

## **New and Revised MIF Test Standards for Judges**

**Written by: Robert Ouellette, Wayne Hundley, Kevin Rosenstein, and Dawn Eyerly  
Revised September, 2010**

New and revised MIF have the same general criteria listed in TR 22.03, 22.04, and 22.05 regardless of the listed focuses. The degree to which these criteria are met will vary and will depend on the test level. This document provides an overview of the standards for MIF elements. **Specific requirements as listed in the Test Book prevail.** Bullet points for each element listed in the PSA MIF Manual give the expectations that are generally accepted as goals for tests.

The original four focuses for MIF elements were power, edge quality, extension, and quickness. Subsequently continuous flow was added for Adult MIF tests and now this focus is a criteria for many of the new and revised MIF. Continuous flow describes the skater's ability to maintain a consistent and undisturbed running edge across the ice. Flow does not necessarily relate to the speed at which the skater travels and it is sometimes best recognized as the skater starts to slow. Turn Execution is a new focus. - it is the proper skill and technique of how the turn is performed. The correct entry and exit edges should be adequate for its identification. It should be noted that the number of elements with power as a focus has decreased.

The standards for these new/revised elements of MIF tests became effective September 2, 2010. It is important to avoid a low initial test standard based on the idea that the elements are new, are considered difficult, or that the coaches don't yet know how to teach loops and twizzles. If a low expectation is our initial mind set then that level of skating is exactly what will result and it will be difficult to change over time the performance level for a passing average standard. Expect performances commensurate with the test level which is consistent with the other elements of the test and the skaters will rise to the standard. In addition, the coaches will then teach to that standard. The PSA has had a very large number of seminars over the country to help coaches learn how to teach these new elements. The new elements should meet the same standard as for the other elements at each level.

As in other elements of MIF, bilateral ability is the goal for elements with twizzles and loops. Of course, this quality is seen in varying degrees on three turns, brackets, rockers, and counters. Judgement of sufficiency of bilateral ability should be similar for the new elements. Substantially lower quality in one "direction" than for the direction involving rotation based on the dominant hand of the skater should not be given a passing average mark. Equality of ability in both directions should be reflected in an above average mark.

Some elements require starting from a stationary position. Introductory steps are allowed for other elements. No more than 7 introductory steps are ever allowed. Note that the introduction to the Junior Straight Line sequence is only two strokes. **A deduction of 0.1 points is mandatory** for an excess number of introductory steps on every element where it occurs (JR 20.01).

Elements for all new MIF should be done in **general accord** with the diagrams. The diagrams are guidelines but they present a layout that is most likely to result in a successful completion of the element.

## Pre-Preliminary Test

This test has no changes. The Pre-Preliminary test is still an “encouragement test” and nationally there is a high passing percentage. Generally there is a range of skills demonstrated. However, some skaters have not had sufficient quality instruction by coaches who “put out” skaters before they are prepared for this test. If these below-quality tests are passed, the test sheets should have substantial and detailed comments that indicate the skills that must be improved to continue in the test structure. Otherwise, the same quality issues will occur in subsequent tests.

Pattern 1 has crossovers as its basis. You should see crossovers in at least the dominant direction with an extended push off from the skating edge. You should not see “stepovers” or a wide step forward with the toe of the new skating foot pointed out of the developing arc. There should be an attempt to gain some power on the second stroke of each crossover as indicated by some “push under” off an edge. Otherwise, the skater is essentially pushing off only one foot. The second stroke should be more than just a toe push. Judges should assess how prepared the skater is for the expected higher quality crossovers of the Preliminary Test. Note that the pattern requires crossovers around both ends of the rink. If only one end is completed then the correct steps have not been done which is a serious error. A reskate is required to pass the test.

Pattern 2 introduces edges on a small half circle. Skaters are required to hold an edge for a longer time over a much larger circle and with significant body control for the circle eight of the Preliminary Test. Skaters who do not understand the concept of an edge, the required rotation of the body and arms over the arc, and who demonstrate little control of the free leg are going to have a difficult time preparing for the next test. All edges must start from a standing position. Thus, a forward stroke followed by a turn to enter the back edges is incorrect and is grounds for a reskate or a retry.

