

Words and Music

Preparing for Competition: Seven Points to Ponder

By Ann Gray, anngray@telus.net

Ann Gray, piper, teacher, competitor and composer, was born in Nova Scotia and became a professional piper at the age of 18, playing with the Grade 1 Scotia Legion Pipe Band of Halifax. Ann, who resides in Calgary, Alberta, is a piper with the Grade 1 L.A. Scots Pipe Band and is also a snare drummer with the Cochran Pipe Band.



As the 2014 competition season is upon us, I'd like to present seven suggestions for helping to make your solo competitive season a success, whether that means earning prizes in competitions, or simply finishing each competition event feeling as though you were much more prepared and played better than you had in the past.

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1. Plan Ahead

As you start to plan for a new competition season, the first thing to do is make sure

your music is chosen well in advance, and that you have it memorized at least a month ahead of when you actually have to perform it. It is one thing to have the tune in memorized in your head, but it's a different game altogether when it comes to muscle memory, and of course it's the muscle memory that will be what carries you through the day of the competition. Your fingers must know what to do -- especially for the light music events, when you won't have time to rely on thinking through your tune as you're playing it.

Part of planning ahead is choosing your tunes wisely. Regardless of whether you're new to the competition scene or a seasoned pro, you'll want to make sure the music you're selecting is within your grasp. Challenging yourself is great -- but when it comes to being successful in solo competition, you don't want to submit music that is above your playing ability.

Anyone who's listening to you play -- your band mates, your parents, your friends, and of course the judge -- will want to hear you play well, and playing a piece of music that's too complicated for your level is almost always a recipe for an unsuccessful competition day, whereas a simple piece of music played well can be the opposite. If you're unsure of whether your music selection is appropriate, don't hesitate to ask your teacher, or someone who has more competitive experience than you do, or do some online research on whether your selection is grade-level appropriate.

2. Have someone listen to your tunes, or record them and listen yourself

We've all been through that confident phase where the music is memorized, the

fingers are working, the pipe's going well -- when we're in our comfort zone -- perhaps in the basement of your home, in the privacy of your garage, or in the empty storage room at your workplace where you practice after-hours. However, it's almost a guarantee that you will not be in your comfort zone when you're competing.

Much has been written on the topic of performance anxiety, and a lot of it has to do with being able to adjust your mindset when you are performing or competing. But when push comes to shove, all of the articles in the world won't be of any use if you simply can't tune out the distractions and the nerves while you're competing.

Why not consider the opposite approach? Instead of trying to figure out how to be less nervous/more controlled when you're competing, why not practice being nervous? Try to create uncomfortable conditions while you're practicing. Instead of playing in the comfort of your basement, try playing in your living room, in front of your family and/or friends. They may not be piping judges, but it always makes the nerves get just a bit more worked up when you have to "perform" in front of people, even people around whom you're comfortable.

Alternatively, record your own performances, and be your own critic. There's something about the little red light going on and the word "recording" flashing on your device that adds that bit of extra adrenalin. If you're able to get through your music the way you want to under conditions that aren't completely comfortable, that's great! If you try

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President

Jeff Mann, President

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The Executive Committee and Music Board have been hard at work these past couple of months.

We are exploring the ability to integrate games' registration into our central tracking and management system (CTAMS). This would give us the ability to do a one-stop shop for both the Annual WUSPBA Registration as well as registering our sanctioned solo and band events. Rather than paying your registration prior to a competition, payment could be done at the beginning of the year. We will keep you updated as our status changes.

Reports from adjudicators regarding our soloists and bands this year is very encouraging. Most of our outside judges feel that our members are doing extremely well in the competition arena. They feel that we are really helping in creating a level playing field. One of our great Canadian judges recently told me that he is seeing

more consistency in playing both bands and solos. So I do believe the key word here is consistency.

I was impressed at the competition in Costa Mesa there and feel proud of all of you who are out there competing and performing. It is great to see some of the older folk who have decided to come back to playing after a few years' hiatus.

We are mid-season now. Let's keep finding the passion in the art and music that you play. Here's to wishing you the very best for the rest of this season.

Vice-President

Stu Baker, Vice-President

Stuart.Baker@tusd1.org



Plans are moving forward for the AGM in Salt Lake City on November 21 to 22. The move to Salt Lake has made our goal of a much less expensive AGM a reality. The commitment of the Executive Committee is to direct as much of that savings as possible into education and other initiatives that directly benefit the membership.

