

Proposed Rule Change #3 - Rule IX.A.1.g. (Submitted by Public Relations Director)

Add the text in italics to this existing rule dealing with lifts:

Lifts and Dangerous Moves

Lifts are allowed in the Theatrical, Showdance, Grand Championship and Exhibition/Cabaret dance categories only. A lift is any movement during which one of the dancers has both feet off the floor at the same time with the assistance or support of their partner. Couples who perform lifts in categories where lifts are not allowed may be disqualified after one warning, or may be dropped to last place in the final, at the discretion of the Chairman of Judges.

Dangerous movements will not be permitted in any competition or championship. A Dangerous move is any movement that places another individual at risk. For the purpose of this rule such steps as High Back Kicks are considered to be dangerous movements. Implementation of Disqualification under the "D" Rule –

- a) Adjudicators observing any infringement of the Lifts and Dangerous Moves rule should note the couple's number and mark "D" at the foot of the marking sheet. The reason for the infringement should also be noted (time permitting).
- b) The adjudicator must inform the Chairman of Judges of a "D" marking.
- c) The Chairman of Judges must inform the competitors concerned of the infringements and also all the adjudicators before the next round.
- d) If this or any other infringement is repeated in a subsequent round and is reported by more than one adjudicator, the marks of the competitor in that dance in that round must be deleted by the Chairman of Judges.
- e) Adjudicators observing any infringement in the final round must place those competitors in that dance and mark "D" against the competitor's number. If more than one adjudicator marks "D" against any competitors then those competitors must be placed last in that dance by the Chairman of Judges.
- f) All such disqualifications must be noted on the scrutineers' marking sheet.
- g) If a competitor repeatedly ignores the request of the Chairman of Judges to comply with any aspect of these rules, the Chairman may, at his/her discretion, disqualify the competitor/s from the event in question.

Moved to Accept: 1st - 2nd VP2nd - Rickey Geiger, HLMFor: (20)

Against: (0) None Abstaining: (0) None

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The Lifts

“A lift is any movement during which one of the dancers has both feet off the floor at the same time with the assistance or support of their partner.”

Why do we currently not permit lifts and What is a Lift?

The premise behind not permitting lifts in the Standard/Latin/Smooth/Rhythm styles is presumably that lifts are undesirable due to the increased danger of injury with couples travelling at speed on crowded floors, and questionable relevance to the Style being danced.

- **Question:** Is the proposal as outlined too broad in scope? Would a strict interpretation of this proposal as it currently stands include leaps and scatter chases in Quickstep, transitions and any leap or jump in Jive and American Smooth where the partners are connected in some way? Aren't jumps an accepted component in just about every dance form in the world?

Suggested possible clarification put forward for further discussion:

A two part test to define a permissible jump as opposed to a banned lift

1. If the lady partner can demonstrate the ability to execute (take off and land) the leap/jump/move on her own

And

2. The hang time in the air does not last longer than one beat (take off on beat one, a foot lands by beat two) in the slower dances (Waltz Rumba etc), and 3 beats in the fastest dances (Quickstep), when the move is danced whilst connected to a partner.

Rationale:

The longest hang time in the air possible by a self propelled human being is under 0.95 second, the slowest Ballroom dances (Waltz) bottom out at around 84 bpm or approx 1+ beats per second, the fastest ones (Quickstep) top out at around 208 bpm or 3+ beats per second).

If a move was challenged and the two part test was successfully passed it would indicate it is a permissible maneuver, a self propelled jump, not an assisted lift.

Dangerous Movements rule

As currently stated by the proposal, *A Dangerous move is any movement that places another individual at risk. For the purpose of this rule such steps as High Back Kicks are considered to be dangerous movements*

Possible Questions

From the Choreographers perspective:

- Lack of specificity. No specific dangerous moves are cited guidelines except for High Back Kicks, the assignment of a “D” notice is totally at the discretion of any individual judge.
- Broad definition eliminates jumps, which are an integral part of all dance styles. A lift defined as “any movement during which one of the dancers has both feet off the floor at the same time with the assistance or support of their partner.” Very broad definition which would include any form of connected jumps into a step or pose in all four styles (for example, Quickstep leaps, Jive jumps, transition jumps into between legs splits in Latin and Rhythm, any connected jumps in Smooth).

