



Competition

Winning Tips from the Judges !

Off The Floor ...

October 2011

Australian line dancers took to competition very early after it arrived. Perhaps it is our competitive nature because now there are many regional competitions throughout Australia as well as the annual Australian Line Dance Championships held each year in Tamworth.

Wendy Hughes, LDAA President, believes the standards are as high as ever and encourages more dancers to give it a go.

And we ask four of Australia's top judges for their tips on how to score those winning points.

"I would like to encourage all line dancers to have a go at competition. It is a fantastic experience! Go along and watch and learn. Ask questions of other competitors, as well as the judges as they will also help. It can be loads of fun and at the end of hours of training, people often go to dinner together to make it a social event. Laugh at your mistakes and do better at the next training session.

"The most important thing to remember is that preparation takes time, commitment to training and your dance partner as well as respect for your instructor."

Wendy says it is important to be as ready as you can be, know the routine inside out and get out on the floor and show the judges what you have got! "If somebody in your team makes a mistake, don't hold it against them as it could be you next time! And smile at the judges and look like you are having a great time even if you are shaking in your boots!

"Judging is a difficult task because some people take their scores to heart instead of learning from them. And some people never speak to you again because they didn't win! So you have to have broad shoulders, be prepared to be 'talked about' and you have to stand by your decision.

"Most people think they should win. And sometimes it has happened to me, when you think your routine is better than another or you saw mistakes that the judges didn't. Accept it, congratulate the winner, and then go and speak to the judges to find out the reasons. Be nice and you will get your answers!



Wendy Hughes - LDAA President

"A small mistake may not matter. People who do a 300+ count routine with skirt and hat tricks are getting the mark for the Degree of Difficulty and Presentation. And those who do a 64+ count routine may do it perfectly. So a minor mistake like missing a step, probably would not matter much. The DoD may be high in one routine but the Unity and execution may be higher in another.

"Once you have been on that stage, trust me, you will want to do it again!"

"People who are interested in judging have to 'mock' judge for a few hours a day until they have their 'eye'. They are seated next to an experienced judge who will assist them if necessary. Usually people who are interested in judging also compete. They want to learn how to judge so they know what the judges are looking for and it can help their own performance. That's why I started - I was training duos and teams and wanted to know exactly what was required.

"Sometimes when there are not enough judges, you may have to judge your own club. This is not ideal and it doesn't happen often. But I know that overall when it does happen, a judge will mark their own club much harder as they know the mistakes!"



Presentation - Roxanne Kumre



“I prefer to think of **Presentation** as explained by the judges on MasterChef! You eat and experience food not only by taste, but also by smell and by sight. It’s the same with line dancing. I experience line dance routines not only as a set of steps choreographed to a song but also its overall appeal. What does it look like? How do the competitors

‘sell’ their routine? How does it make me feel? Sometimes I relate to a routine due to the song, the combination of steps choreographed, a head or arm or skirt move, or something else that is harder to put my finger on. But ultimately, I believe that Presentation allows for the interpretation of the song through the dancers.

Roxanne’s top tips:

- Figure out what YOU do well and do it to the best of your ability! I am in awe of the skill of competitors, but it is important to be aware of what your own team members are able to do. I certainly don’t mean you shouldn’t push the boundaries, but competitors dancing out of their comfort zones often look like it.
- Don’t do tricks just for the sake of it! As the first competitor to use a skirt and spin a hat on the tip of my finger in competition in Australia, I love a good trick as much as the next. But you must always ensure that the utilization of tricks adds to the overall appeal and feel of the routine – and is not just an attempt to earn some extra points. I do not award Presentation points when the



tricks in a routine are so overwhelming that the overall feel of the dance is lost. Besides, sometimes the mechanics of pulling off a trick can detract from the performance and indeed thwart overall scoring in other areas, especially execution and Unity.

- Don’t be afraid to be different. How boring would our events be if we all did exactly the same thing? We each have about 4 minutes to hold the attention of the room - so make every second count! Be brave, be confident and be true to yourselves. Enjoy what you do and who you’re doing it with - it will show from the inside out. I learned a lesson very early on when it comes to winning and losing. As time goes by people won’t remember who won or lost - but they’ll never forget a routine that sent a shiver up their spine, took their breath away or made them feel like jumping up out of their seat and giving it a go themselves!”



Unity - Jenny Hughes



“**Unity** includes spacing between the dancers, formation maintenance during the routine, timing of steps and turns, step placement and size of steps.

“It also includes timing of hand, hat and skirt work.”

Jenny’s top tips to achieve a high score are:

Spacing. Work on the routine so that it is neat and tidy looking. Most errors occur when dancers perform the steps differently and it alters their spacing. This is very obvious to the judges.

