Ice Dance music
	Pattern Dance 2	Hickory Hoedown	2 Sequences	Rhythm: Country Western (Hoedown) 4/4, Tempo 26 measures of 4 beats, (104 per minute) plus or minus 2 beats per minute	Set Pattern		Hickory Hoedown Music – available on the ISU website under "Music Rhythms Additions"
	Pattern Dance 3	Tango Fiesta	2 Sequences	Rhythm: Tango 4/4, Tempo 27 measures of 4 beats, (108 beats per minute) plus or minus 2 beats per minute	Set Pattern		the 6 th (last) tune of the Tango ISU Ice Dance music
Intermediate Novice Key points called to max Level 3	Pattern Dance 1	Fourteenstep	4 Sequences	Rhythm: March 6/8 or 2/4, Tempo 56 or 28 measures of 4 beats (112 beats per minute) plus or minus 2 beats per minute	Set Pattern	Timing Presentation Skating Skills Factor: 0.7	the 6 th (last) tune of the Fourteenstep ISU Ice Dance music
	Pattern Dance 2	Foxtrot	2 Sequences	Rhythm: Foxtrot 4/4, Tempo 25 measures of 4 beats, (100 beats per minute) plus or minus 2 beats per minute	Optional Pattern		the 6 th (last) tune of the Foxtrot ISU Ice Dance music
	Pattern Dance 3	American Waltz	2 Sequences	Rhythm: Waltz ¾, Tempo 66 measures of 3 beats, (198 beats per minute) plus or minus 3 beats per minute	Set Pattern		the 6 th (last) tune of the American Waltz ISU Ice Dance music
Advanced Novice Key points called to max Level 4	Pattern Dance 1	Paso Doble Plus	2 Sequences	Rhythm: Paso Doble 2/4, Tempo 56 measure of 2 beats, (112 beats per minute) plus or minus 2 beats per minute	Optional Pattern	Timing Presentation Skating Skills Factor: 0.93	the 6 th (last) tune of the Paso Doble ISU Ice Dance music
	Pattern Dance 2	Blues	2 Sequences	Rhythm: Blues 4/4, Tempo 22 measure of 4 beats. (88 beats per minute) plus or minus 2 beats per minute	Optional Pattern		the 6 th (last) tune of the Blues ISU Ice Dance music

CATEGORY	DANCE		DURATION IN SECS PER SEQUENCE	REQUIRED SECTION or SEQUENCES	No OF STEPS PER SECTION OR SEQUENCE	No of Steps				
						10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
Basic Novice	Willow Waltz	132 – 138 bpm	23.4-24.6	2 Sequences (1 round)	22	2	6	11	17	20
	Hickory Hoedown	102-106 bpm	21.3–22.3	2 Sequences (1 round)	16	2	4	8	12	14
	Tango Fiesta	106-110 bpm	15.8-16.5	2 Sequences (1 round)	14	1	4	7	11	13
Intermediate Novice	Fourteenstep	110-114 bpm	10.5-10.9	4 Sequences (2 rounds)	14	1	4	7	11	13
	Foxtrot	98-102 bpm	16.5 – 17.1	2 Sequences (1 round)	14	1	4	7	11	13
	American Waltz	195-201 bpm	28.8- 29.4	2 Sequences (1 round)	16	2	4	8	12	14
Advanced Novice	Paso Doble Plus	110-114 bpm	16.8-17.5	2 Sequences (1 round)	28	3	7	14	21	25
	Blues	86 - 90 bpm	24.0 – 25.2	2 Sequences (1 round)	18	2	5	9	14	16

CHAPTER 9

Q&A FOR THE SEASON 2026/2027

The Q&A document provides official clarifications and answers to frequently asked questions regarding the application of ISU Communications No. 2794, 2795, 2797 and 2798. It serves as a practical reference for the Ice Dance Community (skaters, Coaches, Officials) to ensure consistent interpretation of technical specifications, GOE evaluation, deductions, and responsibilities.

