

Understanding Championship Scoring

by Jim Montague

The preliminary and championship events are the highest dance levels at a feis. As the dancer's skills have sharpened and competition becomes keener, it becomes necessary for the performances to be evaluated independently by three judges.

As in the lower competition levels (Beginner, Novice, and Prizewinner), each judge scores the dancer from 0 to 100 points (although you'll normally see a score somewhere between 70 and 95). These are known as the "raw" scores. The three "raw" scores earned by any one dancer mean nothing by themselves -- these scores must be restated so that they are in relation to the other competitors.

Take for example a set piece in which Katie competes with five other dancers in front of three judges - Alex, Beth, and Cora. After all six competitors have danced, we see that the judges have given Katie scores of 82, 88, and 79 respectively. These "raw" scores are meaningless by themselves - now each judge must rank the performances - from best (1st) to worst (6th). Here's what the scoresheets might look like both before and after the judges have ranked the competitors.

Judge's Scoresheets (before ranking)

	<i>Judge Alex's Scores</i>	<i>Judge Beth's Scores</i>	<i>Judge Cora's Scores</i>
<i>Dancer #1</i>	<i>Katie 82</i>	<i>Katie 88</i>	<i>Katie 79</i>
<i>Dancer #2</i>	<i>Kevin 84</i>	<i>Kevin 79</i>	<i>Kevin 70</i>
<i>Dancer #3</i>	<i>Mary 83</i>	<i>Mary 92</i>	<i>Mary 80</i>
<i>Dancer #4</i>	<i>Carri 79</i>	<i>Carri 83</i>	<i>Carri 79.5</i>
<i>Dancer #5</i>	<i>Julie 78</i>	<i>Julie 80</i>	<i>Julie 74</i>
<i>Dancer #6</i>	<i>Kelly 81</i>	<i>Kelly 85</i>	<i>Kelly 73</i>

Judge's Scoresheets (after ranking)

	<i>Judge Alex's Scores</i>	<i>Judge Beth's Scores</i>	<i>Judge Cora's Scores</i>
Dancer #1	Katie 82 - 3	Katie 88 - 2	Katie 79 - 3
Dancer #2	Kevin 84 - 1	Kevin 79 - 6	Kevin 70 - 6
Dancer #3	Mary 83 - 2	Mary 92 - 1	Mary 80 - 1
Dancer #4	Carri 79 - 5	Carri 83 - 4	Carri 79.5 - 2
Dancer #5	Julie 78 - 6	Julie 80 - 5	Julie 74 - 4
Dancer #6	Kelly 81 - 4	Kelly 85 - 3	Kelly 73 - 5

Off the subject a bit - we see Judge Cora gave Carri a raw score of 79.5. Indeed, when she initially scored, she gave Carri only a 79, but upon review, discovered that it would result in a tie with Katie... but she liked Carri's dancing better (for whatever reason). So she a 1/2 after her 79 (instead of making it an 80 where she'd then have "tie" problems with Mary, whom she liked the best). People shouldn't have a problem when they see half points added to the "raw" scores. Judges are just doing their job - a feis doesn't pay a judge simply to tie everyone.

The next step in championship tabulation is to convert these rankings to "Irish points". Understand that the rankings are converted, not the "raw" scores. A table of the Irish point conversions is shown at the end of this article... you may want to clip it out to keep in your purse or wallet. Each 1st place ranking receives 100 points, 2nd place gets 75, 3rd gets 65 and so on. Kindly note that in larger competitions like the Oireachtas, only the top 50 dancers are ranked - the 51st dancer and beyond receive no Irish points.

After this conversion, the Irish points from each judge are added for each dancer. The dancer with the most (Irish) points is the winner, the second most Irish points is awarded second place and so on. In Katie's reel example above, the final results are as follows:

When reviewing Katie's "marks", we see that she took overall third place with 205 overall points. A 2nd and two 3rds gave her a third overall in this case. She was very close to Kevin... only one point away from second place.

