

To: All Judges NZARRA
Subject: Overview Workshops and General Updates – Connect & Refresh
From: Colleen Ryan – Head Judge NZARRA
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To '*Connect and Refresh*' was the theme of our recent Regional Workshops and certainly provided an absolute exciting occasion for us all to engage again with each other and to refresh one's own connection to their judging wisdom and knowledge.

As part of our Set of Judges Values (2016) it's acknowledged that as judges we serve the dancers and so part of that is keeping connected and updated to our community. Judges are often the glue between the dancers and our organisation and many a time seen as people who can be a voice for the dancers and have some influence in supporting our rock n roll communities thrive.

A big 'thank you' to the people and Clubs who helped me co-ordinate and facilitate these events in the regions; Cambridge Jim and Kathy, Wellington Danka and Yolanda and Christchurch Brenda and Robin. Creating a warm and welcoming environment, demo dancers, resources and a great lunch, all ensure a professional space for everyone to feel comfortable and enjoy their time with each other.

You will notice that I always endeavour to make all our workshops interesting, relevant and hopefully captivating with a range of activities and topics. I was hugely gladdened at the big number of judges who again come to the workshops and the way everyone participated, thank you so much.

The following is an overview together with some outcomes and ideas from the workshops.

Some of the ideas of what you would like to achieve from the workshop

- Connect and Refresh
- Breaking the Ice
- Restricted / Variety
- In touch with judges and dancers
- Face to face
- Responsibility
- Robust Discussion
- Entertainment
- Local workshops initiative
- Refresh
- Touch base with everyone
- Refresh
- Friendship
- Inspired
- Staying Current
- Confidence
- Get 'eye in'
- Best Dressed

- Trainee Support
- Where judges are headed
- Sponge / soak up the learnings

My welcome and introduction

We can all understand and appreciate that our world has changed and will likely continue to change and being able to navigate through uncertain times is a key strength of any organisation. This has been top of mind for me personally within our judging community and Rock n Roll generally. To be able to find new and creative ways to communicate, while keeping things simple and inclusive has been the answer and I want to thank you judges for the contributions you've made in our zoom on-line conversations over the last few months.

These communications have helped us stay in touch and thinking.

As a result of these initiatives, we've been able to prepare some helpful resources including Guides for Head Judge of a Competition – how to prepare, proceed during the event after tasks requirements and a Trainee Guidelines document - additional guidelines to assist in their pathway. I think we can all appreciate the value that our experienced judges bring and share and hearing from our newer judges brings new ideas to consider.

Best Dressed – 'A Race to the Rack'

A fun activity saw judges' team up and create a few outfits that would potentially be seen in dance categories and Sunday dress parades. It was a 'race to the rack' as we all selected various garments. The hard part was still to come as then each team had to present and talk about their combinations and various aspects of what could enhance, change or modify their choices.

This activity gave us an appreciation in the subtle essence of what it means to be complementary and while personal likes and dislikes may and do play a part at some level of the dress scene, it's undoubtedly recognised that many other considerations are an integral part of dress such as;

Look of the 50's era

Collars and necklines on the dress

Attention to detail – buttons, trim, borders, belts,

Patterns of materials – plains and florals and checks

Overdone – what does it mean to make it all 'too busy'

Shoes – to set off the dress

Shoes – for the man's suit

Ties

Sock – how much sock to show

Trousers – length, width

Boleros –

Tailored – fitting garments

Complementary colours and patterns

The man's suit can often make or break the lady's dress
Sunday Female – more details, often is quite different to the dancing dress
Sunday Man - often the shirts can make a big difference to the suits being worn

And so much more!

Restricted – as it was, is now...and could be..

Restricted has a long history and understanding it's intent in the first instance, how it changed over the course of time and where we are today with it was an important topic.

Please refer to the changes voted on at the last AGM, refer Rule 6.3.2 so being comfortable with how to judge this section in the event of sighting an illegal move is imperative.

I conducted an interview with Judy Russell with a series of questions around Restricted that was pre-recorded for the purpose of the workshops to invite discussion and thought process.

Robust discussion around the multiple aspects of Restricted followed.
Some judges felt it was cut and dry – a full 2 points for deduction, some felt that a 1 or 1.5 would suffice dependent upon the scope and nature of the discretion.

It was generally accepted that it's fair that dancers be awarded points on their full dance and that if a discretion is made – then naturally there has to be consequences and points deducted.

Demo Dancers were asked to primarily dance Restricted and judges utilised Restricted judging sheets and their given categories of either Timing, Harmony and Variety.

Prior to judging the dancing judges were asked to make note of a couple of key elements within the T,H,V that they in particular were going to observe and comment back on later.

It was fantastic to have so many dancers at the workshops and a big appreciation to you as this was a key component to our training day.