Practical information for Judges and Referees

- The Q&A document is published separately on the ISU website
- The Q&A document is updated continuously
- The Judges and Referees have to check the Q&A document before each competition to be well prepared

ANNEX - 1

PATTERN DANCE DIAGRAMS

Basic Novice

- Willow Waltz
- Hickory Hoedown
- Tango Fiesta

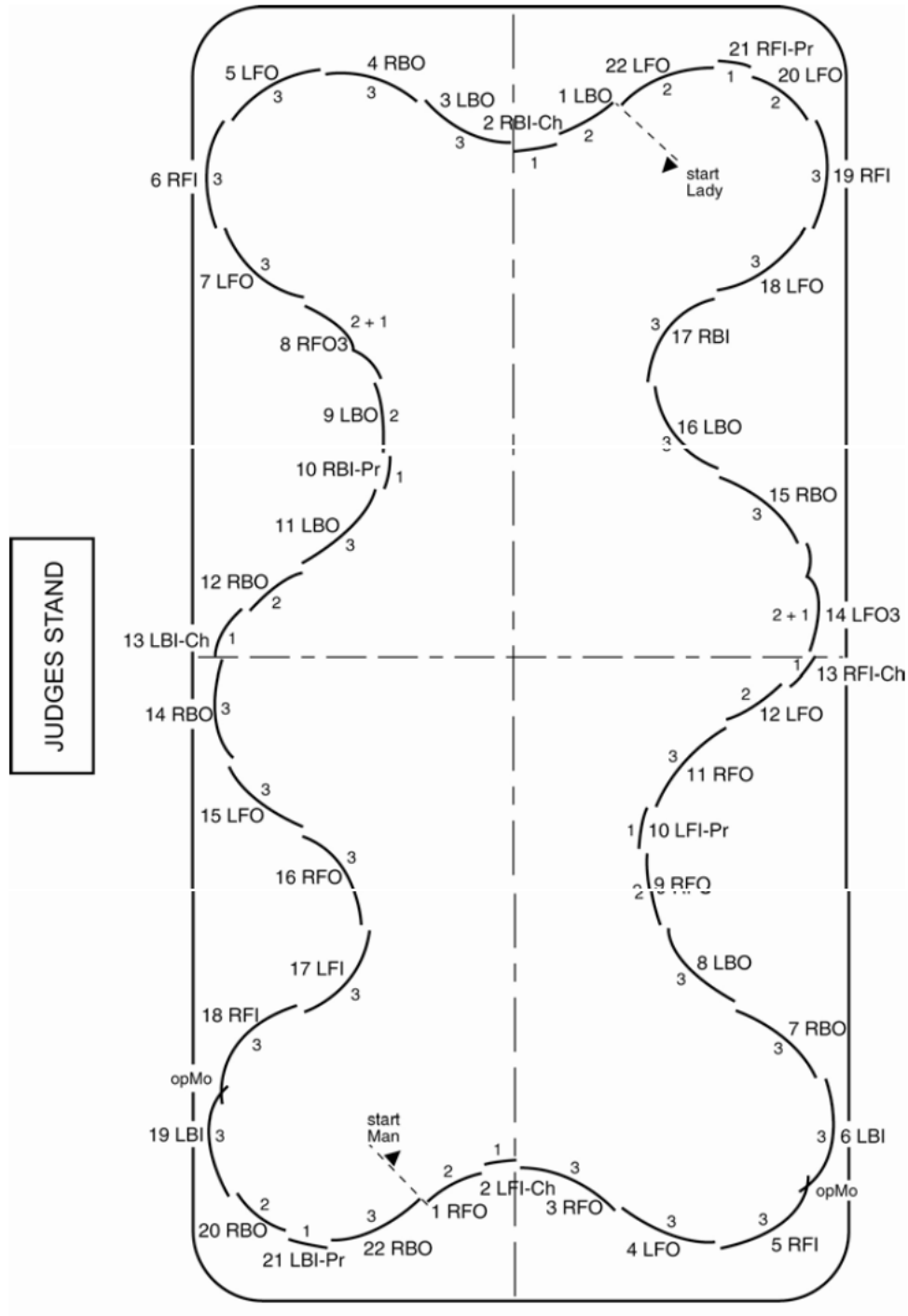
Intermediate Novice

- Fourteenstep
- Foxtrot
- American Waltz