Use of Recorded Music

I want to address one of the amendments from the last AGM: recorded music for solo drummers. The main purpose of the amendment was to increase the number of solo competitors, and so far this year that is exactly what it has done. At every competition I have attended, there have been drummers with recorded music (including myself). If you plan to use recorded music at a competition, I have a couple of suggestions.

The Speaker

First, remember you are responsible for the recording and speaker, so be sure both are of as high a quality as possible. A portable battery-powered speaker is really the only way to go but it must be able to get the necessary volume without distorting your recording. Your recording should be as high a quality as you can make it. Remember, you can have a metronome click up to the beginning of the roll off but not after that.

Placement

Second, practice with your recording. It is certainly self-evident that you would practice your solo, but there is more. You need to practice setting up your speaker and music so you can do it quickly and correctly. Experiment with the volume and direction of the speaker so you can easily hear the recording and your judge can hear both the recording and you without being over powered by either. Keep in mind that on competition day there will be a lot of noise around your circle. There is a different enough quality of sound between live and

SAVE THE DATE!!

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WUSPBA Annual General Meeting

November 21-22, 2014

Salt Lake City, Utah
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and
www.WUSPBA.org for
details!

recorded pipes that the recording can be difficult to hear even though you have cranked up the volume so be sure you test your speaker under a variety of situations

Practice!

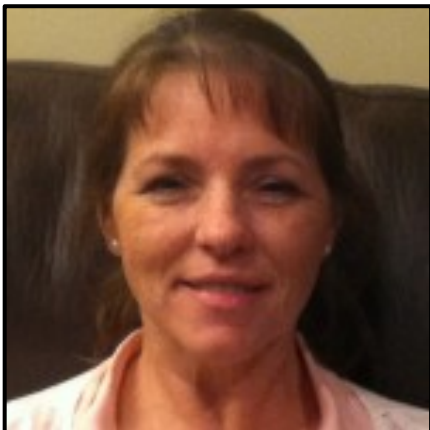
Finally, remember you are making music. With recorded music, it can be easy to drift. If you have spent any time practicing with a metronome you have experienced

this. However, you also know, the more you practice with the metronome the less you drift. So, practice with that recording over and over until you are completely comfortable.

Hopefully, the ability to use recorded music will continue to influence more and more drummers to try competition. These tips should help soloists use recordings confidently and competently. Good luck!

Treasurer

Holley Morrill, Treasurer
hrmorrill@live.com



My name is Holley Morrill, and I became the treasurer for WUSPBA in April of this year. Many of you may know my husband, Andrew, who is a past president of WUSPBA. I have five children and all of them have been involved in the Scottish Games and culture. I am learning a lot and I have really enjoyed working with the members of the Executive Committee. I have been working on getting the financial books in order and keeping within the budget. I think we are getting back on track.

We are exploring different options for paying registration fees that would still be convenient but avoid the fees that occur with PayPal. There is still the option of printing off the registration form, filling it out and mailing it in with your check. Remember to include the \$10 late fee when sent after January 15th. If there are any financial concerns feel free to contact me.

Executive Secretary

Erin Gunn, Executive Secretary
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Although the competition season is in full swing, the Executive Committee has begun planning the yearly annual general meeting (AGM). At the AGM, proposals to change, add, and delete Contest Rules and Bylaws are presented and voted on by the members present.

Before I was on the Executive Committee I would prepare to attend the AGM by reading over all the proposals posted on the WUSPBA website. I would think about how the proposed Contest Rule or Bylaw would affect me, my band, my games, and my

