



Frequently Asked Questions About *Next Gen* Monthly Dance Competitions

Why do we have competitions at Club dances?

Competitions provide a bonus activity that makes our dances more interesting, both for competitors and spectators:

- **Competitors** gain experience and confidence dancing for an audience.
- **Spectators** get a show (entertainment).

What types of competitions are appropriate at Club dances?

We could choose to hold two types of competitions: novelty contests or serious competitions.

- **Novelty contests** could include anything from dancing with blindfolds to wearing special costumes. Usually, the idea is to have fun rather than show good dancing. Entertaining the audience is more important than dancing well.
- **Serious competitions** may be more relaxed at a Club dance than at a weekend event, but competitors take them seriously and the judges are looking for the best dancing. At Club dances, some form of Jack & Jill or Strictly Swing is usually the most appropriate contest.

Why don't we do more novelty contests at our dances?

While they are fun, they are not particularly a draw that will increase attendance. Serious contests typically increase our dance attendance dramatically.

Why do we do a *Luck of the Draw* contest?

A *Luck of the Draw* contest is an inclusive version of the traditional Jack & Jill, where both genders can choose to sign up as leaders or followers. In practice, most dancers will sign up for the traditional gender role, but occasionally someone will sign up for a non-traditional role (most often a woman who wants to lead). The board of directors approved this policy for Club dances so that all dancers would have the opportunity to compete regularly at our dances.

Note: For *Boogie by the Bay*, we offer the traditional Jack & Jill rather than *Luck of the Draw*. The convention committee adopted this policy for two reasons:

- The World Swing Dance Council (WSDC) currently only tracks points for traditional Jack & Jill contests. Since we use WSDC points to determine who is eligible for each J&J division, a woman who wanted to lead (or a man who wanted to follow) would not have any points recorded to dance in higher divisions. Also, if the competitions at Boogie by the Bay were *Luck of the Draw*, the WSDC would not record points for our winners.
- Persons who want to dance non-traditional roles (reverse-role couples or same-gender couples) can choose their own partner and enter our Strictly Swing competitions at Boogie by the Bay.

Why do we do annual *Luck of the Draw* series contests?

About 10 years ago, attendance at our Club dances was down. Kim Liu (president of TNGSDC at the time) and Andy Bouman, Contest Coordinator at the time, talked about ways to generate excitement and increase attendance. They proposed to the board of directors that the Club try an idea suggested by Kim Bergquist (Blume), who had seen "Progressive" contests in Southern California and thought they would be a good idea here too.

We modified the "Progressive" concept by running a series of preliminary rounds in which anyone who placed in a previous round is allowed to compete in subsequent

rounds. Initially, dancers who place 1st, 2nd, and 3rd during the preliminary rounds qualified for the finals. Because the size of our *Luck of the Draw* preliminary rounds has grown -- sometimes with over 30 couples competing to become a finalist -- it was decided to expand it to the dancers who place 1st through 5th qualifying for the finals.

We have run *Luck of the Draw* contests for almost a decade now and experience has shown that they have helped increase our dance attendance. In fact, our *Luck of the Draw* series format has been so popular that other local Clubs started using similar formats at their Club dances.

Why do we allow “open” sign-ups?

Why do we allow open sign-ups for our contests rather than offer separate divisions such as Novice and Advanced? There are several reasons:

- An open contest encourages the advanced competitors to mix with the novice competitors. Advanced dancers are more likely to ask novice dancers to dance during social dancing if they know they might draw them as competitors. It teaches everyone good sporting conduct. It also more accurately reflects the social dance floor, where people of all levels might be dancing together. This mix is closer to the original spirit of the J&J contest, which was invented by Jack Carey to encourage competitors to mix rather than just dance with their regular partner.
- Clubs that offer several J&J divisions typically have weekly dances rather than monthly dances. That way, a different division can compete each week.
- For us, an open contest seems to draw the most participants. While separate divisions make sense at large weekend events, they don't work as well at our Club dances, especially for novice competitors. Whenever the Club has offered a Novice J&J in the past, we've had very few sign-ups.

Why do we let people who have already qualified for the *Luck of the Draw* finals continue to enter the contests every month?

Wouldn't it be better to limit sign-ups to those who haven't qualified for the finals yet? There are several reasons for allowing people to compete as often as they want:

- It encourages those who have already qualified (and their friends) to keep coming to our dances every month. Remember, the original goal of these contests was to increase our dance attendance.
- Each contest is a stand-alone competition as well as part of the series. Competitors draw new partners each time, and don't dance the same every month. We want each contest to be the best it can be. If all the most experienced competitors qualified for the finals early in the series, then limiting sign-ups to those who haven't qualified might mean that the less experienced dancers would not get a chance to dance with more experienced dancers in later contests. This would make them less appealing (to competitors and spectators) and, again, might negatively affect our dance attendance.
- Some people who have qualified for the finals don't sign up again, but they offer to participate if we need extra people to balance the number of leaders and followers. (See below about the need for an equal number of followers and leaders).
- Although some people believe that “the same people always win,” the truth is that most people don't place in the top five (to qualify for the finals) more than 2 times during the series.

