

COMMON CONCERNS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

It's that point in the season where decisions need to be made, programs improved and performances enhanced. Over the past few weeks, I've heard from lots of groups, looked at numerous programs and of course poured over every guard on Fan Network!!! In the course of that process, it became obvious that there are some common "situations" within many programs that could be easily addressed with an eye to a more successful program and subsequently, higher scores. Remember, these points represent "common issues" and are by no means the **only** points to consider.

MANAGING SPACE

- If you expand and contract spatial relationships within any set, you will alter the degree of impact of an equipment or body phrase. The closer the space the more impacting the effect. Make your choice for how you want the viewer to react.
- That "required" big flag block shouldn't be static. Consider changing space within that block, using motion within the block to generate energy/dynamics, and/or resolving in a geometric form for strongest impact.
- If you never alter space within your design, you're missing an opportunity to bring variety to the show. Consider working in pairs, trios or sets of 4. It will force you to write differently.

ENHANCING EFFECTS – there are 3 parts to each effect.

- If you aren't getting the desired response to your planned effects, review what you are doing leading into the effect and what you are doing coming out of the effect. Look at both the motion involved as well as what the equipment and body are doing during those times.
- Be sure you have staged the effect for the best emphasis within the design. Make sure that the inter-relationship of the other elements are supportive and not distracting.
- Remember that 50% of every effect falls to the performers. They need to bring energy and passion to their efforts and exude a level of confidence that will demand that the viewer respond favorably.

EQUIPMENT – How high is too high?

- While everyone wants to throw that 6, please remember that credit for aerials occurs in a solid catch. All judges (and audience) are absolutely responsive to that solid moment. An attempt that is not solidly completed is "disappointing" and won't help your score. If they can't consistently catch solidly, take down the rotations until they can. Have the kids practice that 6 on their own and put it back in when you are sure they can showcase that solid catch.
- Check for variety on releases and catch positions and offer body compliment whenever appropriate.
- The display of consistent and proper technique will pay off. Spend half of your rehearsal time reinforcing technique.

MOVEMENT – The body impacts every caption

- Never ask the performers to do a dance move for which they don't have adequate training. "Almost" achieving a given move is like an aerial that isn't caught solidly. It's more of a negative than you would like to believe. (key offenders are back attitude turns without proper outward rotation, ponche' arabesques hand-stands and illusions.)
- Pay attention to all weight shifts & body shaping. Be sensitive to reinforcing the line of each shape or move. Always define the feet (flexed or pointed.)

- Give the performers a set of “characteristics” (specially designed gestures, style, facial responses, etc.) that will help them to depict the “role” they are portraying. These characteristics can be unique to them as a color guard, to the music or if there’s a “story” to the purpose behind that story.

The look of the performer is vastly different from the look of the average pedestrian. ALWAYS demand that your students conscientiously assume the “role/character” they are portraying. At the most basic level, reinforce their presence, their posture and their confidence. Teach them the difference between “full out” performance and just doing the show “by the numbers.” As the students grow, they need to be pushed to fullest commitment to every aspect of the show.

While these points may not apply to all groups, I promise you that they are worth reinforcing at whatever level your guard is at.

Tie these points into the science of becoming a “winner” and let their implementation be part of how you and they measure growth and success.

As always, I wish you a fabulous “run” and welcome any questions or concerns that may arise.

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