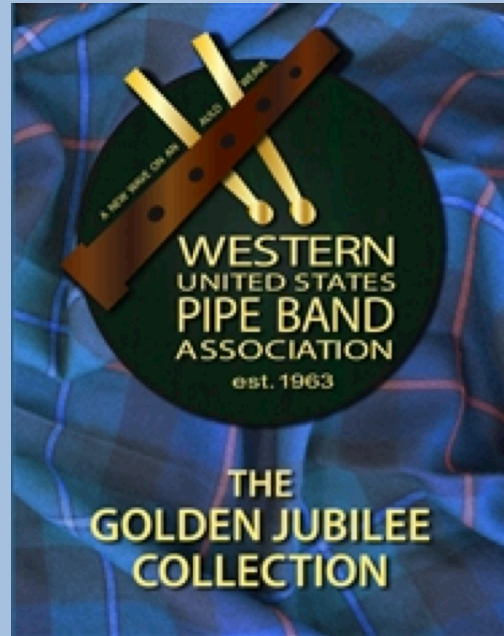
branch. I even jotted down questions that I had for the author. However, invariably I would go to the AGM and the wording that was being presented for vote was different from the proposal that was published on the website. And in some cases the proposal itself had been withdrawn. I found this confusing and frustrating. What was the point of publishing the proposal in advance just to show up at the AGM and find that it had been changed, and why was it changed before the general meeting?

Review by the Executive Committee

Now that I have served on the Executive Committee, I know what goes on behind the scenes. The day prior to the AGM, the Executive Committee meets and reviews the proposals. They are discussed and debated, and the Executive Committee votes on a position to recommend to the membership. Despite the Executive Committee's best efforts, human error still sneaks in and mistakes are made, especially with proposals that have been hastily drafted and submitted to make the deadline. In this last year alone I saw proposals that listed the incorrect article and section number, proposals that if changed would affect another section that was not part of the proposal, and proposals that weren't written to completely reflect the intent of the author.

Proposed Changes Due in October

So, in an effort to more accurately publish what will be voted on at the AGM, I would invite you to begin submitting any Contest Rules and Bylaw proposals for preview now. By allowing the Executive Committee to preview your submission, we can verify that the article and section numbers quoted are



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accurate. We can help ensure that the proposed change won't affect another section (and if it does, we can ensure that the proposal completely encompasses the necessary changes to all sections). And most importantly, we want to verify that your intent is represented in a clearly and concisely written proposal.

When you submit a Contest Rule or Bylaw proposal, be sure to include the current wording and the proposed wording, as well as the rationale for the change, addition, or deletion. If another pipe band association has a similar Contest Rule or Bylaw, please note that in your rationale.

The final drafts of all Contest Rule and Bylaw proposals will be due in October. Please submit any proposal for preview to egunn.ec@gmail.com

As the competition season continues I wish you the best of luck!

Solo Registrar

Lezlie Mann, Solo Registrar
mannelzlie@gmail.com



My name is Lezlie Mann, and I am the WUSPBA's new Solo Registrar.

I want to thank you all for your patience, especially if you have had to wait to get your membership card and kilt number.

This has been a big learning experience and a little more time-consuming than I thought, but I am very happy to be able to be a part of this organization and to learn more.

If you have paid your membership dues and have not received anything, please contact me. If you can submit a receipt or at least date of payment, then I can check it out and get your registration information to you.

Just a reminder that every solo competitor does need to register!

Chief Stewards

Larry and Cathy Erdmann, Chief Stewards
erdmann.cathy@gmail.com



Your chief stewards are busy putting together some highly informative and entertaining training videos for local WUSPBA representatives who are willing to be volunteer stewards and help run competitions at WUSPBA-sponsored festivals.

If you are someone or know someone who would be interested in:

- Free admission to your/their local Highland games
- Free parking
- Whatever other perks you/they can score off the local games organizers (a seat in the shade, a free lunch, etc.)
- A great feeling of satisfaction for helping out, and a job well done!

We need you!

WUSPBA representatives can be anyone who:

- Is not currently competing
- Understands competition in the piping and drumming world
- Can become familiar with the WUSPBA's bylaws and competition rules
- Will be prepared to answer questions and calm unruly hearts.

Please contact the president of your local branch. Thanks!

Celebrating 50 Years of WUSPBA!

As you are aware, 2013 was WUSPBA's 50th Anniversary year and to commemorate this we published a collection of pipe tunes composed by pipers within the Association or with a strong connection to the WUSPBA. This was a labor of love for the organization and everything from the art work to type setting was done by Association members. The final collection was very well received and is now being distributed worldwide. It is available to order online from the book patch.

<http://www.thebookpatch.com/SiteSearch>

Simply search for WUSPBA.

All proceeds after production expenses will go towards promoting the art of piping and drumming among young people within the WSUPBA.

We have produced something we can all be proud of and which will be a lasting legacy for the next 50 years.

