



Ontario Provincial Report

CBTF Annual General Meeting – July, 2008

The 2007-08 season has certainly had its ups and downs. Our province is, I am sure, not unique with this assessment.

Membership has been our number one concern in the past year. OBTA membership numbers have dwindled from earlier years. The good news is that twirling remains a popular activity in the province; the bad news is that this popularity is spread out over two major twirling organizations. We are seeing more athletes, parents and clubs willing to give the other organization in our province a 'try' and we are seeing more clubs shift their primary support to that other organization.

This is not a brand new phenomenon – it is a trend that has been developing over several years. Unfortunately, indications are that in the coming year we are likely to see this trend continue and potentially accelerate. More clubs, some that have been extremely strong OBTA/CBTF supporters in the past, are now indicating their intent to give the other organization a 'try' in the coming year.

We have tried some different programs and practices, in an attempt to restore some 'fun'. A few examples:

- We experimented with special, 'fun', awards at our Easter Twirl competition. These awards were designed to give athletes the opportunity to be rewarded for something other than a 'first place' – Flexibility, Nicest Kick, High Enthusiasm, Great Costume, and so on. We found that judges and athletes alike enjoyed this step outside the norm.
- One of our clubs ran a 'feedback only' Individual Event competition this year. After each set, the coach and athlete were invited to the judge's table to receive verbal feedback on the performance. Score *ranges* were given, but not actual scores. All participants – coaches, judges, athletes – responded very positively to this format.

However, many of the more fundamental concerns that have affected membership in our province are beyond the scope of the OBTA to address. On these, the scorecard is decidedly mixed:

- The Judges' Professional Development Proposal. We brought a number of suggestions to the 2007 Fall Board Meeting (FBM), but these were not heard for lack of time. They were passed on to the Technical Committee for consideration at their 2008 Winter Technical Meeting (WTM), but no action has been taken that we are aware of.
- The Group Event Proposal. This was another proposal that was not heard at the 2007 FBM for lack of time, and it was also passed to the 2008 WTM. We are happy to report that the OBTA was asked to conduct a pilot program on Pom Pom Team. We moved on this pilot very quickly – 5 demonstration routines were created and were showcased at competitions throughout the year. A report was sent to the Technical Committee for their consideration, and we are hopeful that some positive action will be taken by the Technical Committee and Board of Directors in time for the 2008-09 season.
- The proposals for Individual Event age division re-alignment caused a firestorm in our province. A firestorm that may have been avoided had the proposals been accompanied by an information program that explained the reasons for the changes and the benefits to our stakeholders (reference material, seminar-style updates, informal communication such as email, etc). Some of our own technical people did try to continue the dialog on these changes by preparing a follow-up proposal distributed on April 13, 2008. Unfortunately, that attempt to continue the dialog appears to have stalled as there was no response to that follow-up proposal. We appreciate and understand that change is necessary in order for the organization to remain current, fresh, and consistent with current thought in child development. However, changes to events, age divisions, or programs that have been with the organization since its inception (and have roots that stretch far earlier), can only be successfully undertaken with the endorsement of our key stakeholders – in this case, primarily our coaches and parents.

At the core and root of our concerns, however, is a lack of respect. As the competition year began – with an Ontario member being the recipient of disrespectful remarks from a Board member – so has this competition year ended – with an Ontario member leaving Moncton having been treated in a rude and insensitive manner from a Board member. Given the membership concerns in our province, we simply cannot afford to lose any coach, parent, athlete or volunteer.

We are excited about the 2009 competition season and look forward to a cooperative and supportive working environment.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Johnson
OBTA President