

The Outside Edge – Is It Overrated?

By Susan Ellis

One of the most commonly held beliefs in skating is that in order to be efficient, especially in Long Track, you need to land the blade on the outside edge before rolling it to the inside edge to push. While it is true that catching a slight outside edge helps in producing a longer glide on the flat of the blade, as well as helping with an efficient weight transfer, the methods used to “catch the outside edge” are often not efficient.

I have seen everything from turning the ankle inward, to putting the thrusting foot down right beside the pushing foot. Outside edges, yep, but cheatin’ edges, and not very effective.

The goal in landing the blade on the ice is to land with the weight as close to the center of gravity as possible, but very, very slightly to the outside. This means landing the skate under you between the belly button and the outside of the shoulder, or right under the nipple. The alignment on landing should be skate knee, hip bone, nipple. To have maximum power in the push, you need to get to as close to the end of the extension as possible with the pushing leg before landing the thrusting (driving) skate. In other words, there must be separation of the legs on landing of the skate. The separation is pace dependant. For a slower pace the legs will be closer on the landing as well as having a higher body position. The faster the pace, the more separation of the legs and the center of gravity will land a little bit away from the belly button (under the nipple) (sorry, can’t come up with a better reference point than that), and you will have a lower position. The separation of the legs is in a lateral plane as a result of the push to the side.

If the legs do not separate before the push occurs, even though you may feel you are on the outside edge, the result will be either to push upwards, or push backwards as the pushing leg has nowhere else to go.

When you land the skate on the ice you should feel that your thigh is right under your chest, and that there is still some pressure towards the middle line of the foot. The blade must be pointed straight ahead throughout the entire recovery right through to the landing. If you only feel pressure on the very outside of your foot, you have either landed too early, or have turned your ankle in to land.

Honestly, I feel it is more important to stress proper push / landing technique than to stress the outside edge.