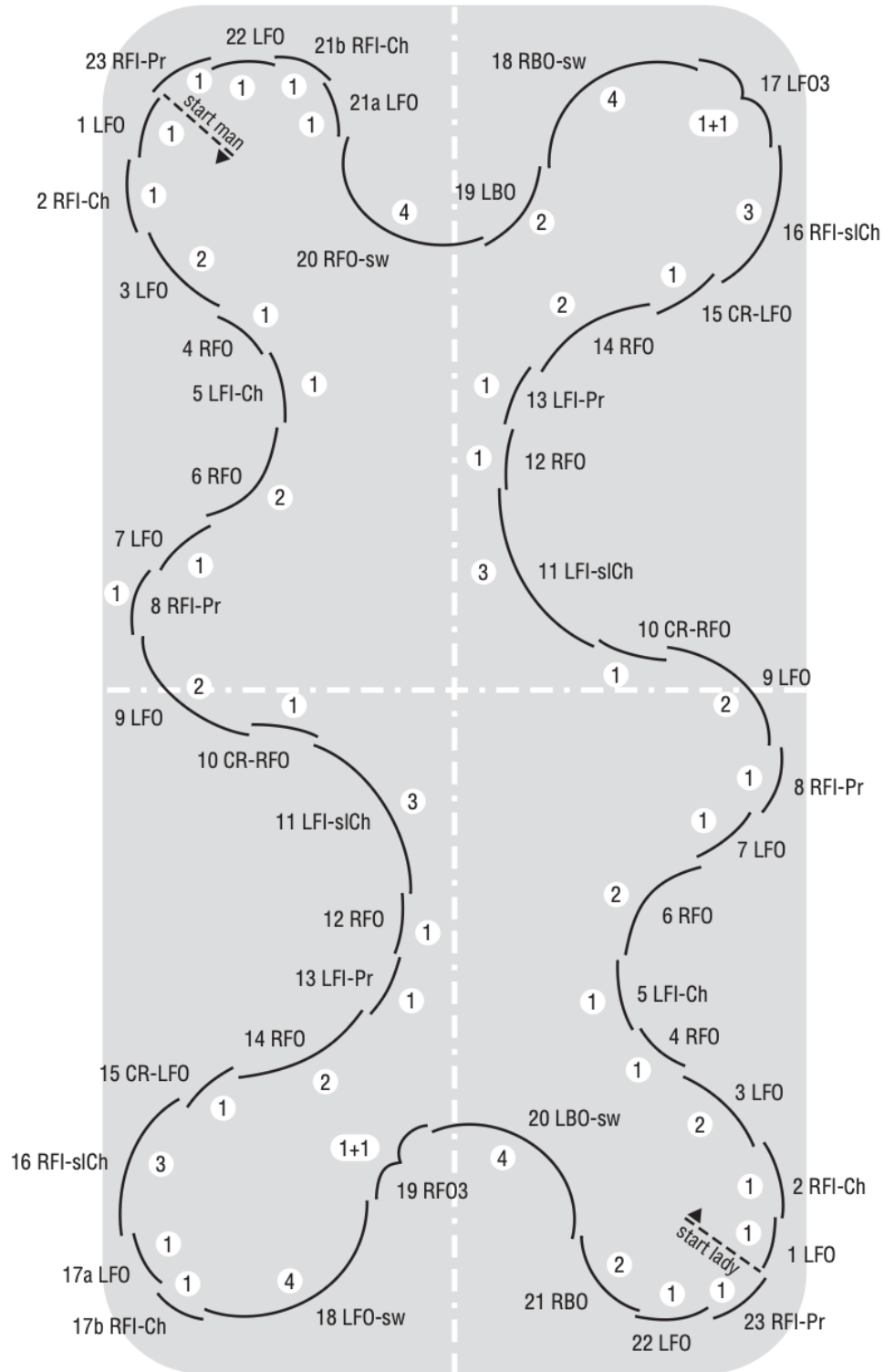
Advanced Novice

- Paso Doble
- Blues

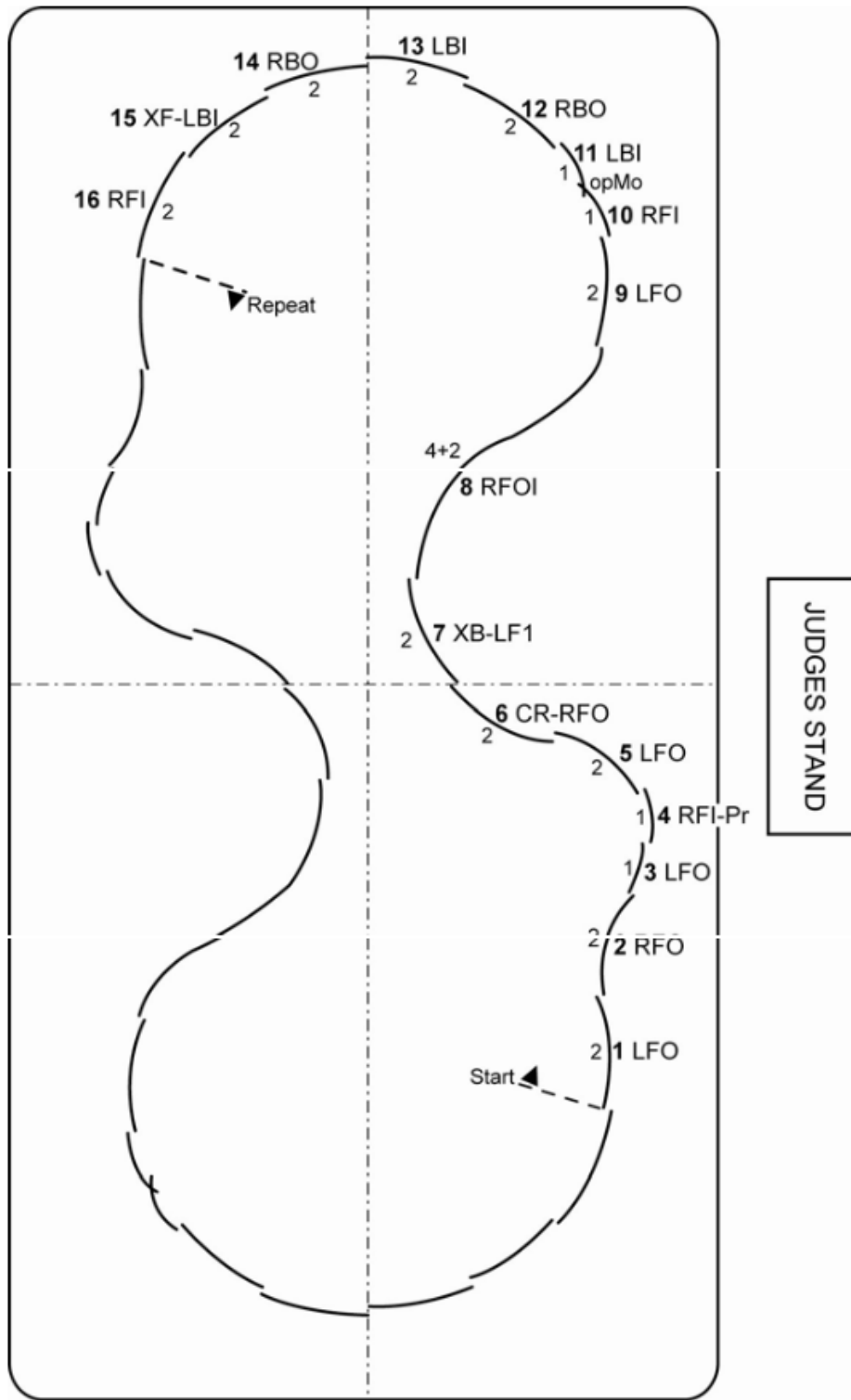
Basic Novice – Willow Waltz



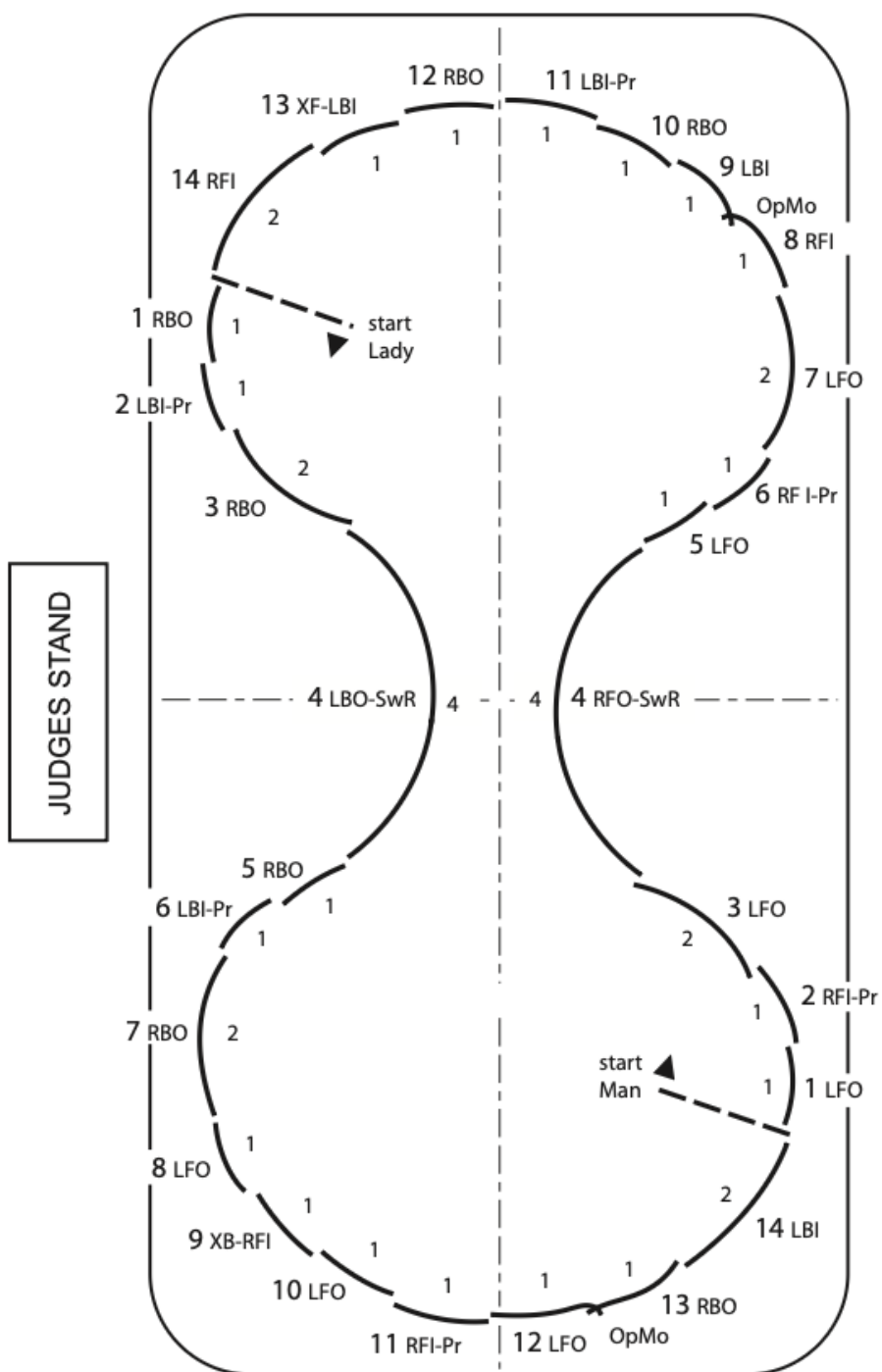
