

JUDGING SYSTEM IN DANCESPORT

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Abstract: DanceSport belongs to the conventional group of sports, the basis of which is built upon structures of movement synchronized with some aesthetic criteria. The competition result depends on the marks which are given according to a determined protocol by qualified judges. Therefore, it depends on the evaluation of experts. The unavoidable factor of subjectivity interferes with the marking procedure, and it can influence the final result significantly. The methods of evaluation have been changed, amended, improved through the years, with one aim – to achieve a more objective overview and evaluation of the performance.

Key words: *DanceSport, dance couple, judging system, dance competition.*

INTRODUCTION

DanceSport is a combination of sport and art, an activity which affects the development of physical and mental skills, creates conditions for the development of social interactions, and enables the achieving of results on different competition levels. A competitive performance requires the dancing activity of the couple, a team of two people, whose body movements are coordinated. Marking this performance is a task for dance adjudicators, who decide, with their competence, which dance couple will win. Unavoidable subjectivity in the marking of a dance couple, created the need for the most objective way of evaluating competitors' performances, in order to minimize the influence of subjective views on the final mark given to competitors. This issue was chosen to be the topic of the research.

Pletnev (Pletnev, 2012) considers dance through the duality of sport and art. The author emphasizes the importance of the authority of adjudicators and their competence, as the only criteria for marking the artistic performance of a couple. He thinks that the separation between the trainer's and adjudicator's work would be extremely harmful for DanceSport. According to him, the separation of people who are experts in the ballroom and up-to-date with the development and changes in DanceSport would be a great mistake.

Furthermore, he thinks that putting DanceSport under the regulations and demands of Sports would actually transform the fundamental principles of Dance. Dance would lose its form and betray itself as an Art. The judges enjoy credibility based on their authority, trust and responsibility. The adjudicator's job is not an occupation which brings adequate earnings, because wages are way lower than the ones given to adjudicators in some other sports for the same competition category. Doing this job (trainer and judge) is supposed to be the main and not an additional occupation. It is emphasized that a judge for whom this is a hobby cannot get adequate education for marking dance couples, because of the fact that there are no clear indicators who is first, as in other sports. Therefore, DanceSport requires a more serious approach to the job.

Bijster (Bijster, 2012) speaks about the transition from the judging system by comparison to the system according to the evaluation of individual qualities. This difference argues for ranking couples based on their own quality, and not a comparison of quality. According to the new system, couples are marked when dancing alone on the dance floor (solo dance), and in that dance there is no competing with other couples, as their quality is judged individually. The author thinks, although supporting the new system, that the defect is that couples lose the passion and pugnacity which appear when competing with others at the same time. The priceless value of the interaction between couples and the audience is lost, as well as between the couples themselves.

We can assume that Pletnev and Bijster have serious remarks on the new judging system, but from different angles. Bijster says that in solo dances couples lose their competitive sharpness, which is an identification of sport, while Pletnev thinks that sport regulations and norms are endangering Dance as an art and

emphasizes the importance of the judge's authority and her/his competence as the only valid criteria for marking the artistry of the couple's performance.

Good physical shape gives a possibility for better performances of couples, as well as the possibility to create a movement with a minimum of energy consumption. WDC considers the development of DanceSport without the loss of elegance, artistry, characterization of the dances, excellent musicality and skillfulness.

We could say that the artistic side of Dance requires the athletic side only as a means for creating a more beautiful performance with more quality and aesthetic shape. Big names in DanceSport are emphasizing the need for keeping the aesthetic quality of Dance, because the technique and the step performance should support the aesthetic shaping of the movement and performance. The focus on the steps means that the essence is not understood. "Beautiful" in DanceSport considers the aesthetic experience of the performance and the reaction on the message that couples are sending. Gasson says that dancers are the artists who move according to rhythm and melody (Gasson, 2012). Speed gives a more interesting performance but isn't important in itself.

The definition of art has changed through time, from the skill of performing some piece to the capability of expressing oneself through creativity (Pust, 2013). The audience experiences the artist's performance through their own aesthetic filters. But, as everything is growing and changing, the need for being different stays. How does one show individuality, especially among various different artistic forms? Does this bring us to the different meaning of Art? Artists have always provoked with their performances, wanting to be different and unique and get reactions by which they would be remembered. Real artists always leave a strong impression.

These thoughts are a consequence of the complexity of DanceSport as an artistic sport, and explain to some degree the problem of marking and objective evaluation of the couples' performances.

