

THE MARCHING BAND CLASSIFICATION and JUDGING SYSTEMS... *and a few other thoughts on competition*

We will be competing in two separate types of events. "ISSMA" and "BOA". ISSMA events are the events that are either Run BY "ISSMA" (Indiana State School Music Association) OR by separate individual High Schools. (Bluffton, DeKalb, Penn, Plymouth). These types of events all use the same "ISSMA" Judging Criteria. "BOA" (Bands of America) is a National Circuit and uses different judging... it's the same process, just different numbers of judges.

FOR ISSMA (Most of what we do), The Judging system is broken down as follows:

6 judges each award the band a score based out of 200 (or 20) points).

The Music scores are each totaled:

Music Individual -200 (judge on the field) + Music Ensemble - 200 (judge in press box) = Total Music 400 pts.

These judges are evaluating how well the WHOLE Band plays (ensemble) and INDIVIDUALS play (individual).

The General Effect Judges (Music "GE" and Visual "GE") look at how EFFECTIVE the presentation is. Essentially, they're looking at 1) How effective is the written show, and 2) how effectively are the students PERFORMING the show?. In other words - How good is the show, and how well are the kids maximizing it?

The Music and Visual GE judges each are worth 200 pts each (total of 400 points).

The VISUAL scores are AVERAGED. Similar to the music judges, there is one judge on the field who looks at the individual members and how they march, move, or spin, and the ENSEMBLE visual judge - who looks at how EVERYONE - or the whole band works together.

So, the point breakdown is this:

Mus Ind. + Mus Ens = 400
Mus GE + Vis. GE = 400
Avg of Vis. Ind./Vis Ens =200
Total possible = 1000/10 = **100 possible.**

The band in each class with the highest over all score is awarded 1st place, the 2nd highest score 2nd, and so on. Bands are often given "Caption Awards" - for best music, best visual, best Effect. These are scores from the total score in each caption. (Each CLASS (A,B,C,D) is determined by the school's enrollment- similar to sports classifications. A is the largest, B is the 2nd largest, and so on) Last year, ISSMA adopted a new variation on this. "Open" and "Scholastic". "Open" just refers to the more competitive levels of A,B,C,D... the same as it has been for years. "Scholastic" refers to a more developing level of competition. For us, We're in "Open A".

Other caption awards may be given, but are not part of the overall score. These may include, "Best Percussion, Best Drum Major, Best Color Guard, and best PIT CREW!! As you can see - this can be a pretty complicated system..... And it REALLY is a matter of MATH and interpretation of the shows. (*As opposed to some people's incorrect assumption that "everything is based on politics and reputation"*)

Now - As far as competition goes – Everyone wants to do well. Sometimes, things will go surprisingly in our favor... sometimes, they won't. We have to remember to take everything in stride, and not to allow ourselves with getting beat by... or BEATING one particular group.

It's the judge's jobs to use the criteria they have to sort through their interpretation of who should be where. We talked in class when we started school about this. This is a competitive activity – but we have to be very careful not to let that be our only motivator. "IT IS OKAY to want to WIN"... And it IS... I love winning... It's fun! BUT, I have also seen what happens when that "takes over" and winning becomes THE most important thing... Often the process becomes less fun, and it can be extremely frustrating when we have given our best, but still "come up short..."

That being said, We will continue to focus on EXCELLENCE as our main benchmark. We can only control the things *in our control* -meaning, We can control how WE perform. We cannot control what other groups do, and it would be a waste of our energy to be concerned with other groups. Our biggest competitor will ALWAYS be **ourselves**. Period.

There are groups out there that we've had "friendly rivalries" with – Groups that we have placed higher than... and groups that have placed higher than us. That's part of the fun, but again – it all has to be kept *in perspective*. Once the uniforms come off, all the kids – from all the bands – look pretty much the same!! It's very important to remember that while you as parents want to see your kids be successful, the other parents in the stands want the same thing for their kids. Sometimes, when this goes too far, and we forget about keeping the competition thing in perspective, negativity can build in.... Take the "good" with the "bad".. roll with it - Have fun when the numbers go our way, and congratulate the others when it goes their way. Don't get fall into the trap of "Such & Such a school has more money, so they always win..." or "This is all political..." Those types of things do nothing to help us, and ultimately cast a shadow of negativity that just isn't necessary.

