

The Extra Cross Over

By Susan Ellis

In short track skating the corners are critical to your maximum speed. A well executed cross over produces more speed than an equally well done straightaway stride. So the goal is to make the corners as long as possible. New skaters, young skaters and masters often struggle to get the last cross over in and often start the straightaway sooner than they should, forcing them to take extra straightaway strides, rather than crossovers. The three main reasons for this are:

- 1) Trying to exit too tight to the blocks
- 2) Blades point up the straightaway too soon
- 3) Not enough lean on the exit

These three things are often tied together. The tighter the exit is to the last block, the less lean there can be, and the sooner the blade points up the straight. Some skaters may still try to get one more cross in, but it is very ineffective without the lean.

How wide you need to exit depends on how much centrifugal force (CF) there is. The faster you go, the more CF there is and the wider the exit should be. It is also somewhat dependant on how much you need to protect the exit to prevent an inside pass.

In general, if no one is trying to pass you, you don't need to protect the exit and can let your speed carry you out of the corner in an attempt to make the corner last longer and get the extra cross in. In other words don't try to fight CF but allow yourself to drift off the last two blocks and let your speed work for you.

To allow yourself to drift off the last two blocks, your blades need to land pointing in a direction which allows you to ride away from the blocks. This creates the space to allow you to get another cross in while holding your lean. If there is no space between you and the last blocks you are forced to stop your lean and your blades will point up the straight too early and you are now in to straightaway strides. Many skaters are afraid to leave space between themselves and the blocks for fear of being passed. However, leaving space allows more lean and you can use your body lean to cover the blocks rather than your skates, creating more speed on the exit while still protecting your track.

Look at the diagram below. On the 'A' corner the blades are riding away from the corner allowing a deeper exit with more lean, while the "B" corner is too tight and the corner stops early.

Tune in for more on the exit in future tips!

You may also want to check out the January 05 tip on Tracks.

Thanks to Tim Donegan for requesting an article on this subject!