Pattern 4 can be done at any site on the ice that the skater selects. The JIC should not require a specific point on the ice. The skater can mark the center or select a location with painted marks or any random mark on the surface of the ice. Most skaters start from a standing position but there is no rule against introductory strokes.

As an “encouragement test”, the standards for this test should not change with the introduction of new and revised elements but the above considerations place the elements of this test in perspective of what eventually the skater must learn to do correctly. Passing some tests without comments will not help to further the skills of the skater. Tests without any demonstrations of the above should not pass.

The rules for serious errors apply to the Pre-Preliminary test. Only one element can be reskated for a serious error such as a touchdown or fall. Touchdowns in two different elements such as on pattern 2 as well as on pattern 4 requires that the test be marked retry. However, multiple touchdowns within a single pattern can be reskated - in part or in whole depending on the element. For example the back inside edges can be reskated no matter how many touchdowns occurred in that element.

## **Preliminary Test**

### **Forward and Backward Crossovers**

#### **Focus - Power**

This new element combines the forward & backward crossovers into one pattern. This element has no new criteria. The quality of the transition from front to back is not a primary issue on this test but a well controlled Mohawk at the center should be noted. Given the combination of forward and backward crossovers there will be less time to write comments on this element for both forward directions as well as for backward directions. The quality of forward crossovers should have improved from the Pre-Preliminary Test. If comments are not made on the test sheet about the stepovers that are done rather than crossovers, then skaters will not develop correct skating skills in the forward direction. Toe pushes are not acceptable.

### **Forward Outside /Inside Eight**

#### **Focuses – Edge quality /Continuous Flow**

For judges who have judged figure tests in the past, this element should not be evaluated by those test standards. Flats cannot be seen; there is no multiple repeat of tracings to form a print; the center will not be as well defined. The continuous flow focus will be demonstrated by edges implied only from the lean of the skater. Body control throughout is expected - the rotation and control of arms and free leg should be noted as a strength. At this level, toe pushes should not be used to start the element. The transition from outside to inside did not occur in figure tests. This feature is not an important aspect of this element. However the control of the body (minimal lunge) with weight transfer between feet is a positive feature for a skater with developing abilities. Expect reasonably shaped circles approximately three times the height of the skater.

On ice with many marks from multiple tests it may be difficult to determine the center both on the part of the judge and the skater. The skater may use any of the painted circles or lines on the ice for the center and may mark the center by a scratch on the ice with the heel of the skate blade.

There is no specific limit to how close the skater must return to center but a square with sides about three times the length of a skate blade or the width of the skater's shoulders may be reasonable. Mark up a test with good centers. Take into account the focus of the test, which is edge quality and continuous flow to balance your remarks about the center.

Skaters might not have sufficient flow to return to center. After stopping on the circle, toe pushes to return to center are touchdowns and the element should not pass without a reskate. In such cases the loss of edge and wobbles on the circle will be evident as well. Note that if the skater comes to a stop and strokes at that point before the center or does a wide step to reach center, the issue is one of quality that can be reflected in the mark but does not necessarily require a reskate.

## **Alternating Backward Crossovers to Backward Outside Edges**

This move only eliminates the second side of the original pattern. The same criteria is used as in the past. Up to seven (7) introductory steps may be used and any turn to start in the backward directions is allowed. Four or five lobes are allowed.

### **Pre-Juvenile Test**

#### **Forward & Backward Perimeter Power Crossover Stroking**

**Forward Focuses – Power /Extension**

**Backward Focuses – Power / Edge Quality**

This new element combines the forward & backward perimeter crossovers. In addition to the stated focuses, general adherence to the pattern is still important. A smooth transition around a curved end pattern can only be established if the lobes are set up properly down the side of the ice. There is a set up point near the top of the hockey circle that is ideal and allows for the development of the end pattern. Going past this point results in the skater pulling up short and then going around the end on a straight line. The first end pattern should have an even one-count cadence except for a two-count LFO open stroke before the mohawk. One or two backward crossovers follow to set up the second side of the element. The second end run should be completed to the opposite barrier. Not finishing the 3-5 crossovers around the end run is a serious error. The method of exiting the element after the last crossover is optional.