When we review the overall field, we find pretty consistent rankings except with Kevin/Judge Alex. All the judges ranked the dancers within a place or two of each other and there should be no doubt that Mary "won"... that's what we like to see. But we have to wonder what Alex saw in Kevin's performance (scoring him the best) that the other two judges didn't see (both giving him last place).

I included Kevin's scores in this example to show the strength of one judge's 1st place ranking... the 25 point difference between a judge's first and second place is a lot to make up. But for both consistent and inconsistent judges is the reason a feis will hire three judges... to smooth things out; to make things more fair when it comes to somewhat subjective scoring.

In the above example, I used only one dance being scored. Local feisanna have each competitor perform two dances in front of the same panel of judges. As this is normally the case, I should mention how the judges score the results. Then, each judge adds their two dances together to arrive at the dancer's "raw" score. The judge now ranks from the combined scores and converts to Irish points as discussed above. Of course, at the Oireachtas, Nationals, etc. when there is a separate panel of judges each time, each dance will be scored separately and then Irish points added together to determine recalls and/or final results.

If you're not thoroughly confused by now, perhaps when I mention how ties are handled, I'll put you over the edge. When ties occur after ranking the field, Irish points are determined by computing the average score for the places involved. For instance, in a two-way tie for 2nd, take the average Irish points awarded for 2nd and 3rd place and award both dancers 70 points $[(75+65)/2 = 70]$. If there were a three-way tie for 3rd place, 60.33 Irish points would be awarded to each involved dancer $[(65+60+56)/3 = 60.33]$.

Not really a problem so far, but here's what makes it confusing... the Irish points are properly distributed but the rankings which follow the tie are not! Take this three-way tie for 3rd, for example, in a field of seven competitors. The rankings that appear are 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 3rd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th! (rather than 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 3rd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th). The Irish points awarded are 100, 75, 60.33, 60.33, 60.33, 53, 50 respectively. The 5th place dancer receives only 7th place points!

When you have a whole bunch of ties in a large event like an Oireachtas, the dancer's "place" becomes meaningless, especially when the dancer receives 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places and "Your Marks" with the results that are purchased. However unfair it is on the surface, the reader of the results has to understand the disclaimer noted "Due to ties, you may not have placed as high as this report suggests!"

I understand that this method of determining "places" came from the North American teachers in order to qualify more kids for the Worlds. Think about it. Say An Coimisiún allowed the top 25% places from the Eastern Regional to qualify for the world competition. If an event had 100 entrants and there were 15 ties spread among the top 25 places, we could send 40 dancers to the worlds! Of course, this rule was changed three years ago when an exact number of qualifiers per certain number of entrants was spelled out.

Regardless, here's how to interpret those "disclaimed" results... simply go from the Irish points earned back to the conversion chart to determine approximately how many dancers placed ahead of you. For example, say a judge awards you 17th place but only 13.336 Irish points. When you look up 13 points, you'll see that some 37 dancers placed ahead of you (some 17th place, huh?).

I helped a first time Oireachtas mother face reality last fall. She approached me saying "Something's really wrong! They "recalled" 28 dancers in (her daughter's) competition and she placed between 22nd and 27th from five of the six judges and was 30 place from the sixth judge. How come she didn't recall?" I merely explained to her that she had to review the points, not the place, for a more accurate analysis. Needless to say, daughter didn't want to accept reality.

Irish 100 Point Conversions

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Pts</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Pts</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Pts</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Pts</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Pts</i>
<i>1st</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>11th</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>21st</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31st</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>41st</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>2nd</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>12th</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>22nd</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>32nd</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>42nd</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>3rd</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>13th</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>23rd</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>33rd</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>43rd</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>4th</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>14th</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>24th</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>34th</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>44th</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>5th</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>15th</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>25th</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>35th</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>45th</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>6th</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>16th</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>26th</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>36th</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>46th</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>7th</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>17th</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>27th</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>37th</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>47th</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>8th</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>18th</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>28th</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>38th</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>48th</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>9th</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>19th</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>29th</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>39th</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>49th</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>10th</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>20th</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>30th</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>40th</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>50th</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>51st + 0</i>									