

## Accountability

By Shirlee Whitcomb

All judges, both local and International are reminded that they are to be accountable to every competitive group, every performer, the system and the philosophy. Judging decisions must be accountable to the tenets of the caption. Instructors also have a responsibility to be accountable. Instructors must understand the scoring system under which their students will be graded. They are also accountable to the students to provide them with the best program and the strongest training to aid in their optimum success. They are further accountable to their sponsoring school or organization to represent that body with taste and excellence.

### COMPETITION IS A TEST OF SKILL

Our first measure of accountability is to the premise of competition. The nature of a competition demands that judges recognize, reward and compare all of the qualities that separate competitors. This process produces a comparative rating which subsequently ranks each competitor.

### ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH SCORING

Application of a score is one of the most significantly accountable representations of how the judge values each unit within a contest.

- All judges must share a consistent, collective understanding and application of the philosophy. Personal interpretations or personal values must be put aside. The judge must always represent the "community agreement" of each caption's philosophy.
- Judges must be independent in arriving at their scores, and avoid the tendency to assign "follow the leader" numbers for no other reason than insecurity or "safety". However, the concept of "independent judging" may not become an excuse for unaccountable decisions.
- Judges should expect to be held accountable for every score assigned, and be able to support that score with valid discussion relative to the rating and ranking of each group.
- Judges must feel confident to make hard, but accurate calls which sometimes might not be popular. They must feel confident to assign scores that they believe are right in spite of what other judges may have done. When a score is correctly given based on the criteria, judges must be confident that their decision will be supported. If the call is not correct, it must be identified immediately, and both judge and guard advised of this.
- Judges must "judge" each contest as a new event, carrying NO PRE-CONCEIVED OPINIONS into the actual competition.
- Judges can only judge what is presented; they cannot judge what is not presented. Speculation or expectation of what the judge thinks "should be in the show" is inappropriate.
- Judges should consider all aspects of a program/composition/vocabulary "within the context of the whole" not in isolation. Their final assessment will be cumulative in nature.

### ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH NUMBERS MANAGEMENT

Every judge has the responsibility to rate and to rank each group within each of the sub-captions on the score sheet. This involves providing numerical information to the guard, telling them where they are in the competitive field relative to other groups, as well as how high on the development curve they are. Each sub-caption must provide this information if the judge is to do the best, most accurate job of scoring within his/her caption.

- The caption is always judged "top to bottom" including every competitor, and the system is designed to work when these ratings combine to yield the total ranking.
- A judge who applies ties in sub-captions must understand that this tells the instructors that the two groups are equal. This also suggests that either the judge did not give due thought to the "comparison" process of scoring, or

that the judge's management of numbers failed to allow scoring room for the proper ranking of all groups within each sub-caption.

#### RATING AND PROPER SPREADS AT EARLY SEASON CONTESTS:

The foundation of our judging process has always embraced the combined application of BOTH rating and ranking each group in the context of a competition, and through a criterion based reference.

While spreads have historically been a source of concern, yet, in the accurate process of "rating" each guard, often, separations will exist between two groups, and it is the judge's obligation to provide this numerical information. From the onset, these separations must be accurately indicated through scoring.

Judges must be prepared to offer this scoring information, and instructors must realize how valuable this information can be to them in their overall seasonal development. Together with this kind of scoring directive, there must be accountability on the part of the judge, offering the instructional staff of each group, a clear understanding of what prompted each score (Tape dialog and critique accountability).

Guards want to believe that scores received, even at the local level, are an accurate reflection of their value at that time. They hope to build on this score in their developmental process. If scores are inaccurately compressed, suggesting that a group is within a tenth or two of another group, and this rating fails to hold up in subsequent contests with other competitors, then the group loses confidence in the scoring process, and might even make choices that could impede their development based on this inaccurate information.

There is a "trickle down" effect of early season scoring at the World Championship level. The compression of local and Regional scores begins to impact on the subsequent lack of scoring opportunity for full rating at World Championship Prelims. Inadequate seasonal ratings may create inaccurate competitive neighborhoods. However, if Judges apply the criteria with care all year long, and employ proper rating techniques within these competitive events, a significant step will be taken to avoid the problems of sub-caption ties and lack of space to score the groups at World Championships.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH PROFILING - sub-caption integrity

This technique can only mature when judges are disciplined in the rating process, the understanding of the meaning of a number, and the application of correct spreads. Proper scoring STARTS through rating and ranking within the sub-captions. It is this process that leads to the bottom line score, and then takes the judge to the consideration of "comparisons".

Judges must expand the latitude (range) of each sub-caption score, and understand that they can assign an excellence score several tenths below or ABOVE the vocabulary, composition, repertoire mark in profiling the strengths and weaknesses. When this is done consistently and properly, the accountability within each sub-caption ranks units fairly and accurately not only in each sub-caption, but also in an accurate overall rating. This latitude and emphasis on sub-caption integrity (profiling on each sheet, ranking within each sub-caption) must be applied equally in all 4 captions.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH SAMPLING

All sheets need to be sampled equally between the what and the how sub-captions. Judges' observations at all points in the season should be 50% designer and 50% performer. Every viewing is virtually a first viewing, due to limited exposure, ongoing changes in the program, and development of performance skills. Every contest is a "new contest" with a new and unique set of dynamics. All achievement should be seen through "what the performer is being asked to do." What and how exist simultaneously; observations should include both pieces as they occur.

- Scores should offer all groups a true barometer of the success of their process in each sub-caption.
- Scores should always accurately reflect the degree of quality and achievement of each guard, at every point in the season.
- Scores should never be elevated just because it is the end of the year and the judge wants to give a year-end bonus.
- Box 5 scores within the season may be assigned with great care and consideration by the judge.
- The Criteria Reference is always the basis upon which scores are assigned. Accountability to the criteria is mandatory.

## ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH CRITIQUE DIALOG

This year, there will be critique opportunities at the Power Regionals. Accountability by the judge is a skill that is enriched through dialogs with instructors wherein the judge is accountable for observation, scoring decisions, etc. This could include the judge's ranking and rating process, which is an important aspect of accountability. Sometimes instructors will deliver a dialog to the judge telling them everything they want the judge to recognize/reward in their show. This is the instructor's choice, even though this approach will probably not develop the confidence the instructor might build when detailed accountability is forthcoming from the judge. The most beneficial critique approach is the exchange of information where judges account for their decisions. While this will involve comparisons, it is important that "guard bashing" of competitors does not occur.