#### **Backward Outside/Inside Eight**

**Focus – Edge Quality**

This basic element may be difficult for the skater, especially if the skater has not mastered a correct strong thrusting technique on the back edges of the Pre-Preliminary test. The circle size might be smaller than for the forward eight. However, the skater should be able to control shoulder rotation by using arms and free leg to avoid an uncontrolled curl back to center. The test standard is round circles of similar size – not of an identical size as was required in figure tests. Long two foot transitions at the center of the back inside circle must be avoided. A variety of techniques to go from outside to inside circles might be developed by coaches for the transition. After that point we should still expect circles. In the figure era, skaters could skate circles, maintain flow, and return to a reasonable center. They formed a “print” of repeated tracings, the tracings had to have minimal flats, and the center had to be well defined. There should be no reason why a skater in this era cannot be expected to skate reasonably shaped circles about three times the skater’s height.

As in the case of the forward eight, the many marks on the ice from multiple tests may make it difficult to determine the center both on the part of the judge and the skater. There is no specific limit to how close the skater must return to center but a square three times the length of a skate blade or the width of the skater’s shoulders may be reasonable. The center may not be as well defined for back circles as for forward circles. The element may start on either foot and the center may be marked by the skater.

## **Five Step Mohawk Sequence**

This MIF only eliminates the second side of the pattern. The same criteria are used as in the past. Introductory steps not to exceed seven (7) are optional.

### **Juvenile Test**

**Forward Power Circles** (moved from Intermediate Test)

**Backward Power Circles** (moved from Intermediate Test)

The focus is still power for these two elements. The skater has the option to start in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction. The element **must** show progressively increasing foot speed and **gradual acceleration**. There should not be a sudden significant change in speed from slow to fast. An increase in the circumference of the developing circles is expected. There may be a difference in Juvenile power compared to Intermediate power but it may not be significant. A reskate can be done for the entire element or for one direction of the circles.

### **Eight Step Mohawk**

**Focuses-Power & Quickness**

The new move, which may start with up to seven (7) introductory steps may start in either the clockwise or counterclockwise direction. It combines both directions into a two lobe pattern with two sequences (each eight steps) on each circle. The focus is still power for this element as well as quickness. The expectation is still that every stroke has the same "count" of "one" and as a result there is a constant cadence in both circles. Two beats occur at the transition step.

This element must be planned much better than for the original separate eight-step mohawk patterns. Three sequences of steps were formerly required and there was no defined point to complete and exit the element. Now two sequences are required per circle and the skater must be near the center to start skating in the opposite direction. Thus, the second set of eight strokes on the first circle should occur at or slightly before the long axis. The edge of the 2-beat stroke at the transition is not defined - it may be flat, outside, or inside. The second circle might be larger due to the momentum gained but ideally both circles should be of similar size. Credit should be given for a good pattern with a good transition on long axis between circles of equal size. Note that steps 6 and 7 are not a crossover but steps.

### **Intermediate Test**

#### **Spiral Sequence**

**Focuses – Extension / Edge Quality**

The focuses are the same as for the spiral sequence of the former Novice Spiral. However, the pattern is different and the foot/edge components are different. Furthermore all

eight of the possible spirals are demonstrated over the two patterns rather than a repeat of the same four spirals in the Novice Spiral. **Judges should note the foot used in the first spiral so that the same foot is not used for the second pattern.** General conformity with the published pattern will help establish the proper edges on strong curves in the correct direction. Note that the position of the start, the mohawk, and the transition from a BO spiral to a FI spiral are all depicted on the long axis. There should not be significant deviations from this pattern.

Introductory steps are optional, but the maximum allowed is still seven (7). Flow through the spirals should be the result of good edges, not speed gained at the start from too many strokes/steps. A reskate can be requested for the entire element or for one of the two directions.

