

To the Friends and Patrons of the US OPEN SWING DANCE CHAMPIONSHIPS, INC.

In the past several days there have been a lot of posts on Facebook regarding the way THE OPEN is going to handle judging the routine competitors at the 2019 OPEN.

We would like to confirm to you all that we are listening, good, bad, or ugly! We have been working on this project for almost two years because of the difficulties presented to the OPEN with regards to maintaining a level and fair competition environment. There is no other swing event in the world that has the same set of characteristics to organize.

It is obvious that all who have posted are passionate and concerned that we (THE OPEN) get this right. Everyone who has worked on this project has only the best of intentions at heart. We want to protect “our dance”, the competitors, the attendees, the stockholders, and THE OPEN. This is the 37th year for THE OPEN and it is a tradition, that we value and care for 365 days a year.

We respect that you all care and have invested time and energy to make your feelings known. We hear you! We can assure all of you that your comments are being reviewed and processed. It would be impossible to create a format that utilizes every comment or suggestion. Each of you believes that you have the correct formula or way that it should be done. Over the past few years, the competitors and judges have asked for definition, guidance and leadership. We are answering that call and this how we made our decisions...

- 1) In December of 2018, after the OPEN, our annual Judges Review indicated that there were issues that needed attention. Our judges were inconsistent with their scores and swing content. For example, one judge might give a V3 (a drop out of the money) and another gave no violation or warning. We heard from many of the dancers, “how could this be”? After reviewing all data we met to determine how to reduce discrepancies.
- 2) We created committees to address the Swing Content issues and to develop a “judging certification program” that will level set our judges knowledge and training necessary to judge THE OPEN at the highest standards.
- 3) THE OPEN financed the creation of this judging certification program. Our entire 2019 panel of judges are participating in the program and are not paying tuition or testing fees. The OPEN is covering all expenses to develop this program. We plan to open this process to more applicants and broaden the scope of the project.
- 4) NEWSBREAK:
We have not changed the rules...they are the same. For our Classic and Showcase Divisions we adhere to the rules as set forth by NASDE. On June 1, 2019, (one month earlier than previous years) the rules for THE OPEN 2019, were posted on our website at www.usopenswing.com THE ONLY CHANGE IS WHO WILL measure the Quantity of Swing “Does IT Swing” or Does IT NOT Swing” (Swing Content) issue.
- 5) We added “SWING CONTENT JUDGES” who will focus on swing content only. (Some say we returned to Swing Scrutineer). Why did we do this? Over a 7 month period of time and much collaboration with many professionals and non-professionals, we concluded that our panel of judges in our premier OPUS DIVISION contests did not have enough time to judge swing content and all of the other elements they have to consider to determine a competitors score and placement. So, we determined that it would be better to have two judges focus solely on the Quantity of Swing, allowing our remaining judges the ability to focus on Quality characteristics

- (technique, timing, and teamwork, choreography and showmanship) across all swing genres. (Plus, all the other things they must consider in formulating their scores).
- 6) For the purpose of creating consistency, Swing Content Criteria (What IS Swing, What IS NOT) was defined. Using the NASDE "JUDGING CRITERIA CLASSIC & SHOWCASE DIVISIONS", the guidelines for how any swing warnings and or violations will be processed into the score are documented. By publishing what the Swing Content Judges will measure as Swing Content and what will not be measured, WE HAVE ESTABLISHED tools like what was provided to allow a Referee to successfully do their job.
 - 7) Change is difficult. Our goal is to have ZERO Swing content violations at THE OPEN, legitimately. Our Swing Content Judges, including the Chief Judge, volunteered their time to offer FREE Reviews to The Open Routine competitors. Our system was enhanced to accommodate video uploads. This information was announced in our Mailchimp, posted on our website and on Facebook June 1st.

Our US OPEN Board of Directors and the committee that have been working (researching published materials, interviewing "experts" and Testing) for 7 months on both the SWING CONTENT Project and the US OPEN CERTIFIED JUDGES TRAINING. We want to assure everyone that it is not our intention to punish or negatively impact the competitive framework. We want to provide definitions, set expectations and elevate the understanding to give all of you a framework to create and dance your routines without fear of the ambiguous or unknown. As before, you should continue to create routines that adhere to the guidelines and rules that have been previously established.

Please accept that we cannot respond to or satisfy every opinion or comment. However, we will attempt to address your concerns and make worthwhile adjustments as we can. We can tell you that several of you have contacted me, Phil Dorroll, personally by phone, text and email and offered some very valuable suggestions. This is how this process works best. I offer you my email address for the same purpose. (phil@usopenswing.com). We have sought the advice from experts and will continue to seek the best solutions to accomplish our *Mission: To provide all competitors an experienced judging panel and provide training that contributes to a fair and consistent evaluation/scoring process.*

Our goal is to make this better for everyone. Understanding that THE OPEN has taken the task of leadership seriously and we need your support. After all, the dance is yours, THE OPEN is yours. We are just the caretakers and are doing our very best to get this right. At this time, we could use a few positive comments from some of you that believe we are moving in the right direction.

Thank you all for your passion and love of the dance and the OPEN. We are working for you, not against you. For example, we were not a proponent of video reviews. Our Test results demonstrated that when swing content was measured via video reviews the Swing Content percent is lowered resulting in more Violations. Based on your requests for a video review process the committee will discuss; if, when, where it might be applied. Adjustments and considerations will be continually added to, modified and changed as we continue reviewing results.

Please continue to support THE OPEN, you will not be disappointed.

God Bless You All!

Phil Dorroll

President and Event Director