Why do we let juniors (under 18) compete?

Juniors are welcome to compete because they are an important part of our dance community. Our mission statement encourages us to live up to our Club name and welcome the “next generation” of dancers.

Why don't we do prelims each month since the qualifying rounds have become so large?

There are several reasons why using a one-heat final format (single heat with all couples dancing at the same time) works best for our *Luck of the Draw* qualifying rounds:

- Primarily to save time. We are on a very tight schedule at Club dances. The contestant meeting, the contest, scoring, and awards all have to happen between 8 pm and 9:30 pm.
- Equally important is minimizing disruption of social dance time. The entire contest doesn't take more than 10-15 minutes away from social dance time. This minimizes complaints from spectators who primarily want to social dance.
- Running the contest in a one-heat finals format gives each couple three or four dances to several styles and speeds of music. It also gives the judges time to observe and compare all the couples.
- The group heat format is less intimidating for novice competitors than spotlights would be.
- It gives all the competitors practice in being visible in a group heat, which is a skill they need in order to make finals at weekend events.

Note: To run a single-heated final format, we must have an equal number of leaders and followers, which the contest team ensures either before or during the contestants' meeting.

Why don't you have alternates for the finals?

- We believe that the most fair system is to allow only the dancers who qualified for the finals throughout the series to compete in the finals round.
- If we had alternates for each preliminary round, there is no truly fair and unbiased way to select which alternate would compete in the finals.

What are the prizes at Club dances?

- We provide one complimentary dance pass (value: \$7-\$12) to the top five leaders and followers each month. This minimizes the Club's costs in holding competitions.
- For the finals, the Club contributes [*Boogie by the Bay*](#) tickets for the winners.

Who selects the competition music each month?

The DJ for each dance selects the competition music for the competition that night after consulting with the competition coordinator.

Who selects the judges?

The chief judge selects the judges for each competition.

What qualifications and requirements do judges need to possess?

All judges for our Club must be dancers with extensive training as judges. They also must have practiced judging a considerable amount.

Also, to ensure fairness, a person may not judge a contest that his or her significant other or immediate family member is competing in.

Moreover, a judge may not compete in any individual contest within a *Luck of the Draw* series, even though they may not be judging that particular night. Again, this requirement is in the interest of leaving no doubt of fairness.

Are the judges paid to judge?

No. We do give the judges complimentary admission to the dance as a "thank you" for their time.

Why don't we just let the audience decide the winners (via applause)?

Because that would turn the judging into a popularity contest. Plus, some of the competitors are hoping to get some serious feedback from judges so they can improve their competing skills.

What would I have to do if I wanted to become a judge?

You would start by taking judging workshops. Then you would practice judging as often as possible by "mock judging" at weekend events and local dances. At Club dances you can arrange to discuss your scores after awards are announced with the chief judge for that competition. Eventually, when you are ready, you would be asked to judge "for real."

Who scores the results of our competitions?

At Club dances, someone on the Contest Team does the scoring. We normally ask at least one of the other judges to assist to minimize the possibility of errors. We use the standard Relative Placement Scoring System.

Why do we have to have a contestant meeting before every competition?

Wouldn't it be easier to just call out the names of everyone who has signed up when it's time for the contest?

Actually, it wouldn't be easier to call out the names when it's time for the dance. And contrary to popular belief, the primary reason for contestant meetings isn't to explain the rules.

The reason for the meetings is to do a roll call to make sure that we know about everyone who is supposed to be in the contest and to verify that we have an even number of leaders and followers. That way, if there are problems, we take care of them before the contest actually starts. In most cases this makes the contest run quickly and smoothly.

Other reasons to have a contestant meeting:

- To give the judges a chance to hear the roll call and to write the names and numbers of the leaders on the judging sheets, so they only have to fill in followers' names after the rotation for partners.
- To pass out contestant numbers and safety pins.
- To explain any unusual procedures.
- To answer any questions from contestants.
- To randomize the order of dance when the number of competitors is large. This eliminates the need to randomize -- such as drawing a card and rotating the followers or leaders -- on the competition floor, thus saving time and minimizing disruption of social dance time.

What do you do to keep things fair?

The Contest Team, the judges, and the Club president do not compete to prevent any appearance of a conflict of interest.

- An individual may not judge a contest in which his or her significant other or family member are entering that contest.
- DJs play a variety of styles and speeds of music.
- The partner rotation method used makes sure that each competitor has an equal chance of drawing any partner.
- The partner rotation method changes throughout the *Luck of the Draw* series.
- We always use a minimum of seven judges.
- Scoring is always done by at least two people.
- Contestants may ask to view the tally sheet of scores after the competition to see how they did.
- Feedback from contestants, judges, spectators, and board members is welcome.