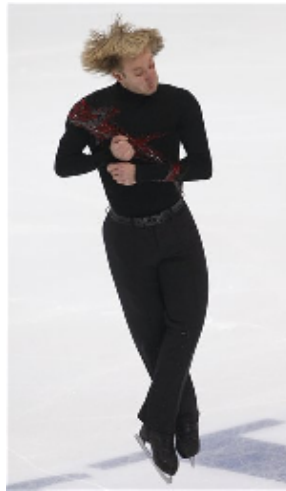


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ISU official: Fairness, not pressure, led to edit

By [barry wilner](#), AP Sports Writer

**VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP)** — Evgeni Plushenko's gold-medal performance at the 2006 Olympics was removed from an instructional video for judges because the Russian was returning to competition, not because of pressure from his federation, an International Skating Union official said Thursday.



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**FILE** – In an Oct. 23, 2009, file photo Russia's Evgeni Plushenko performs his short program at the Cup of Russia ISU Grand Prix figure skating event in Moscow, Russia. (AP Photo/Ivan Sekretarev/file)

The Turin Games program and critical comments about it were removed out of fairness to Plushenko, ISU event director Peter Krick told The Associated Press on Thursday.

"The video is made for educational purposes and at the moment the video was made, Plushenko was not back competing," Krick said. "When he came back, we discussed it with the Russian federation and removed it.

"The examples were not very positive. For a person coming back it isn't fair, so we changed it," added Krick, who has great input into the judging system.

USA Today first reported the editing of the videos, but said the Russian federation had "demanded" the ISU remove the criticism of Plushenko. Krick dismissed any suggestion of controversy. Though Krick did not mention other names, he said the decision was routine and had occurred with other skaters.

Once Plushenko passed his doping tests and entered a Grand Prix event, his performance was deleted from the video.

"It's the right of a member federation to say, 'Hey, wait a minute,'" Krick said. "Our policy is to not use current skaters for examples ... it is not fair."

Plushenko's free skate from Turin, which earned 13 points more than Canada's Jeff Buttle, was to be used as an example to help judges better assess component scores — the old artistic marks. He was included in the video because he retired after the 2006 Games.

But Plushenko is back and won all three events in which he competed this season. To have a current skater's routine dissected in a video distributed to judges throughout the world — some of whom could be judging him in the coming months — could have been damaging to Plushenko.

ISU president Ottavio Cinquanta took interest in the case, Krick added.

"Our president was very concerned that the video is properly done, and that we must be very careful not to have a current skater," Krick said. "We discussed with him Plushenko's involvement."

Remaking the video delayed its distribution for 1½ months, which Krick said was not a problem.

Much of the focus in the video was on Plushenko's interpretation of music and his transitions from one element to another. Plushenko recently was quoted as saying he doesn't have transitions because he focuses on the jumps.

The issue has created something of a stir at the Vancouver Olympics because American judge Joe Inman forwarded Plushenko's quotes to friends. Inman's e-mails were meant to be private, but some have used them to suggest the North Americans are trying to lobby on behalf of their skaters.

The men's competition is expected to be one of the premier events in Vancouver, with Plushenko and skaters from Switzerland, France, Japan, Canada and the United States all legitimate contenders for gold. The men's competition begins Tuesday with the short program.

"A skater like Plushenko could say easily, in his strategy, 'I don't need transitions, I have two quads,'" ISU seminar moderator David Kirby said Thursday. "And, 'If I add transitions to my two quads, I can't do the two quads. So I'm going to sacrifice transitions to do the quad.'"

That choice is a good thing, Kirby said.

"Instead of it being a controversial thing, to me it shows how much more strategy there is in our sport," he said.

Still, figure skating, like any sport involving judging, is subjective. Whether Plushenko's transitions — or lack of them — matter might not even be evident.

"In any sport, you've got subjectivity," Kirby said. "If I go to a soccer game and a referee pulls out a card, I can think that's a terrible, terrible card. But I'm engaged in the game.

"In figure skating, how is that any different than any other sport? One official may see something different than another official, but that doesn't mean it's controversial or a scandal. That's why we use multiple experts."

Krick is confident the medals will be decided on the ice.

"The Olympic Games will be decided Feb. 18 by the men."

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AP National Writer Nancy Armour contributed to this story.