### **Forward Outside / Inside Twizzles**

#### **Focuses – Turn Execution / Continuous Flow**

As a new turn in the test structure, there could be substantial differences in quality on tests. However, an adherence to the requirement of a continuous action is strongly recommended so that the skaters rise to the standard for these turns. Giving passing marks to actions that are not twizzles (i.e. three turns) will not advance the skating skill of the skater or the sport overall. A single mark is given for skating four times across the ice on the short axis. Thus, comments must reflect the quality of not only right and left foot but outside and inside twizzles.

The forward outside twizzles are done before the forward inside twizzles. However the choice of a right or left foot start is the option of the skater. The twizzles may be done on the long axis with the skater stopping for a change of foot as is done for the brackets of this test.

Although not listed as a focus, bilateral ability is desirable and accomplished skaters should be marked accordingly. Judgement of bilateral ability should be similar to those for turns in other MIF elements. Substantially lower quality in one “direction” than for the direction involving rotation based on the dominant hand of the skater should not be given a passing average mark. Equality of ability in both directions should be reflected in an above average mark. Based on the rules, a reskate can be required for the entire element or any of the four parts of the element. For that reason, notations should be made for each of the parts of this element.

Philosophically it might be argued by some skaters and coaches that twizzles are not really that important in free skating. However, the twizzles are important for several disciplines - dance and synchronized skating. Furthermore, twizzles can be used in step sequences and as transitions in a free skating program. **Twizzles are now considered as important to the development of skaters as any other turns.**

## **Novice Test**

### **Inside 3 Turns / Rocker Choctaws**

#### **Focuses – Power / Quickness**

Up to seven (7) introductory steps are allowed for this element. General conformity with the published pattern will help the skater develop power off each turn. The transition to different feet as well as the transition from the inside 3-turns to the rocker/choctaws are shown on a

common axis. This pattern can be established only with good controlled turn technique on all turns in both directions. Watch for rockers that are three turns and choctaws that do not occur with an outside exit edge. **Note that closed choctaws are required!**

This element might be skated in about 25-30 seconds. Thus, it is important for judges to recognize the quality or errors in turns in each of the four half circles. Comments on test sheets must be specific. A reskate may be done for the entire element or for just the inside three turns or the rocker choctaws. However, it may be difficult for the skater to start at the point where the rocker choctaws occur and the skater may elect to do the entire element.

Note that the steps at the axis of the change for the inside three turns arcs, at the transition to the rocker choctaws, and at the change for the rocker choctaw arcs **are defined**. Alternative steps that do not conform to the prescribed pattern constitute a serious error and the element must be reskated for the test to pass.

### **Forward Outside / Inside loops** **Focuses – Edge Quality / Continuous Flow**

Although figure test quality loops are not expected, the general adherence to the shape of a loop coupled with continuous flow throughout the loop is expected. This flow used to be called “loop action” which reflects the control of the body coupled with the tracing on the ice. The loops may be somewhat more difficult than figure loops because the loops in this element are skated on half circles. It is not necessary that the return to the axis and the start of the next half circle be on a straight line as drawn in the pattern. Some retrogression or pinching at the transition is acceptable.

The loops might not point on an axis perpendicular to the center due to unequal control entering and exiting the loop but this fact may not be easily seen from the side of the rink. However, the loop shape can still be accomplished. A well placed loop on axis should be recognized and marked accordingly as a nice refinement.

Significant errors in loops include ringlets (very small circles) as well as large balloon shapes in which the width of the loop is virtually the same as the length. A more serious error occurs when a pointed loop is skated. This is the result of stopping loop action near the top of the loop rather than a continuous flowing motion. If the action stops on top of the loop and then the skater pulls around in a distinct separate motion, a loop has not been skated.

Doing loops on the right and left foot requires a different rotational direction and thus there can be differences in the quality of the loops on each foot. Demonstration of bilateral ability is an issue for the judge to decide. This element is different than other turns in the MIF test structure but the expectation level should not be significantly different. Substantially lower quality in one “direction” than for the direction involving rotation based on the dominant hand of the skater should not be given a passing average mark. Equality of ability in both directions should be reflected in an above average mark.