In his work, Montero (Montero, 2012) speaks about the importance of the judge's dance experience. According to Hum (1757), the experience in viewing art is important for the critic, but there is little said about the need that critics are the consumers of art as well as the performers. Kant gives a rich analysis of the experience of the beautiful and supreme. He discusses the objectivity of taste, aesthetic indifference, relation between art and nature, the role of imagination, originality and ingeniousness, limits in presentation and connection between morals and aesthetics. It is considered that judges with greater dancing experience have an advantage and are able to evaluate the artistic aspect better.

Also (Ansorge&Scheer, 1988), there is an issue about favoring competitors, participants of the Olympic Games, if they are from the same country as the judge. Research has shown that those competitors were marked better and favoring was obvious. These problems appear when a qualitative evaluation of experts is needed. WDSF has the same issue and the goal is to create a system in which partiality and unethical behavior would be minimized.

The goal of the research is systemization of the judging system in DanceSport regarding the issues which have been appearing through the years and influence the changes in ways of evaluation of dance couples.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The history of DanceSport

Throughout the 1920s, several European nations were the pioneers in the gradual emergence of dance as an organized sport. They defined the norms and launched the concept of its worldwide governance. In 1929, British dance teachers defined the standards for an “English Style” that was soon adopted everywhere.

1935 – FIDA is founded.

1957 – IDSF is founded under the name International Council of Amateur Dancers (ICAD).

1960 – First TV broadcast of a DanceSport competition airs in Germany.

1990 – ICAD changes its name to the International DanceSport Federation.

1992 – IDSF becomes a member of the General Association of International Sports Federations (SportAccord).

1995 – IDSF and DanceSport are provisionally recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

1995 – IDSF becomes a member of the International World Games Association (IWGA).

1997 – IDSF becomes a member of the Association of IOC Recognized International Sports Federations (ARISF).

2001 – IDSF establishes an Anti-Doping Commission and subscribes to the World Anti-Doping Code.

2003 – IDSF creates the Grand Slam Series for Latin and Standard.

2004 – International Dance Organization (IDO) joins IDSF.

2006 – IDSF establishes an Athletes’ Commission and a Disciplinary Council.

2007 – IDSF presents its development plan VISION 2012 to the AGM.

2007 - IDSF assists professional athletes in creating their own organization, the International Professional DanceSport Council (IPDSC).

2009 - IDSF beats all existing attendance records with the DanceSport events at The World Games 2009 Kaohsiung, TPE.

2010 - IPDSC dissolves and becomes the IDSF Professional Division.

2010 - DanceSport premieres in the Asian Games held in Guangzhou, China.

2011 - The IDSF Annual General Meeting held in Luxembourg agrees to change the name of the federation to the World DanceSport Federation - WDSF.

2013 - The World DanceSport Games are held in Kaohsiung, Taipei.

2016 - On December 6, Breaking was accepted into the 2018 Youth Olympic Games.

Structure of competition

LATIN DANCES:

- Samba
- Cha-Cha-Cha
- Rumba
- Paso Doble
- Jive

Standard dances:

- Waltz
- Tango
- Viennese waltz
- Slow foxtrot
- Quickstep

For the disciplines Latin, Standard and Ten Dance alone, WDSF every year grants approximately 1,500 competitions to organizers around the world.

- WDSF World DanceSport Championships in Latin, Standard and Ten Dance for couples in age grades Junior, Youth, U-21, Adult and Senior.
- WDSF World DanceSport Championships in Latin, Standard and Ten Dance for senior couples.
- WDSF World DanceSport Championships in Latin and Standard Formation for Adult teams.
- WDSF World DanceSport Championships Showdance in Latin and Standard.
- WDSF Grand Slam Series events in Latin and Standard for Adult couples.
- WDSF Continental, Sub- and Intercontinental DanceSport Championships for most disciplines and age grades.
- WDSF World and Continental Cups for Adult Latin, Standard and Ten Dance.
- WDSF World Ranking Tournaments: World Opens, International Opens and Opens for most disciplines and age grades.

Add to this the competition the structures put in place by the WDSF National Member Bodies, with championships and tournaments in all disciplines at local, regional and national levels, and you arrive at an impressive number of opportunities for athletes in DanceSport to match up against their peers.

Assessment and evaluation of performances

The performances of couples are evaluated by the judging panel. The number of judges depends on the level of the competition as well as the system of judging which is to be used. The methods of evaluation have been changed, amended, improved throughout the years, with one aim – to achieve a more objective overview and an evaluation of the performance.