Basic Novice – Hickory Hoedown



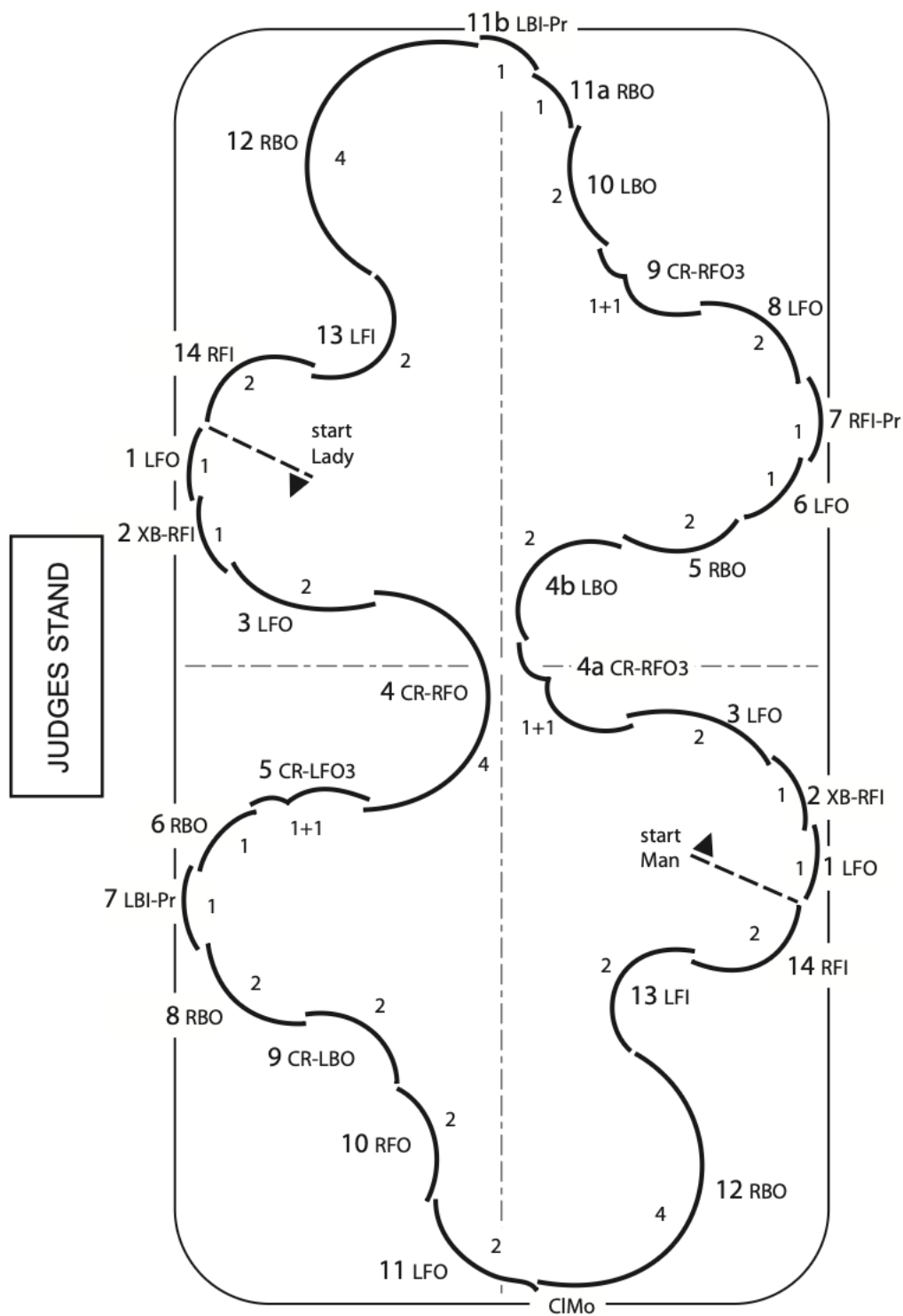
Basic Novice – Tango Fiesta



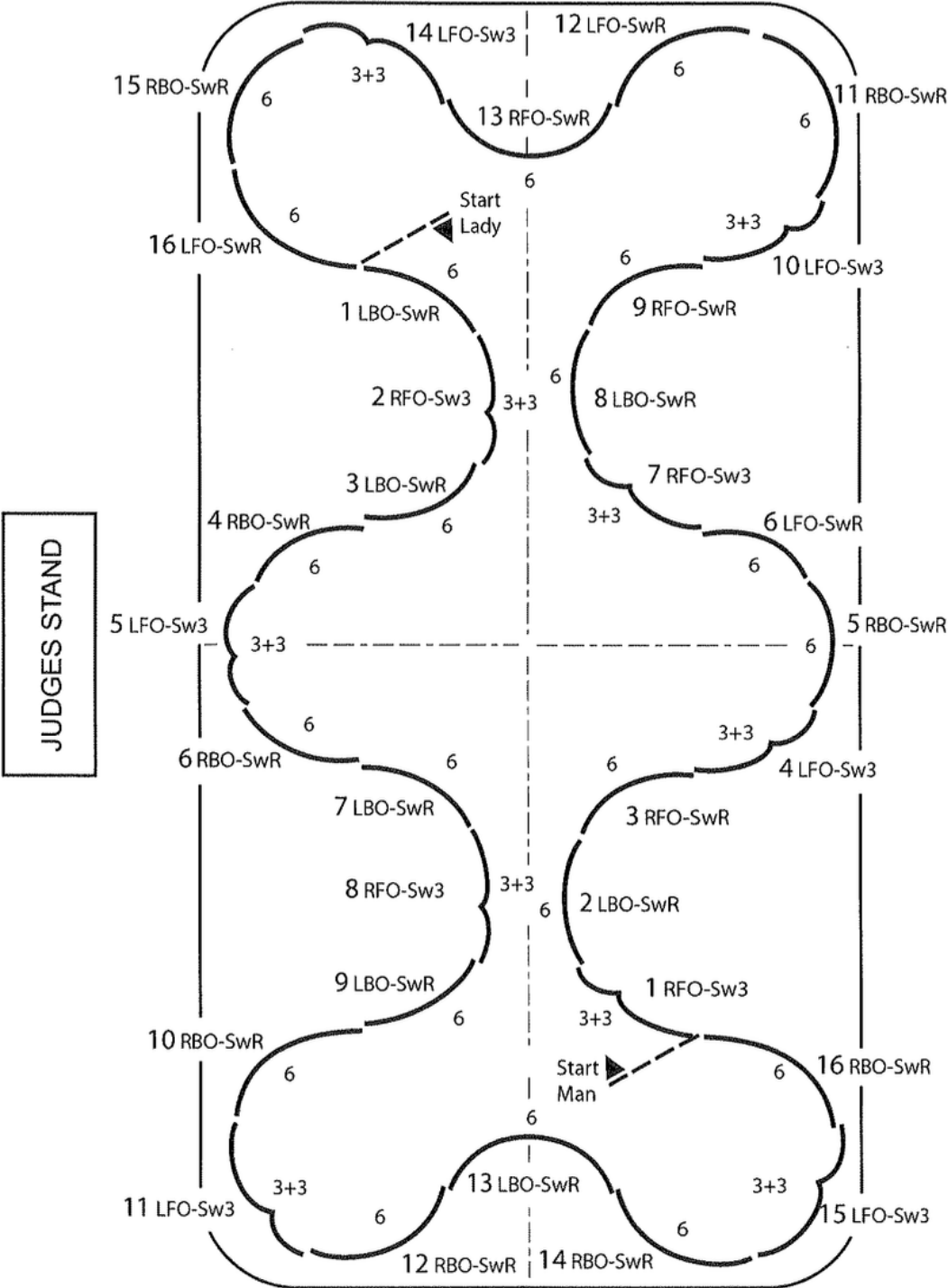
