

Memo to : All Judges
From: Colleen Ryan - Head Judge – NZARRA
Date: 25 August 2020
Subject: Combined National Workshop 18 July 2020
Theme “Teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn” Benjamin Franklin

Judges Workshop 2020 – general overview

This year 2020 was scheduled for our bi-annual National Combined Judges Workshop in Wellington on 18 July, however due to COVID19 alerts and travel restrictions, and to assist them remain current, the workshop was rescheduled as an online ZOOM event. As this date was set in place for some considerable time and all judges were aware of the date, it made sense to ensure the event was held.

To ensure the judges had some form of communications and discussions I offered to host a zoom meeting / conference and this opportunity was readily taken up by the judges and I thank all those judges who attended.

To ensure the event was a success I offered an informal practice zoom session a couple weeks prior to test out some technical features and to ascertain the kinds of things that would work better in such a media. About 12 judges attended and it was incredibly helpful to me as I invited feedback that I could take into considerations in relation to my preparations for the actual event, so thank you to those judges too.

Attendance as follows:

19 National Association Judges attended (out of 30)
No Association Judges Attended (out of 4)
8 Trainee Judges attended (out of 19)

Total 27 judges attended.

Thank you to those who gave their apology.

The workshop was formatted to be flow easily, be fun, interactive, and mindful of trends, ideas, personal development and helping create a positive growing community.

I also arranged a follow up de-brief for those judges who had attended to give opportunity for feedback, further ideas of matters discussed or anything else that they would like to convey. This was a short 1.5 hour and was well attended, their feedback was positive and that the workshop was of immense value, good communication, easy and well formatted.

Some Outcomes of the Combined Workshop for your information and awareness.

The Essence of Rock n Roll

The essence of rock n roll connects with the original icons of the 1950's era and judges were given handouts prior to the event, photos of various artists and to think about what that person brought to rock n roll and how that is significant today still in our rock n roll communities and the dancing of course.

Elvis Presley, Connie Francis, Brenda Lee, Jackie Wilson, Bill Hayley, Cliff Richard, Little Richard

Breakout rooms gave judges opportunity to talk with each other and discuss the various icons and their look, sound, voice, dress sense, personality...and how that contributes to the dancing. Then reporting back to the main session group so everyone could hear the feedback.

This was an exercise in connecting to the energy of rock n roll and how that applies in our dance and music and what that might look like on the dance floor.

What does a dancer respect/admire in a judge ?

It's important to appreciate what dancers might respect in a judge and again breakout rooms engaged small groups of judges to talk about this.

Responses back included:

Honesty, Unbiased, Consistency, How to Deliver a Message, Confidence, Constructive, Availability, Fairness, Focus, Integrity, Admiration, Experience, Approachable, Human, Professional, Self-Evaluating, Supportive, Solution based.

What can a judge do when they realise they've made a mistake?

Importance of talking about things when a mistake has been made and to share best practice.

Try to fix the mistake as soon as practical.

Communication to the HJ of the night and the Floor Manager of the event.

It was felt that we own our mistakes and realise the human element and that sometimes people are learning along the way.

Ensuring good breaks between throughout the events are important to help the judges keep focus, hydrated.

Important to make an apology and show humbleness. Judges don't go out there to make mistakes, however, we are human and recognise that sometimes things can happen.

It's perfectly okay to say 'can I come back to you about that please?' to give you time to consider your response.

BE sure to keep an eye on colours/names/or numbers on your sheets – double check and take your time.

Even if the runner is ready to collect your sheet – ask them to come back to you to allow you more time.

How to Respond Effectively

Judges can be asked about all kinds of matters including their marks or placings.

It can be hard to recall all the details over the course of day and /or night or weekend as judging is very much 'in the moment' and you are fully focused on the dancing and observing what is actually happening.

Some helpful guidance around this could be with the '3 E's '

Empathise

Educate

Engage

Empathise – is to understand and share the feelings of another – showing appreciation that they asked you and finding something positive to share with them – identify a positive quality / something they did really well.

Educate – give some context around the guidelines 0.....10 – and what it might take to get a higher mark – refer to the guidelines.

Engage – offer an area to focus on - that's an aspect of the particular T,H,V or placing outcome.

Breakout groups returned with some great feedback about how to handle questions and some ideas about how to respond in a positive helpful way.

It was also important to realise that best not to give feedback unless asked, and not on the same night or event. Encourage the dancers to seek out the sheets and get a good perspective from them first.