Judging criteria

Criteria, all of them well defined and most of them interrelated, are the tools which adjudicators use to evaluate the quality of the performances. This requires experience and expertise.

The list of criteria is as follows: hold, movement, presentation, rhythmic interpretation, foot action, floor craft, etc. It even includes some intangibles, comprising factors such as how two dancers look and fit together as a couple, how their costuming and appearance are perceived, etc.

The adjudicator is not required to use all criteria at all times. The emphasis put on certain criteria shifts somewhat in different stages of the competition. In the early stages - in the preliminary rounds - emphasis is put on the criteria related to the basic requirements, e.g. the correct dance hold, basic technical competence, movement in time with the music, etc. The performances are primarily judged for their correctness. As the competition progresses, the more sophisticated criteria are applied. They relate to accuracy of execution, dynamic qualities, characterization of the dances, partnering skills, body rhythm, etc. In the semi-finals and finals, the adjudicators also consider the artistic value of a performance.

Judging Systems and their development

DanceSport evolves, which means that the assessment system over the years changes and improves with the goal of impartial and objective determination of placements and winners. Since the beginning, dance couples are judged on the basis of certain criteria that have changed for years with the development of dance. The ranking of the competitors is determined on the basis of the mutual comparison of dance couples or by individual assessment of the performance quality (in the final rounds of the competition). There is, however, a problem of objective assessment, which is a task that the teams of experts in WDSF are trying to solve, with respect of all aspects of this beautiful, but complex sport.

Evaluation by comparison

Dance couples compete in groups. During qualifying rounds, the total number of couples is reduced by elimination in the finals. Judges choose a number

of couples in relation to the competition circuit (96, 48, 24, 12 or 6 for the finals). The basis of their selection is a comparison with clearly defined criteria, on the basis of which they are compared. This system is also known as the Skating System, consisting of a set of 11 rules.

At the end of each competitive round, the couples continuing with the competition have the highest number of passes given by judges. In the finals (6 couples), couples are rated from 1 to 6, whereupon 1 is the best, and 6 the worst rating. The judge cannot rate two couples the same. There is an odd number of judges in the competition (5, 7, 9, 11, 13), depending on the level of the competition.

An essentially correct and transparent judging system:

- The judges must sign a Code of Conduct and Ethics Standard
- Training and licensing of judges
- WDSF system of random selection of judges
- WDSF review of judicial evaluation

The absolute scale developed by IDSF

Judging Systems 1.0 and 2.0

In December of 2009 a team of WDSF experts presented the new Judging System 1.0, based on the Judging System of artistic skating (ISU), approved by the Olympic Committee (IOC). The components that were judged by judges are posture, balance, coordination, quality of movement, movement to music, partnering, choreography and presentation. The initial version was first used at the 2009 GrandSlam final in Shanghai. If there was something new in the new system, it was the numerical marking scale from 1 – or very poor – to 10 – outstanding. From 2013, an enhanced version was implemented, system 2.0. Couples are rated for each of the four criteria in each dance. In the final round, competitors dance 3 solo and 2 group dances. Solo dances are individual performances, when judges have opportunity to see only one couple on the dance floor.

The components that are assessed:

- *Technical quality*
 - The performance of dance movements in the most rational way with the smallest energy consumption. Posture, balance, coordination, etc.
- *Movement to music*
 - Coherence of movement and steps with rhythm, accent, music structure.
- *Partnering skills*
 - Ability to communicate with each other and match in pairs with and without physical contact.

- *Choreography and presentation*

- Balance of choreography (basic and skilled figures), communication with the audience, atmosphere, personal style, etc.

Judging System 2.1

Judging System 2.1 is an upgraded system 2.0. Namely, Judging System 2.1 which was introduced in 2015 was updated with an improved calculation of points. The premiere of this system was at WDSF Grand Slams, from the judging of the 1/4 final. The following components were assessed: Technical quality, Movement to music, Partnering skills and Choreography and Presentation. This System is used for European and World Championships, GrandSlams and World Cups. The other competitions are judged by the Skating System (Comparison System), as well as for competitions up to quarter-finals. In the finals, competitors dance 2 solo and 3 group dances. Solo dances are set for one year in advance.