Music Board

Andy Trimble, Chair

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As many of you are aware, the Music Board has been charged with assigning grades to both soloists and bands. While we have been piloting aspects of the program for the 2013 season, the official system will be up and running for the 2014 season. As such, all re-gradings for 2014 will need to be approved by the Association.

Two Methods for Re-Grading Bands and Solo Players

Now that the competition season is upon us, the Music Board will be paying close attention to both soloists and bands to assist in decisions at the end of the season.

The process has two methods of affecting a grade change:

1. Soloists and bands may petition the Association to be considered for a new grade, and/or,

2. The Music Board will review the results and CPL data over the year and make recommendations to the Executive Committee.

Look for more information soon regarding the forms and procedures!

No doubt, some of you will have questions regarding how the process works. I urge you to contact the Music Board or the Executive Committee with any questions. As always, we strive to operate with clarity and transparency.

Good luck this year!

Historian

Richard Strayer
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By way of introduction, I'm the sort of person who is always asking questions such as, "Where are the Green Hills of Tyrol, exactly?" and "Who's this Jimmy Findlater guy anyway?" So when I was approached about leading the association's efforts to

catalog the WSUPBA's history, it seemed like a natural fit.

Last year our association celebrated its 50th anniversary, a significant milestone by any measure. But the roots of the association go back farther still, and over the course of my tenure as Association Historian, I'm looking forward to delving into not only what has occurred during the past half-century, but also to understand our origins.

We're seeking your help!

To do this I'll need your assistance, for the history of the association lives in its members. I challenge each of you to think about how you can contribute toward helping us put together a coherent picture of our journey to this point – through recollections, stories, photos and other memorabilia – and share that as you're able. Over the next several months I'll be putting together a plan to gather these memories and a team to collect them, but I invite you to contact me at any time if you have something to share or know anyone with whom we should speak.

As part of my charter, I'll also be thinking of ways that we can organize and present what we'll be gathering, so it can be shared back with all of the members of the association, and I welcome any thoughts or contributions in that area as well. I feel it's vitally important for our history to be accessible to everyone, so that it will live not only as memories in the past but can also be shared with new members and be carried into the future.

I look forward to sharing results as we make progress toward these goals, and hope that you'll become as enthusiastic to learn more

about our association and its storied past as I am!

Great Basin Branch

Michael Gibbs, President
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We have had several Great Basin Branch bands and soloists travel to other branches to compete in their games. We are happy to announce that our members have done quite well. We are proud of their hard work and dedication to improving themselves.

July Competitions in Utah

The Great Basin Branch has three opportunities for our bands and soloists to compete locally.

On June 13th and 14th, we saw the first of our local games with the Utah Scottish Festival. Eight bands competed, as did many soloists.

July 11th and 12th will be our second local games, in Payson, Utah. The Payson Scottish Festival secured Adrian Melvin and Brian Donaldson for piping and ensemble with Andrew Hoinacki judging drumming.

Scots on the Rocks

Our third and final games of the year are being hosted by the Great Basin Branch. We are thrilled at the interest shown by many bands and soloists in our newest festival, The Moab Celtic Festival, "Scots on the Rocks," will be held November 7-9 at the Old Spanish Trails Arena in Moab, Utah.

This will be a fully sanctioned event with WUSPBA, including Grades 5, 4 and 3 band competitions and full solo piping and drumming competitions. We have secured two judges at this point, with more to follow: Jack Lee will be a piping/ensemble judge, and John Fisher is currently lined up as our drumming judge. We are not sure at this point if we will be holding a drum major competition, but we hope to do so.

This is one of the last band competitions of the year for all of WUSPBA, and we hope bands will take the opportunity to gain those last aggregate points to secure their positions. For further info and updates, please visit www.moabcelticfestival.org or www.facebook.com/ScotsOnTheRocksMoab

Intermountain Branch

Jamie Cuthill, Vice Chair
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The IMB is bustling after a period of reflective inactivity.

With our contest season started, we enjoyed the camaraderie at Pikes Peak (June 21/22) and CUIS (July 12/13), and look forward to Highlands Ranch (August 9/10), and Estes Park (September 6/7).



We've also gotten the annual Rio Grande games behind us (May 17/18). Though there was a healthy solo field, there was a severe lack of band participation at this contest. We hope to see this remedied in the future.