On these forward loops, the introductory step is a swing roll and the diagram shows a quarter circle. Some judges may feel that it should be exactly a quarter circle. However, others are willing to accept a half circle. We probably should not get caught up with this issue. It is just important that the skater does one edge into the beginning of the element.

Note that free skate blades do not have a "figure grind" and the depth to which the blades cut into the ice may be considered a problem. However, at some schools, the demonstrators who had passed loops in the figure test structure could still do them!

### **Back Outside / Inside Twizzles**

#### **Focuses – Turn Execution / Continuous Flow**

The concept of a twizzle is not new at this point except for those skaters in the transition to the new MIF who passed the original Intermediate MIF. Forward twizzles were introduced in the Intermediate Test and skaters may have been practicing backward twizzles for foot work sequences. The backward twizzles have two revolutions as compared to one and a half revolutions in the Intermediate Test. Note that a "two foot push" with a change edge is used to assist the outside twizzle action. The inside twizzles are set up by an inside edge followed by an inside Mohawk. Both of these features are part of the proper presentation of the element and are not optional. Not properly performing all steps in the diagram is a serious error requiring a reskate in order to pass the test.

The start of the twizzle element shows a half circle. As in the case of loops, the exact size of this circle is not a critical issue.

An adherence to the requirement of a continuous action is strongly recommended so that the skaters rise to the standard. Giving passing marks to turns that are not twizzles will not advance the skating skill of the skater. Novice skaters should master this turn and can use it in other disciplines - that is why it has been introduced into the test structure.

One mark is given for skating for both the backward outside and inside twizzles. As indicated elsewhere, substantially lower quality in one "direction" than for the direction involving rotation based on the dominant hand of the skater should not be given a passing average mark. Equality of ability in both directions should be reflected in an above average mark. Based on the rules, a reskate can be required for the entire element or either the outside or inside twizzles.

## **Junior Test**

### **Forward and Backward Outside Rockers**

#### **Focuses – Edge Quality / Power**

This element has an important change from the previous version of this element. The two strokes after the forward rockers are now cross strokes. The former pattern had a cross in front, then feet together and a push to the back outside rocker. This is no longer acceptable. The change of feet after all rockers is now a cross stroke (XS).

Up to seven (7) introductory steps are allowed and the skater may select either the left or right foot to start. As usual, it is a good policy to note the foot used for the first side so that it is not repeated on the second side.

## **Back Outside / Inside Loop Patterns**

### **Focuses – Edge Quality / Continuous Flow**

Although figure test quality loops are not expected, the general adherence to the shape of a loop coupled with the continuous flow throughout the loop is expected. In addition, there should be an even continuous flow on the strokes between the loops.

This element must start from a stationary position and the first stroke is a defined three turn. Either foot may be used to start the element - two loops are done on each foot for both the outside and inside loops.

Note that inside/inside strokes are required on the backward outside loops. The size of these half circles should be comparable to the size to the loop half circles. Three cross strokes are required on the backward inside loops. Wide stepovers with lunges in which the body is not over the skate should not be tolerated nor should toe pushing. The half circles should be of comparable size to the loop circles and the change edge should be easily accomplished. Properly done, both the backward outside and inside loops should be an integrated motion for the entire length of the rink.

The loops should look like loops even at a distance. There must be a continuous flowing motion. If the action stops on top of the loop and then the skater pulls around in a separate motion, a loop has not been skated. As already emphasized, doing loops on the right and left foot requires a different rotational direction and thus there can be differences in the quality of the loops on each foot. Demonstration of bilateral ability is an issue for the judge to decide. However, while the element is different than other turns in the MIF test structure, the expectation level should not be significantly different. In addition, this is a Junior level test and the expected performance should reflect that level! Substantially lower quality in one “direction” than for the direction involving rotation based on the dominant hand of the skater is a more serious concern and elements skated with such difference should not be given a passing average mark. Equality of ability in both directions should be reflected in an above average mark.

Based on the rules, a reskate can be required for the entire element or either the backward outside or inside loops.