The Judging System 2.1 has contributed to the following:

- Greater objectivity
- Transparency
- Better understanding for the audience and the media
- Giving guidelines for athletes and trainers

Final results are calculated as the sum of the results of the criteria in each dance. Dance couples are ranked in relation to the values of their grades.

Three judges give a rating for each component. Estimates are scaled by value.

The weight of best/worst mark should be created depending on the distance to the median.

- Example: Judgments: 7.0, 7.5, 9.5 -> Distance of best (9.5) is 2 to the median (7.5), distance of the worse (7.0) is 0.5 from the median.

Formula: $W(\%) = \frac{1}{1+D^2} \times 100$,

D – distance from the median

- W_1 – distance best 9.5 is 20% (0.2)

- W_3 - distance worst 7.0 is 80% (0.8)

The value of a component is calculated according to the formula:

$$C = \frac{C1 \times W1 + C2 + C3 \times W3}{1 + W1 + W3}$$

C – value, C_1 – worst, C_2 – Median, C_3 – best

The total result of a dance is the sum of all components:

Dance Total = Value TQ + Value MM + Value PS + Value CP

The total result of a round is the sum of all dance totals.

The influence of the subjectivity, reflected in great mutual deviations, was reduced by using this formula.

Absolute scale:

- 10 Outstanding
- 9 Superior
- 8 Very Good
- 7 Good
- 6 Above Average
- 5 Average
- 4 Fair
- 3 Weak
- 2 Poor
- 1 Very Poor

Judging System 2.1:

- 4 components
- 12 judges
- 3 judges for one component per dance
- Randomly choosing judges who assess a randomly given component in each dance.
- The Judging System is applicable to the evaluation of 6 or 8 couples on the dance floor at the same time.
- From the quarter-finals

Judging System 3.0:

THE UPGRADED 2.1 JUDGING SYSTEM

- 12 Judges will be grouped into 2 groups of 6 judges each.
- Twice as many Adjudicator Scores (6 scores per component) will be used to calculate the results.
- A median will be established from the 6 scores from each group of judges and a tolerance marking scale is used to eliminate possible manipulative scores. The tolerance range is set at 1.2 for GS/Championships and 1.5 for World Open.
- It will produce more accurate results with less possible distortions from 6 scores. In the 1/4 and 1/2 finals, 2 groups of judges will be assigned to judge single component combinations of TQ (including considerations of PS) or MM (including considerations of CP).
- There is no change of judging components for the entire dance, allowing judges to focus on the same criteria.
- In the finals, in the group dance, the judges will again assess single component combinations.

- In the finals, in Solo dance, the judges will judge 2 components each, and a separate score will be given for each component.
- There is a possibility to calculate manually if the computer fails.
- The formula used is scalable for smaller competitions, and it is possible to operate with 10 judges.
- The chairperson will not set the judging range.
- Features 0.25 marking scales are derived from reduction. 0.25 should be awarded in consideration of a reduction rather than addition. For example, if a couple consistently presents the qualities of a 9, with a slight occasional mistake or deficiency, they can be awarded an 8.75.

CONCLUSION

The papers dealing with marking in DanceSport and the judges who evaluate couples performances are more focused on research regarding moral and ethical issues and the dilemma if dance is a sport or an art. Those papers can help to establish clearer criteria for the couples as well as for the judges, and on the other side, in understanding DanceSport through the duality of sport and art.

Judging systems which evaluate specific parameters of couples performances should be more objective in giving final marks. In the Judging system where couples are marked by comparison, there is a bigger probability for ethical influence and there are no exact indicators as goals, scores etc. Although judges are being trained and given licenses, at the end, it involves a subjective evaluation, so the judging systems with strict marking parameters have an advantage regarding objectivity. Even here, there is a possibility of political influences by giving inappropriate marks for certain parameters, but it is minimized by introducing a technique for determining the median value in the system 2.1 and later 3.0. Of course, time will show if these systems are objective and legitimate.

On the other side, judging should be in accordance with ethics, unbiased and independent. A dance judge signs an Ethical Code and rules before the competition. It is a fact that most judges are also trainers of competing couples and there is a conflict of interest. WDSF has the rule that certain competitions cannot be judged by an adjudicator who has trained a competing couple for the previous three months or even held a seminar in the country which is the organizer.

This is valid, of course, for the most important competitions such as World, European championships, etc., while it is not possible for less important competitions. Furthermore, seminars are organized with judges who will judge the same couples (present at the seminar) during the competition. These are all issues and topics to be discussed in order to objectify as much as possible the evaluation of dance couples performances.

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