One of the least productive things we can do is to "make excuses" for when things don't go the way we want to. We ALWAYS have to remember that marching band is a PART of the high school experience for kids, and even in the heat of the competitive moment, we need to remember that we are all at risk of letting our emotions get the best of us. The kids are always watching our reactions, and they ARE LEARNING from us.

Despite what you might think, believe, or hear, "Politics" really don't exist in marching band judging. Nobody gets "robbed" by not getting the place they think they deserve. Do some things happen sometimes that seem unfair? Yes. But... that's life – and if we're preparing kids to be successful in life, then we need to be teaching them how to deal with the unfairness aspect as well. The judging system is not perfect, and it's implemented by people who aren't perfect.

A note on SCORES:

ISSMA Has a policy that scores for ISSMA Events are to remain Confidential as private, confidential evaluations and are not to be made public. Therefore, I cannot discuss scores (At ISSMA events) with anyone other than students and staff. This is an agreement that we make by participating in ISSMA events.

As parents who sit in the stands, you will see a LOT of different band and a lot of different fans. Some will be VERY good... some will be "okay".. and some, honestly, it will be painful to sit through. I CANNOT Emphasize this enough: **EACH band on the field works hard to do the best they can.** It would be very easy to make **negative** comments about another band that maybe isn't as good as any other band, but please remember that those kids are working just as hard as ours. **NEVER say a negative thing about another band in the stands... concession lines... bathroom – you just never know who is listening!**

In my opinion, this activity has become **too competitive** - and you'll see what I am talking about in the coming weeks when people in the stands start bad-mouthing other bands and making all kinds of negative comments. What gets lost in this is that people start saying negative things about other bands... but those bands are made up of *other peoples' children* - so what they are really saying are bad things about other peoples' kids... and that just shouldn't happen.

Just like we can't make the judges give us the number we want, we can't influence other people from saying negative things. What we CAN Do is be an example of **good sportsmanship.**

When you're in the stands - here are some guidelines.

1. **Stand & applaud** for EVERY Band. It takes courage just being on the field (you'll discover a bit of this next weekend) - THAT ALONE deserves a standing ovation.
2. Be **aware** of what you're saying. You never know who is sitting around you that may just be "looking for" someone another school to say something un-classy. When you talk about another group, **keep your comments POSITIVE!** (and if you don't have anything nice to say.. then - maybe - don't say anything!)
3. Be **attentive** and **quiet** for each performance.. but always cheer when you can! Fight the urge to comment on someone else's (even ours) show in the middle of the performance. This is performance and concert etiquette, and is actually part of the Indiana Standards for Music Education.
4. Always try to **compliment** someone else's band if the opportunity arises. You know how much you appreciate hearing recognition for your kids, so always try to return the favor.

These are some things that have really made Carroll Parents a class Act year in and year out. Don't just limit it to the stands... practice this in the concession line.. in the parking lot and yes - even in the bathroom at shows!! :)

Lastly - There's a website out there called "Indianamarching.com". The website exists for entertainment, and each year people from every band get "sucked in" to a near obsession with it. I'll admit it – I get on there quite a bit myself... I don't mind if they are on there reading, but please do not post or respond to anything.

Some of the staff members also do a "Poll"... similar to an AP sports poll. IT IS STRICTLY FOR ENTERTAINMENT. Every year, I hear people getting pretty amped up about who is where in the "IM.COM POLL"... It's kind of fun, but please understand – it is an entertainment poll run by people who do are fans of marching band. That's all it is... ☺

There are also message boards on there where people can get into discussions... My belief is that we should say what we have to say with our performance on the field; not an online message board.

If you're a new person here - WELCOME!!! If you're a returning person, You guys know the drill... We're about to begin and things are ready to roll!!!!

See you soon!

Mr. Hassell