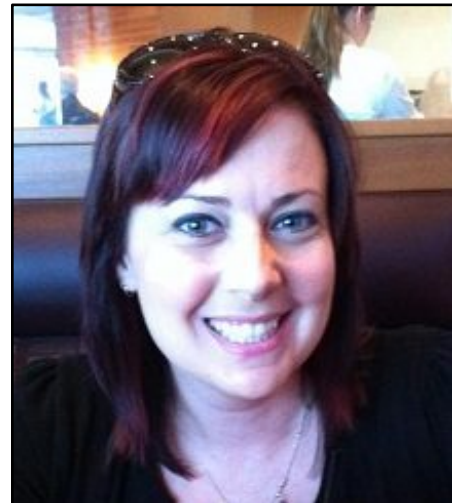
In April we held the annual IMB Smackdown. This is an informal "contest" that allows competitors to get their feet wet in a relatively stress-free environment. It was a great success with several bands and many soloists across the grades involved. Many hours of impromptu piping and drumming followed the competition. It was great to see this enthusiastic, lighthearted side of piping and drumming in our community. Not a bad way to spend a Sunday afternoon!

On the education side, we are preparing for a workshop in Denver the weekend of October 18th. Instructors will include Jack Lee, Glen Kvidahl, and Andrew Elliot. We hope to give these talented instructors a full, and eager, house.

The IMB is always looking for ways to improve the education for, and involvement from its members. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any ideas you may have.

Northern Branch

Amber Bartholemeusz, President
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As we're now knee deep in the "high season" of WUSPBA and the local pipe band season, it's been nice to get out and see the friendly faces and bands that you normally don't bump in to from September to February each year. Ardenwood was a great solo event in April, where we saw competitors come out of hibernation with many old and new faces attending the event to compete in the solo heats.

Solo Drumming at Ardenwood

Part of the Ardenwood Solo Contest was the solo drumming competition. Much to our pleasure, this was well attended and indicates a change we're seeing with attendance of drumming solos in our branch and around the Association. As a drummer myself, I'm always happy to see

drumming solo events running at the various gatherings, and also seeing so many new drummers getting out there and competing for the first time. This was the first year after a several-year hiatus that Ardenwood held solo drumming competitions; because it was well attended, we hope to continue offering this drumming event in 2015.

Solo Drummers Appreciate Pipers!

Unlike our piper counterparts, solo drumming comes with its own bucket of challenges, and competitors, judges and officials are always very appreciative of the pipers who support solo drummers in their events!! It's always nerve-wracking to have to ask around to find a piper willing to accompany you. Drummers hope that the piper will play the tunes he or she wants to perform, and drummers keep their fingers crossed that the piper sets the alarm for the right time and will appear at the solo area at the crack of dawn on competition day.

It might not be said enough, but drummers really do appreciate the pipers that are willing to go that extra mile to play for drum solos. This is such a stressful exercise that I personally married a piper to ensure I'm covered on competition day!

Recorded Music for Drummers at Costa Mesa

In Costa Mesa I saw a few solo drumming competitors take advantage of the WUSPBA rule that allows for competitors to play to an accompanying pipe recordings. While I was hesitant about this rule when it was first announced, the ability to use a recording for drum solos worked really well. While the competitors I saw had a very

sophisticated speaker system, it was good to see that some of the new policies are helping soloists get out there on the day and play.

The "Mt. Tam" event in late June followed a new "mini-band critique" structure where musically there are "no holds barred" – so it was interesting to see what performers brought to the table. The possibilities were limitless!

Pipe Band Gophers and Scary Clown Bathrooms

The next sanctioned pipe band event in the Northern Branch will be the Monterey Scottish Games, which will be back at the Monterey County Fairgrounds this year in August, a little later on the calendar than in previous years. This was a really enjoyable event in 2013 and I'm looking forward to this year's games.