Back as a group we had some great insights and was really helpful to hear how judges utilised their 'up to 2 points'.
It was also valuable to know that as judges we do not see everything all the time and definite lifts and off the floor moves were not in range and line of vision of every judge.

We are also mindful that 'when in doubt - leave it out' so we must be absolutely certain to observe the illegal move.

It's good to remind ourselves that it's the collective input of all judges that provides the results and outcomes.

Feedback to Dancers

Some of the dancers asked for feedback from the judges and this provided a fantastic opportunity to practice the 'the 3 E's - Empathy, Educate and Engage'

At the combined workshop 2020 we covered a topic around how to express to a dancer when they've asked about their mark.

Empathy – something they did well

Educate – the T,H,V specific element

Engage - what part of the guidelines could they do to gain more marks

It was a really nice way to finish off the demos at Wellington seeing this interaction as dancers could approach a couple of judges each and quietly on their own.

The perception of jumps

No-where in our guidelines does it actually say dancers must do jumps – however we do recognise that it's about presenting a well-balanced structured routine.

Discussion around variety and the perception of jumps lead into some good ideas and thoughts.

Great examples of good floor craft and dancing can be observed in Restricted sections and even Novice to a degree – as Novice strive for good timing with some basic good all-round dancing.

How can we encourage dancers to participate in sections without them thinking they have to do heaps of jumps?

Other ideas to consider the growing demographics of our dancers around the 60+ and what could be offered to them for those who for a variety of reasons cannot do lifts or have some health concerns but still want to dance.

Mentors for Trainees

It's a great testimony when a trainee comes through feeling confident and having faith in themselves. The role of a Mentor is such a guidance for trainees and can be that voice for them too. I know when I started my judging I didn't have a mentor and it can be rather tough and requires a huge amount of determination and self-discipline. I want to say congratulations to the Mentors we have right now. We have around 4 or 5 judges coming up very close to National Status and Association Status within the next few months – so that's an exciting place for them to be.

Badges for Judges

Judges receive their National Association Badge to acknowledge their status and achievements. This badge can be worn at Club competitions and assessments and shows they represent the NZARRA. However, do we require a badge for Trainees and or Association judges? We understand that Association Judges generally continue onto the next level within a shorter timeframe of that qualification.

Do we need to recognise Association judges with some reference to their judging?

Great discussions in all regions and the main outcome could indeed be a NZARRA badge with their name on it, with a gold bar linking the status – Association Judge. Please let me know any further ideas you have around the badges.

Closing of the day

Workshops hold plenty of opportunity for conversation rounds so each judge present gets a chance to express themselves, ask questions and comment on the previous topics.

Completing the day going back to check the whiteboard and ticking off all the key outcomes and a final round gives reflection on the day for each person.

I'm sure we'd all agree that we come away with a greater sense of personal development and understanding for ourselves and our judging.

My thoughts:

While in Wellington I had the opportunity to visit Wellington Club for their Saturday dance and the vibe of the night was tremendous. I got to connect with some good friends and chat and have a few lovely dances too. What I can say is there is plenty of enthusiasm from people at the grass roots level keen to grow rock n roll within the various communities of NZ, foster good spirit and find ways for many others to enjoy the substance of our rock n roll dancing both at Regional and National level.

At the last Combined National Workshop in July 2020, we had a topic that gave some energy to growing rock n roll. There were some fabulous ideas coming forward and I know that both in Auckland, Waikato, Wellington and the South Island we have some key people – not only judges – who are quite keen to share their ideas of the success they experience right now, and the ideas of how to introduce the enterprise of rock n roll locally and nationally.

As judges are quite passionate about rock n roll it's often judges who can be in touch with others who would like to offer more.

I'd like to gather together a bit of a 'think tank' for anyone keen to collate the ideas please. That could be anything from how you've got your community rocking along to regional ideas to national ideas.

Junior Nationals 2021

With the Junior Nationals almost upon us I'd like to wish everyone well, the dancers, their Clubs and the officials and the Junior Judging Panel for this Easter.

As usual we hold a mini workshop 3pm to 4.30 pm on the Good Friday for anyone who is able to come please – it would be lovely to see you.

During the year ahead I'm sure, it would be great to have you gather together in your areas for mini-workshops/discussions/demo dancers and you can also zoom the Head Judge in when travel is limited.

It's definitely been a challenging year for each of us, however, in good Kiwi spirit we continue to stay calm, stay connected and stay in touch with each other.

Thanks for staying current to what's going on, please do your best to keep updated on any AGM information too.

At the last AGM the country made amendments to various aspects of the Rule Book.

With that I'd like to say how much I continue to enjoy the Head Judge Role and you'll have seen how passionate and thoughtful I am about all aspects of judging, the judges, the Executive and our NZ rock n roll community.

It's my absolute pleasure and privilege to again stand for Head Judge so please do watch out for those voting forms coming out very soon.

Warm Regards

Colleen Ryan
Head Judge – March 2021

