

# IMPROVING YOUR SCORES...the EASY way!

By Teri Rowe

- I. *Learn what judges are looking for at your competitions!***
  - A. Study the score sheet and where points are lost
  - B. Always look for maximum points in Overall Effect (the big picture!)
  - C. What things can you control in your performance...maximize effort here
  - D. Are you willing to push the envelope in order to be creative, original and unique?
  
- II. *Better Coaching Preparation- leads to relaxed, better prepared performers!***
  - A. Lesson plans & schedules
  - B. Organization!!!
  - C. Early preparation and planning for entire season!
  
- III. *Physical Training-start early and continue! Push harder as season progresses!***
  - A. Understand aerobic vs anaerobic training in preparation for competition
  - B. Flexibility is the most overlooked key to success!
  - C. Never forget core strength/upper body carriage (tells judges a lot about technique, confidence and style!!!)
  
- IV. *Music-choose wisely, edit well and carry various copies!***
  - A. Listen to itunes, soundtracks, new music, old music...stay away from Top 40!
    1. Look for acoustic versions, dance hall versions, remixes
    2. What is getting tons of radio play now will be "played out"
  - B. Editing music-make sure edit, sound quality, volume is perfect
  - C. Copies of music...carry multiple and copy on various programs
  - D. Just because YOU like a piece of music doesn't mean your audience will
    1. Let go of the Deep Purple or Cream...explore other types of music!
    2. Encourage kids to do this as well! Have a day where you all bring in music!
  
- V. *Choreography-Keep routine short, leave them wanting more and LAYER!***
  - A. Keep routine to minimum length possible (longer routine = more physical demand, more time to find weakness, harder to hold audience)
  - B. Don't do what everyone else is doing because then you are allowing yourself to be compared to everyone else. Set your own standard with creativity!
  - C. Use layering in parts of routine along with group synchronization to hide things and to create dimension to your routine.
  
- VI. *Stage your routine to win!***
  - A. She may be a senior but is she the best for that part or front & center?
  - B. Utilize your skills best...it is not personal! Teach them to take one for the team!
  - C. As you are staging a routine, pre-plan for disaster...make a back up plan if your best dancer goes down, if you lose someone to grades...what will you do!
  - D. Think twice about a "solo" or feature part...is her skill that good?
  - E. In prop routines, keep routine flowing by moving props more effectively...no breaks!
  - F. In pom routines where are you placing poms, what are you doing with poms?
  - G. In drill routines, what are you doing that is DIFFERENT from what has been done before?
  - D. In dance routines, If you have a turn sequence, show the good turns, then STOP TURNING when their skill doesn't support more turns.
  - E. In Color Guard/Flag routines, have you carefully evaluated your routine to make sure that if you have made changes to succeed in a different venue (i.e. if you have been competing with your band or in Winter Guard, have you changed things up a bit to succeed on the WSDDCA scoresheet?)

**VII. *Costumes can make or break a routine!***

- A. Clean up what you can control...bad bra straps, no socks, pins, losing pieces, etc
- B. Look objectively at your costume and how it looks on the floor!
- C. Use costumes to draw the judges eye where you want it and away from where you don't want them to focus.
  - 1. Smoke screen effectively (gloves, shoes, poms, etc)
  - 2. Be creative in your costuming! Don't look like everyone else!
- D. Choose hairstyle and makeup wisely too...get good at whatever you choose...no bad buns!
- E. The human eye will track anything DIFFERENT...use this knowledge!

**VIII. *Clean your routine in layers and then go back and revisit style!***

- A. Step 1: Use lesson plans to plot out cleaning schedule! Count 8 counts or sections in routine and break it down into manageable sections to clean..go slow and be realistic
- B. Step 2: Initial cleaning of entire routine to make sure all doing the same movements and so they can practice correctly at home (suggest no music at first with individual practice)
- C. Step 3: Repeat again in sections, using groups or video to critique and clean.
- D. Step 4: Synchronization of entire group
- E. Step 5: Transitions can kill you! Spend time to clean up and break down all transitions and perfect them
- F. Step 5: After you have cleaned beyond all belief...revisit your style to bring it back to the original form you wanted
- G. Step 6: Practice hard marking while listening to music to work musicality and accents!
- H. Step 7: Don't get tired of cleaning and give up

**IX. *Preparing for competition...run routine full out with music...no marking!***

- A. When they are tired, do it again
- B. Get to competition early and

**X. *Evaluating your own performance objectively***

- A. Don't get married to the routine...separate and look at it objectively using judges feedback
- B. Review the video tape many times to look at separate parts of the score sheet (i.e. review once to look at Execution only, then again for Content (look at transitions!) and then for Overall Effect.
- C. Keep a broad picture of what the judges are saying to you.
  - 1. If they give you a low score, DON'T get hung up on all the nit picky ways you may have lost points and don't get hung up on ONE comment they make. Step back and look at your overall scores...they are telling you something...your product isn't finished?? Go back to the
  - 2. If they give you a high score, DO look at the nit picky ways you lost points and go back after each and every point the next time out!

**XI. *Don't be afraid to go back to the drawing board a little bit!***

- A. Continuously look for ways to improve... should look different by the end of season!
  - 1. Tweek costumes after seeing them on the floor
  - 2. Speed up music to make routine seem peppier?
  - 3. Fix patterns that are not clear to judges/audience
  - 4. If the judges don't "get the picture" maybe the picture is fuzzy or out of focus?
- B. Move team members who are not developing or giving what you need
- C. Stand back and look first at the BIG PICTURE (aka OVERALL EFFECT)...what can you change to make the picture clearer for your judges and audience?