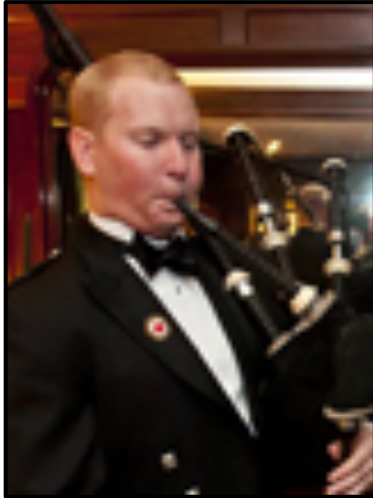
The set-up and running of these games is always top notch – everything from the competitions themselves right down to the "scary clown bathrooms" and the gophers who like to pop their heads up in the pipe band competition circle as the bands are walking in. You don't believe me, do you? Come to the Monterey Games and see. I am not kidding! We go that extra mile in the Northern Branch. Where else do you get pipe band gophers?

I hope everyone is enjoying the pipe band season so far, and we look forward to seeing you at one of the Northern Branch events!

Southern Branch

Scott Larsen, President

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Hello everyone! There's not a whole lot to update on, so I'm going to take this time to talk about the importance of actively participating in your branch and in the Western U.S. Pipe Band as a whole.

I've only been involved with the Executive Committee for a little while now, but in that short time, I've learned how dedicated your leaders are. There is a ton of work that goes into running this association. But it's not the way I pictured it before I got involved.

The WUSPBA Building!

As a line piper in a small band, I had this idea in my head of WUSPBA being this huge entity, with people dedicated to specific jobs. I even had a WUSPBA building in my imagination! In reality, it's people with regular lives, jobs, and families volunteering their time to help all of us do this thing we all enjoy doing a couple of weekends a

year. And no, there's not a WUSPBA office building, at least not one that I've seen yet.

Active Volunteers = Stronger Association

The more active our members are, the more that the WUSPBA can do to help us. If we're not active, and we don't know what is going on, then we can't relay to our leaders what it is that we actually need. So I would challenge the line piper or drummer to find a way to get involved. I'd challenge pipe majors and drum sergeants to get their players involved in some way. Whether it's going to the AGM just to hear what the issues are, or volunteering to help out on a committee, or helping out with a games, it can only make our association better.

I assure you, there is plenty of work to be done. And if we get to a point where there is not enough work for the help that we have, well, what a great problem to have!

Upcoming Newsletter Deadlines

October 2014 Issue: September 10

January 2015 Issue: December 10

Preparing for Competition...

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numerous times to "perform" your pieces and you're not successful at getting through them, you might want to re-think some of your music choices.

Try to simulate competition conditions as often as you can. It's difficult to finish a day of work and immediately summon the energy to have a 40-minute play on your pipes. But on competition day, you're probably going to be tired, either from a not having slept well the night before, from having arisen much earlier than usual in order to drive to the competition venue, or even just from the extra energy that nerves tend to consume. Try adjusting your practice schedule so that you practice at a time when you're not at your physical peak, so that you force yourself to play under conditions that aren't ideal.

I remember hearing a story about the practice schedule of the fellow who was entered in the gold medal competitions at Inverness one particular year. When the draw came out a month or so in advance of the competition, he was dismayed to discover he would be first on. However, as the story goes, he rose early every morning from the time the order of play was released until the day of the competition, got dressed in his full regalia, played his pipes for about 20 minutes, and then "performed" a different one of his six submitted piobaireachds at exactly 9:00 a.m. And sure enough, on the day of the competition, in spite of having what many consider to be the worst possible draw in the order of play, he won the gold medal. I'm not sure if the story's completely true, but it does make sense to try to simulate competition conditions before the actual day of the event.

3. Know Your Instrument

This seems like it would be a no-brainer, but many of us tend to trust that as long as everything's fine with our pipes in the

comfort of our own home, there's no need to worry. But if you're playing a chanter reed that's getting old and is taking longer and longer to settle every time you play it, or alternatively doesn't hold up to 30 or 40 minutes of solid playing, is it going to last through a day of solo competitions? This is something you should keep in mind at least two months before the competition season starts.

How about your pipe bag? If you're playing a moisture control system, make sure you dry whatever needs to be dried at least two days in advance; pipes do take just a little bit of time to settle back down after the drying agent has been changed. Are you playing synthetic drone reeds? Is there a chance they're going to get wet in the middle of your piece and suddenly change pitch? Are your drone slides properly hemped, so that you can tune your drones with one hand without the drone turning in the stock at the same time, but also without there being the chance that the drone will slip down the tuning slide?