From the Competitors perspective:

- Fairness. The reason there are a large number of judges at major competitions is so that the competitors can rest somewhat easy in the knowledge that a majority rule will at least partially offset any unfortunate bias that may occur in marking by one or two judges. Under this proposal it only takes two judges to effectively disqualify a couple if, in their opinion, the couple executes a “dangerous move”. How do the competitors feel about that?
- Right of Appeal Is there the opportunity for a competitor to appeal a dangerous move assessment at an event?
- Repeat offenders Do “D” markings accumulate from comp to comp? Are they wiped at the end of the calendar year? or are couples repetitively allowed to inflict one “D” per comp without further repercussions.
- Prize Money. If a couple makes the final and is “D” disqualified would they still receive any prize money?

- Proximity vs Contact. Experienced dancers often dance in very close proximity to other couples but are in control and balanced, and while they may be intimidating in their proximity, they do not touch the other couple. It is a legitimate tactical element of competing used by some dancers. Should that expose them to a possible “D” by a judge alarmed by the proximity? Contact is not required for a judge to issue a “D” notice, just the degree of “at risk”
- This rule would presumably also apply to all Pro-Am couples and Overseas Pro couples competing in open to the world events in the USA?

From the Judges perspective:

- Primary Responsibility. Being required to police the couples conduct on the floor could cause the judges to focus an undue amount of attention on a particular couple looking for possible infringements (especially after an initial “D” notice has been issued) and less time being spent on their primary job of judging the placements of all the couples dancing.
- The Chairman. Would a possible alternative be for the judges to verbally notify the Chairman of Judges if they happen to see questionable conduct on the part of a couple? The Chairman could then both warn errant couples and take the responsibility of monitoring and if necessary disciplining them during subsequent rounds, thus allowing the judges to focus on judging the dancing.

What constitutes a Dangerous Movement?

As currently stated by the proposal, *A Dangerous move is any movement that places another individual at risk. For the purpose of this rule such steps as High Back Kicks are considered to be dangerous movements*

Talking on the phone to Jackie Rogers, who put forward the proposed rule change at the last NDCA meeting, it is obvious that the motivation behind it stems from a genuine concern for the safety of the dancers. With the greater speed and athleticism combined with the increasing complexity of choreography there seems to be a particularly alarming growth in the number of instances of moving feet and heads being in close proximity (some of them actually connecting), with the Smooth division seeming to be receiving particular attention.

Jackie relayed to me that the intent of the proposal was certainly not to stifle the creativity of the different styles, or their evolution, but that it was a response to a feeling that in some instances dancers were placing too high a premium on the execution of their material without consideration as to whether that might result in them making physical contact with those around them.

It was felt that a mechanism was desired to communicate to the couples the importance that, notwithstanding the fact they were in competition with each other, ballroom competitions are a noncontact sport and they needed to watch out for each other's safety.

Jackie also encouraged the idea that discussions take place amongst the dancers and choreographers on the topic and if constructive ideas that would help clarify or refine the rule were developed, that they be brought to the table.

But apart from High Back Kicks, specifically what other movements constitute a Dangerous Movement?

Actually, any movement can be dangerous.... if it connects with another dancer

Specific instances of actual contact resulting in injury at competitions.

- Pivots - International Tango –I recall a Standard girl being knocked momentarily unconscious by an elbow to the back of the head in an International Tango
- Ronde - Latin – A classic, I saw on tape a male Latin dancer (I believe it was Nick Cotton) getting whacked in the groin by a ronde (which made him very unhappy).
- Fleckerl – International Viennese Waltz - an incident was recounted to me where two couples, whilst fleckerling at speed in opposite directions in the middle of the floor got close enough for the girls heads to collide (knocking one of them out momentarily). Thankfully their male partners, although shaken up, were okay. Way to go guys!
- Kick to the hand – Smooth Tango. A female dancer extended her arm sharply outwards in a Tango movement and intercepted the kicking foot of another dancer with a resultant two broken fingers (*Revision: Actually the couple later established it was her own partner's hand reaching out that bent her fingers back and broke them*).
- Slap – Latin Jive - On the other hand (no pun intended) I saw a Latin Rising Star girl dancing Jive at the last Ohio deliberately smack her partner across the face halfway through the dance, seemingly because he missed a connection. A dangerous movement? If he had ducked and she missed, would it still have constituted a dangerous movement?