## **Straight Line Step**

### **Focus – Edge Quality / Continuous Flow**

Before dissecting and commenting on the component turns of this element, consider whether it shows Junior quality skating. Are the edges and continuous flow a pleasure to watch or are there parts where the skater struggles to maintain the unity of the element? There is a general axis that should be maintained without significant distortions. The rocker and counter turns are done on the axis. Both twizzles, toe steps, double threes, and the loop are done on either side of the axis.

Without regular judging activity, the test pattern diagram should be reviewed prior to a test session. Comments on the quality of specific turns should be identified. It is not acceptable to say “poor turns.” By contrast, “flow is not continuous” may be acceptable.

This move can be started on either foot and that foot should be noted on the test sheet to identify any problems that occur within the element. In addition this record will prevent a repeat of the foot just skated.

The first two strokes of the element as shown are introductory steps. No other steps are allowed. The diagram shows these steps skated straight down the rink which is fine. However, skaters may take these introductory steps more parallel to the short barrier so that they have more ice for the actual pattern. This is acceptable.

Care should be taken to ensure that the rocker and counter turns are skated as designated - substitution of a rocker for a counter is a serious error. The order of these turns is a rocker followed by a rocker/counter and then a swing counter at mid-rink and finally a rocker/rocker prior to the loop. In addition, at this level, the twizzles should not be three turns and the double three turn should not be a twizzle.

A skater with speed and deep edges and turns will make the pattern wider than shown which is a positive feature to be reflected in the mark for the element.

Based on the rules, a reskate can be required for the entire element or for a start on the right or left foot.

## Senior Test

### Spiral Sequence

#### Focuses – Extension & Edge Quality

This element is very similar to the original spiral sequence. However, there are no quick open mohawks. There is a FI edge after the continuous 3-turns rather than a FO edge that occurred before the quick open mohawks. The extension and edge quality must be at the Senior level. General conformity with the published pattern will help establish the proper edges on strong curves in the correct direction. Full ice coverage not only over the length of the rink **but the width as well** are ideals that should be achieved at this level. Strong performance of this element provides the training for spiral sequences in free skate programs.

Introductory steps are optional, but the maximum allowed is still seven (7). Flow through the spiral should be the result of good edges, not speed gained at the start from too many strokes/steps. There are two crossovers in the retrogression part of the element after the open mohawk whereas in the Intermediate Spiral there is only one crossover. The cross stroke behind followed by a swing roll prior to the triple threes is a required part of the element.

Based on the rules, a reskate can be required for the entire element or for a start on the right or left foot. Again, it is important that the foot used in the first spiral be noted so that the same pattern is not skated a second time.

### Serpentine Step Sequence

#### Focuses – Edge Quality / Continuous Flow

This element consists of two sequences covering the full ice surface, not only the length but the width as well. Some of the components in the second lobe of the serpentine are the same

as for original Quick Step Sequence as are the quick mohawks. Note that five quick mohawks are required - not three or seven. The addition of twizzles and loops compared to the Quick Step Sequences makes this element a true final exam for a Senior Skater. In addition, there is a sequence of direction changes of turns both outside and inside the lobes.

Properly performed, the continuous flow should make this element enjoyable to watch. Power is not a focus of this element - continuous flow is - and skaters should avoid trying to over skate this element. All of the turns should be of high quality. In addition, at this level, the twizzles should not be three turns and the double three turn should not be a twizzle. In the final analysis, this is the final element in the final MIF test and may result in a Gold medal – the highest recognition in this facet of the sport.

As in the case of other step sequences, without regular judging activity, the test pattern diagram should be studied prior to judging a Senior MIF test. Tests should not pass with incorrect turns and steps that are not recognized by the judges. Comments on the quality of specific turns should be identified as to whether there are problems in counters, rockers, etc., and where and on what foot. It is not acceptable to say “poor turns.” By contrast, “flow is not continuous” may be acceptable.

This move can be started in either direction and that direction should be noted on the test sheet to identify any problems within the element. In addition this record will prevent a repeat of the direction just skated.

Based on the rules, a reskate can be required for the entire element or for a start on the right or left foot.