

CALIFORNIA SQUARE DANCE COUNCIL REPORT ON 2002 YOUTH SQUARE DANCE COMPETITION

The inaugural edition of the California Youth Square Dance Competition was held on Saturday night, April 20th in Ventura, California as a part of the 43rd Annual California Square Dance Convention. A total of sixteen competitors, ranging in age from 8 to 17 years of age participated in this first time event. They represented seven different clubs and the cities of Sacramento, Walnut, Salinas, Victorville, Buena Park, La Crescenta, Lakewood, El Cajon and Livermore, California. A complete list of competitors is attached to this report.

Special thanks go to the following individuals for their help in putting together this year's event:

Initial Planning & Development: Ben & Terri Jellesed; Lovina Jellesed; Ole Foss; Arnold & Peggy Rose; Ben Goldberg; Jerry Janke; Sue Kabage; Ray Thompson; Michael & Kimberlee Streby; Rose Styczinski; Scot & Erin Byars; and Bonnie Abramson, with valued input from the following youth dancers: Emma & Heidi Jellesed; Jerrod Birmingham; Jessica & Krystal Horton; Mahlon, Marshall & Pauline Styczinski.

On-Site Competition Help (timers, registration, etc.): Ben & Terri Jellesed; Lovina Jellesed; Ole Foss; Jerry Janke, Sue Kabage, Ray Thompson, Michael & Kimberlee Streby; Bob Kamuf; Mickey & Diane Manning; John Rowe and Bonnie Abramson

Competition Caller: Bill Silver, with audio tapes provided by Scot Byars and Ben Goldberg.

Competition Judges/Caller-Coaches: Ken Bower, Chuck Hall.

Award T-Shirts: Ben Goldberg, BLG Designs.

The competition was run with all ages and dance levels competing together at the basic dance level (this was decided by competitors.) They danced to a patter call in the "hot hash" format, with each square being timed by three timers with stopwatches. Each square also had a "Caller-Coach" that served as a Judge. As long as the square was dancing the clocks were running. If the square broke down the judge had the timers stop their watches. Once the square was reformed into "lines" the judge instructed the timers to start their watches. At the conclusion of the designated time, the square with the most total average dancing time (based on the three watches timing that square) was declared the "winner." The competitors were allowed to choose their own dance partners and establish their own squares this year ... although with only two squares most of this was done kind of by "default." At the conclusion of the competition the two "teams" were very close in time, with the winning team leading by only a few seconds. In the end, since this was our first year and we were all learning as we went, we declared them all as winners.

Recommendations for next year's competition include the following:

- a. Expanding the length of the actual competition from five minutes to 15 minutes. Many felt it was over much too soon.
- b. Letting the competitors select their own partners, but use a lottery to determine the make-up of the squares. Since very few of the competitors this year knew each other prior to the competition, they felt this would even out the squares better.
- c. Continue with a "live" caller. We had initially planned to use tapes as this is the format used at the Pacific Northwest Teen Competition, but all felt the "live" caller worked better. (We had to use a "live" caller this year as the tape for the Basic program did not get made.)
- d. Move the competition to the afternoon in hopes of drawing a larger audience. We have asked the State Convention Committee to see if they can find time during the Grand March for us to recognize the winning square during the ceremonies.
- e. Run a one hour "practice" session prior to the competition so that the squares established by the lottery will have the opportunity to practice together and workshop breaking down and reforming their squares quickly.

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Caller Ken Bower, who served as a Judge this year, offered a great deal of enthusiastic input during the competition. He has been involved with similar competitions in the past. One recommendation was to offer gold, silver and bronze medals to the winning squares -- a marvelous idea, but a costly one. Luckily for us, a gentleman attending the competition, Russ Garside of All-Quality Recognition Services in Arcadia, was so enthused he has offered to donate medals for next year's competition.

Plans are well underway to implement the recommended changes. Our goal for 2003 is to attract five squares of competitors, so it's up to all of you to help us reach this goal. Special thanks to the California Square Dance Council, Inc. for having the confidence to let us try this project. We hope it is something that we can build on and utilize to increase the number of youth dancers in our state.

Respectfully submitted,

SCDC Youth Advisory Committee

Bonnie Abramson, Chair; Jerry Janke & Sue Kabage; Michael & Kimberlee Streby; Ray Thompson