Intermediate Novice – Fourteenstep



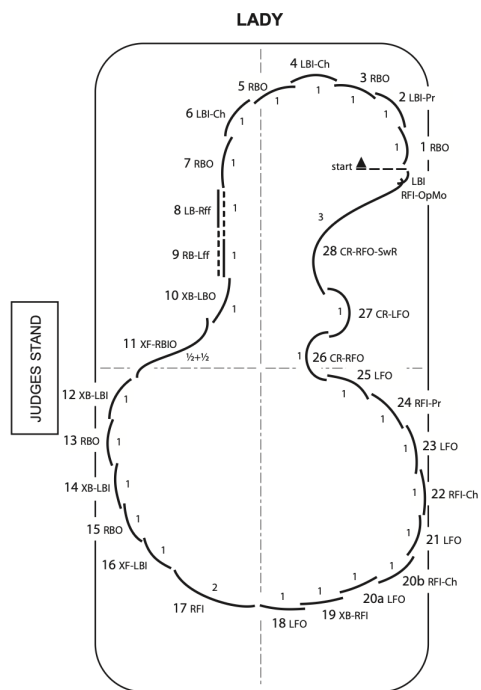
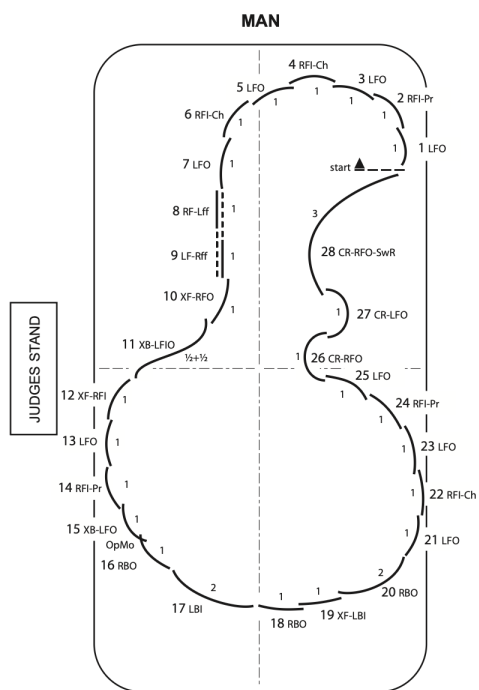
Intermediate Novice – Foxtrot