Make sure well in advance that all of these mechanical and maintenance details are taken care of so that you're not frantically re-hemping your chanter because it's too loose 20 minutes before you're supposed to compete.

4. Where Are You Going to be Playing? Are There Weather Factors that You Need to Accommodate?

Think ahead to the venue where you'll be playing. Many pipers only play local games, and therefore are familiar with the general climate of the area. Don't be caught unprepared for the competition that's away from your local jurisdiction. If you're

travelling somewhere cool and/or near water, make sure you prepare yourself for the excess moisture issues. If you're travelling to a higher altitude, know that the change in altitude will sharpen your top hand, and that your drone reeds may have to be opened up a bit, as they may tend to stop at higher altitude.

Regarding temperature, remember that even a place that's cool but dry will have its effect on your pipes. Cool will always translate to moisture, so be prepared with your drone brushes and an extra canister of drying agent. Alternatively, if you're going to a hot climate, be aware that your pipes will dry out very quickly; your tuning slides may suddenly become too loose, the pitch of all your reeds will change, your chanter will become sharper, and the tuning of your drones will need to be adjusted accordingly.

5. Prepare Yourself Physically

I certainly don't consider myself an athlete, but I do know that bagpipes are a very physically demanding instrument, and I also know that being nervous takes a lot of energy. If you know you're going to be walking and/or standing all day, playing pipes, and being even somewhat nervous, prepare yourself for this. Make sure you get a good night's sleep ahead of time, plan ahead for your meals on competition day, and keep hydrated. Think of a piping competition as you would any athletic event: if you've not been training, you're not going to hold up.

If you haven't been playing your pipes for at least 30 to 40 solid minutes a day, at least four or five days a week in the full month leading up to the competition, you're not going to play to your potential on the day,

especially if you're competing in two, three, or even four events -- one of those potentially being piobaireachd -- and perhaps with a band as well. It's tough stuff! Accept that it's very physical, and that you have to train for it, and that if you don't, you'll be sorely disappointed in your performance on the day.

6. Find Out What Time You Play and Plan Accordingly

Most competitions in North America are very well run. Even if the only time you are provided is the start time of the event, you ought to be able to figure out your playing times, as competitor lists for each event are almost always posted, and if they're not posted, the steward for the event will have the list. Check with the steward frequently to see if the event is running ahead or behind. If you're properly prepared, 20 minutes should be plenty of time to get yourself and your instrument in optimum playing condition prior to your first event. Be careful not to over-play -- it will be detrimental to you and to your instrument.

7. Present Yourself Politely and With Dignity from Start To Finish

Remember, at the end of the day, almost all of us who play this game are doing it for fun, and a little respect goes a long way to ensure that everyone is able to enjoy a competitive event. Dress properly for your competition; make sure you're aware of the dress requirements in the jurisdiction where you'll be playing (for example, some jurisdictions require all competitors to wear a hat, while others don't). Have the name(s) of your tune(s) written down on a sheet of paper in your sporran to avoid drawing a blank when you're asked by the

judge what tune(s) you'll be playing (especially if you're in an event which requires the submission of multiple tunes). And if you're playing in a piobaireachd event, make sure you have a copy of your music with you.

Be polite with the judge, and s/he will treat your performance with respect. It is indeed a game, and there are rules. While it may seem daring and rebellious to show up wearing runners with your kilt, or with your shirt not pressed, or with your shoes looking as though they could use a good polishing, these things don't go very far toward endearing you to the judges, or with your peers who have taken the time to treat the game with respect.

Finally, remember that what we do is open to subjective judging. If you're not prepared to accept the judge's decision, then don't enter the competition. You have to have faith at all times that the judge knows what he or she is doing: that's why he or she was given the job for the day. It's not a lucrative job for judges -- the majority of people who judge at competitions are doing so because they're giving back to the piping and drumming community. The judge is never wrong. You asked for his or her opinion by taking the step of entering the competition.

If you walk away feeling that you were wronged, just remember that the judge who was wrong with the result when you didn't win could be just as wrong with the result when you do win.

Practice good sportsmanship. Treat your fellow competitors and judges well, and also remember to thank the many volunteers who run the games, because without those people who collect entry forms, act as stewards, tabulate results and hand out adjudication sheets and prizes at the end of the day, we wouldn't have a place to play.

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