

# Background

- Reviewed band piping scoresheets from 2006 Grade 3 & 4 contests
  - 6 different venues: Woodland, Utah, San Diego, Monterey, Pleasanton, Longs Peak
  - 19 separate contests
  - 13 different judges
  - 10 Grade 3 bands
  - 29 Grade 4 bands
- Looked for consistent themes, common comments, items of interest
- Not a scientific study!!!!

# Some observations

- Intro/attack – always rates a comment!
  - Something that all bands can perfect – don't give this away
- Comments on specific players/side of band
  - i.e., cutting in & out or obvious mistakes
  - Implications for circle formation
- Focus on one issue when it becomes dominant
  - Judge will naturally zero in on significant issues
  - May end up discounting good things that are happening elsewhere
- Finish – almost always rates a comment!
  - See comment under “Intro”!

# Comments on the Intro

- Confident E
- Early E
- Rising E
- Es together
- Es not together but in tune
- Slightly graduated Es
- Es surging
- Es not quite compact
- Es not together nor in tune
- Tone dipped
- Precise entry
- Solid intro
- Good attack
- More commitment needed
- Rather a soft approach
- A competent start
- Quite a timid approach
- A lackluster start
- Clean attack
- Piper front rank slightly late
- Piper rear rank slightly behind

# Grade 4

- Fewer comments on musicality
- Many specific comments on tone
  - Probably easiest to pick out and describe
- Comments on technique – varies
  - If many issues are going on, can at times be overwhelming to capture them

# Grade 4

- Sagging blowing – D's, low A's
- Drone sound often thin, not balanced with chanters
- D, F, top hand, low G problems
- Drones losing steadiness during set
- Some pipers not with the group – playing different styles of embellishments
- Unison playing inconsistent
- Intro: “attack” OK but 1<sup>st</sup> part run-up not good (unison, tempo)

# Grade 3

- Comments on tone & technique about equal; more specific technique comments
- More comments on musicality (vs. Gr. 4)
  - Especially Strathspeys!

# Grade 3

- Harmonies
  - Construction
  - Fitting in with main melody
  - Too much/too little
- Medley Slow Air – blowing & unison playing
  - Pipers may be taking a break
- Transitions – blowing before, during, after
- Blowing on D and low A (sagging), especially long notes
- Expression and rhythm – strathspeys especially
- Chanters: D, F, sometimes B
- Sustaining composure – ragged playing, rushing, blowing at end of set

# What was that?

Some out of the ordinary remarks...

- “Quite a lot of tugging among pipers”
- “I’m not a total believer in the harmonies”
- “Steady – maybe just a shade too steady”
- “That was a Naill of a job, pipers!”
- “Pipers losing feel of chanter, causing many Strange Noises”
- “Good mood shift in 4<sup>th</sup> part – tough to accomplish”

# Take-aways: what you can do now

- Introduction and finish – make these perfect each time
- Arrange your pipers to produce the most consistent sound
  - Volume
  - Stability
  - Harmonies
- Develop full drone sound, balance with chanters
- Use harmonies moderately
- Work hardest on your weak areas
- ...in addition to the ongoing work on blowing tone, improving technique and musicality!