These are actual contact incidents as opposed to possible incidents and occurred in the execution of (except for the slap) commonplace competition dance movements.

Actually, if a couple has the space, there is no danger to any other couple no matter what movement they are executing.

If any movement can be dangerous when executed too close to another couple, and not dangerous when executed in sufficient space, perhaps we should be guided by the context within which the movement is executed, rather than banning the movement itself.

There are no inherently Dangerous Movements, but there are Dangerous Dancers.

Although competitive ballroom dancing is not designed to be a contact (with other couples) sport, the reality is that collisions occur between couples dancing in competition and there is always the potential for injury.

Main causes for collisions

1. Purely accidental (for example a couples backing up out of a corner, and another backing LOD not seeing each other),
2. Due to lack of experience and technical skills (bad floorcraft, the inability to change direction, not able to anticipate other couples movement, going against LOD)
3. Negligence (not pulling in a leg kick or ronde when another couple is close enough to be hit and consequently making contact)
4. Malicious intent. (deliberately targeting and making contact with another dancer)

In which instances should “D” notice warnings and /or penalties be issued?

1. No Penalty. Accidents happen, and in the case where there is no fault neither couple should suffer more than they already have from the inadvertent contact (it does not seem that the intent of the rule change that this circumstance would warrant a “D” notice).
2. Warning to be more aware. Contact with another couple as a result of lack of competence due to lack of training or experience is unfortunate but it is a fact of life and as irritating as it might be to the more experienced couples it is going to happen. It would be appropriate to notify the couple that they need to be more aware of their surroundings but to “D” notice Rising Star couples who are taking their first tentative steps onto the competition dance floor because of their inexperience seems a little harsh (again it does not seem that the intent of the rule change that this circumstance would invariably be an official “D” notice).
3. Penalty. Negligent contact where a couple decides to execute a move that results in contact with another couple with no consideration of the proximity of the other couple. Perhaps deserving of a first offense warning, a second offense wiping of marks for that dance and third offense suspension from competition for a period of time.
4. Penalty. Malicious contact can be hard to differentiate from negligent action but although the motivation is different, the result is the same, contact with

potential injury. The penalty therefore should be the same as for negligent contact.

Summary for discussion

Statement: Dangerous dancing is in evidence where, due to negligence or malicious intent, physical contact is either made with another couple, or would have been made if the potential victims had not taken inordinate evasive maneuvers in order to avoid contact.

Mitigating circumstances and Other Thoughts.

Size of Floor

- The difficulty in maneuvering is also exacerbated, and more collisions are likely, when the size of the competition floor is smaller or a nontraditional shape (e.g. square). A fact recognized in the observation that organizers in such situations intelligently run split heats.
- Likewise, the dancers have to recognize the limitations of the space they are given to dance in and adjust their choreography to ensure that consideration for their fellow competitors is a priority.

Proximity

- Generally the more experienced couples are sufficiently skilled and balanced not to actually make contact with other couples no matter in how close a proximity they dance to each other. Therefore degree of proximity should not be the sole criteria in assessing whether to categorize a Movement as being Dangerous.
- If a couple executes a maneuver in a location on the floor that is away from the other couples, and therefore there is no danger of contact with any of the other couples, no one is endangered and it cannot logically be classified a Dangerous Movement no matter what the movement.

Right of Way

- If a couple is occupying a space and a moving couple approaches, the standing couple has right of space and the approaching couple should dance around them.

High feet

- If a couple is moving in a pose (e.g. Ladies leg up on man's shoulder, man dragging her backwards) they have the same responsibility as any moving couple not to make contact or invade the space of another couple.
- Any kicking action should be directed to space where there is no apparent chance to make contact with another dancer. The dancers should adopt and rehearse alternative movements to use in the eventuality they find themselves in a competition situation where they do not have the space to execute a choreographed kicking action without contacting with another dancer.

Please contact us at the PDF or your member organization representative to the NDCA with if it has affected you and your thoughts and suggestions on the Rule going forward.

Regards,

Michael Mead
PDF Western Vice President