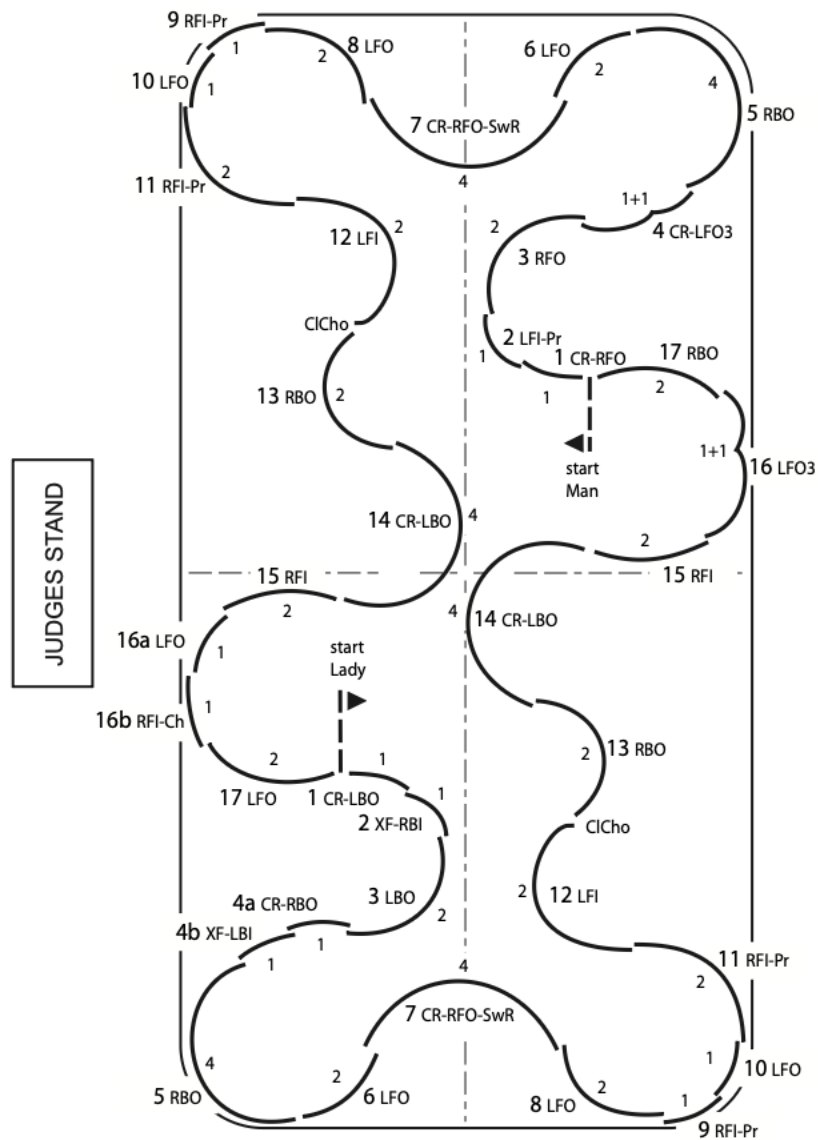
Intermediate Novice – American Waltz



Advanced Novice – Paso Doble



Advanced Novice – Blues



ANNEX - 2

CHECKLIST FOR REFEREES

Before the event, at home	Comments
Prepare IJM	
Review recent ISU Communications	ISU.org
Bring ISU <u>Competition and Event Regulations</u> , <u>Sport Rules</u> , ISU Communications, Q&A, Handbook etc.	
Bring whistle and stopwatch	
Review time and place for IJM	
On site, before the event	
Verify entry list, passport and clearance certificates for "Confirmation of the OC"	International events only
Verify Calculation Setup Verification for Referee	International events only - www.isureresults.com/setupverification.pdf
Confirm practice and competition schedule	
Conduct the draw	Announce if the schedule is updated
Confirm Judges' panel in accordance with the current ISU Code of Ethics	
Conduct the IJM	Take attendance of judges
Conduct the judges' draw	
Meet Medical Staff for communication purposes	
Contact the Music Technician and Announcer	
Instruct the Timekeeper	
Confirm communication between Referee and TC	
Conduct Pre-event meetings	
Decide on the condition of the ice	
On site, after the event	
Complete "Withdrawal Notification form" if required	For the Referee Report
Sign Final Results	
Prepare and facilitate the RTD	According to guidelines; take attendance of judges

After the event, at home	
Complete Referee Report	Submit latest 14 days after event