Variety – Apples are back!

Lifts, diverse combination of moves, execution of the actual lifts/moves, entry and exit...and how does the variety assist the flow of the dance...were all considered and discussed.

Breaks/Pauses were discussed and how one might view them within the routine...based upon;
Interest created, clever use of timing, stopping the flow, took risks, over did it....

It was felt breaks/pauses accents are absolutely part of a routine, however, it's all around balance and how it fits the song.

Judges felt differently about different aspects of breaks/pauses – but all agreed it should be in balance and enhance the flow – not stop the flow.

Dress Attire

Discussions on how does dress bring value to our rock n roll culture and teams of 4 thinking about the

Strengths / Weakness (Internal)

Opportunity / Threats (external)

Dress was generally viewed as part of the culture of rock n roll.

Sometimes people may have the view that they need new attire each and every year to be seen as being new and fresh.

It was felt that People look forward to the dress and it's important to look good – look the part.

For people who cannot dance for whatever reason – the best dressed parades give them an opportunity to compete in something.

Dress in general gives people the opportunity to compete in a category.

Costs can be seen as an obstacle perhaps and perhaps a perception that you have to spend a lot to look good.

The parades are well attended and get good support and well contested.

There was some discussion around judges wearing rock n roll outfits. Judges are most welcome to wear rock n roll and many do and it's their personal preference.

It's important to take into consideration comfort, warmth and practicality especially during the long weekends of a Nationals.

POLL were part of the day – Tempo / Why I attended the Workshop / RNR History (FUN)

Cheerleaders

This Juniors there were 5 teams entered to start the Saturday energy/atmosphere off at 2020 Nationals after 10 years with no Cheerleaders.

We went over the judging sheet and talked about the aspects of judging this section.

Cheers and Chants and an audible message were key components of the team.

Marks are given around the clear message of the team and fun.

Not high-flying gymnastics but a co-ordination of rhythm, chant, (music can be used) and message.

Stephen Blasé

Stephen presented some ideas to consider and the opportunity we have at the present time of 1.5 years until the next Seniors. His suggestion around a 'Mega Nationals' a 'Welcome Back' theme.

Marketing, bringing the rock n roll brand into a new era.

To be able to reach more into our own communities – increase the level of engagement and awareness around the country of NZ.

Perhaps a position is created to help with marketing generally.

Open ideas and discussions around our brand and thinking about how we can grow the future.

All great conversations and thoughts as judges we are at the grass roots level and can pick up and feel the thoughts and ideas of our own Clubs.

It was felt that more communications around these ideas by others would be useful and perhaps a topic at the next AGM.

Times have changed and the way we grow may need to change and adapt too if we are to grow and be a valuable part of our communities within NZ.

As judges we are all passionate about our rock n roll and can start to ask and talk to others about any kinds of ideas.

Thank you Stephen.

Rock around the Regions –

20 seconds to tell us why YOUR region was the place to rock..

Colleen did her little chant -(thanks for being a great audience) the things one has to do at times LOL)

As always there was unfinished business and I had a couple of other topics :

Section 8 is updated Judges Criteria and all judges will need to be aware of this.

It's taken about two years to liaise with all judges and come to formulate a criteria we all feel is workable and upholds our judging set of values.

Please take time to familiarise yourself with your responsibility in your judging role.

Mentorship – what is it ..?? how to we measure it...? What is the expectation

A Mentor is a National Association Judge who is mentoring a trainee.

More about the Mentor role will develop in time.

Trainee workshop –

It would be helpful to hold a trainee workshop – and their mentors – via zoom before the year is out. This would give trainees another opportunity to get current and have a platform that they personally can best suit their needs and questions at this time. Please watch out for dates on that.

Do you know what to do if you are Head Judge for the night?

When you are invited to be HJ for an occasion it's quite a different mindset and a few things to be aware of. Please note a mini session is set for Monday 7 September @ 7.30 pm (via zoom) an informal discussion to formulate a clear document and outline to assist in those times when you may need to take on that role.

What to consider PRIOR...DURING...and AFTER the event.

All welcome to attend.

All that remains is for me to thank you judges for your attendance and input to help ensure our 2020 Combined National Workshop was a success. It's my pleasure to hold the HJ role at this time and I look forward to seeing you at one of our events during the next year.

Keep positive, keep encouraging others and if you know of anyone in your Club that has the attributes that you feel would make a good judge – be sure to have that conversation with them and plant the seed.

Sincerely,
Colleen Ryan