Timing. All dancers should be doing exactly the same thing at exactly the same time. This includes timing of full turns and pivot turns.

Footwork. All steps must look the same from each competitor. Dancers should perform each step in the routine exactly the same and their step sizes must also be consistent.

My extra tip is PRACTICE!

Take the time at practice to ensure that all of the competitors are dancing together as one. Have someone observe the practice so that every aspect of your routine can be judged and any issues can be rectified.

It is often necessary for some dancers to adjust their steps to ensure the Unity in duo, trio or team performances.



Degree of Difficulty - Cathryn Proudfoot



“Degree of Difficulty is one of the most difficult parts to determine accurately. Unity and execution can be noticed by most people – dancers and spectators alike. However, scoring DoD can prove to be rather tricky and there

are many things the judges look for.”

How fast is the routine? Many people don't realise that slow dances can be even more difficult as the dancers must have more control of their steps. Muscle and foot control are vital in slow dances. Of course very fast dances are difficult too!

Direction changes. How often are the dancers changing the direction they are facing in the routine? Dances that change direction more often are obviously harder than those that don't.

Weight changes. Are the dancers needing to change weight from one foot to another to complete a step so they can move on in the routine?

Sequence of steps and how they are put together. A series of turns back across the stage at an angle is obviously more difficult to dance than a vine with a scuff.

The number of counts in the routine. A 300+ count routine should obviously score higher than one with 32 or 64 counts. Are the verse and chorus different? Are there bridges and tags? Has the routine been repeated at least once?



Choreography. Has the routine been specifically choreographed to a particular track? Is it a social dance being danced to the same music it was originally choreographed to, or is an alternate piece of music being used? Have two or more social dances been combined to make a competition routine?

Score the dance and not the dancers. A dance has the same DoD regardless of who is dancing. Some competitors have the ability to make everything they do look very easy while others make everything look difficult or awkward. This should not alter the actual score awarded.



Cathryn's top tips:

- Have routines specifically choreographed for competition. Competition routines always score higher than social dances. If you don't choreograph, approach someone for help – most choreographers are very generous and will readily help.
- Choreograph to the ability of the least experienced dancer. This is very important for Unity and execution. Remember to use the music to determine your steps. Soft flowing music demands appropriately choreographed steps.
- There is nothing that will cost you points. DoD is determined by the dance/routine you perform.

Attitude - Adrian Lefebour



“Attitude is all about stage/floor appearance.

It is how well you and your partner or team present yourselves when dancing a routine.

As judges we are looking for the following:

- Use of the floor/stage.
- Facial expressions. Are they in keeping with the music and choreography?
- How confident the competitors are when competing. Don't ever bring it to the judges' attention when you make a mistake, eg, like shaking your head!!
- Smile. Judges love it when competitors smile. It shows that you are enjoying the routine and in turn we will also enjoy it.



Adrian's top tips are:

- Smile and have fun. Look like you are having fun even if you are nervous!
- Use of the floor/stage. Ensure the judges can see your footwork as well as your hand/skirt work.
- Pick or choreograph routines that compliment your style.
- Dance to songs you love.
- Make sure if you are doing a waltz that you rise and fall throughout the routine.
- And add some style - like hand moves, a shimmy, shaking your hips. Something that is a little bit cheeky so that it will grab the judges' attention.

And what to avoid:

- Don't look at the floor - look straight ahead.
- Stay confident from start to finish - keep the energy going!



An Invitation
20TH ANNUAL
AUSTRALIAN
LINE DANCE
CHAMPIONSHIPS
JANUARY
2012



To All Teams & Dancers...

2012 will mark the running of the 20th Annual Australian Line Dance Championships during the Tamworth Country Music Festival in January.

In anticipation of a truly memorable event & with such a landmark year ahead of us, the LDAA & ALDC committees would like to invite you and your dancers to participate at the ALDC 2012 with the hope that many previous teams will be able to attend to help us celebrate the ALDC's 20th year.

Of course, the planning for an event of this size takes considerable time, so in anticipation, the LDAA & ALDC committees would like all of you to consider suggesting your ideas for the running of our 20th Annual ALDC

With thanks

Wendy Hughes
LDAA President
ALDC 2012 Event Director

PROPOSED CHANGES ALDC 2012

- 1 FREE ENTRY ALL COMPETITORS
- 2 Less days e.g. Monday - Thursday (yet to be decided)
- 3 Less sections
- 4 Door fee as daily or weekly passes for both competitors & spectators (price yet to be decided)
- 5 LDAA members discount door fees (price yet to be decided)

SAVE THE DATES

ALDC 2012
will be held during the
Tamworth Country Music
Festival
Calrossy School
Brisbane Street Tamworth
JANUARY 22ND - 29TH
(dates & times to be confirmed)

For further information

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