



## Canadian Baton Twirling Federation

## La Fédération Canadienne de Baton Sportif

### PILOT PROJECT REPORTING TEMPLATE

Provinces granted the authority to pilot test one or more of the technical proposals approved at the 2013 Fall Board meeting are required to prepare a final report that provides all of the following information. The report must be submitted to the CBTF Technical Chair ([technicalchair@cbtf.ca](mailto:technicalchair@cbtf.ca)) no later than June 30<sup>th</sup> 2014. Anyone wanting some assistance in setting up their pilot project is urged to contact the CBTF Technical Chair.

<b>Province:</b>	Saskatchewan
<b>Name of Pilot Project</b>	Use of Single Age Divisions at Provincials for Level BN Juvenile and Junior Athletes at the 2008 Provincial Championships
<b>Name of Project Lead:</b>	Elan Paluck

#### 1. Scope of the Pilot Project:

Number of participating clubs:	5
Number of participating athletes:	77
Number of participating coaches:	8
Number of competitions/events that pilot project was tested at:	1

#### 2. Description of the Pilot Project:

*(Describe in detail how you conducted the pilot test in your province. There should be enough detail provided in this section such that another province could read your description and replicate it in their province next season.)*

In April 2008, the Saskatchewan Baton Twirling Association (SBTA) was granted permission to run a pilot project examining the feasibility and utility of using single age divisions at our Provincial Championships. The purpose of this report is to share Saskatchewan's experiences with the CBTF Board.

The day began with an open competition for all Pre- and Level C athletes. The purpose of the Open competition was twofold: first, it allowed athletes who received a score of 2.5 to compete in the provincial championships, and second, it provided an opportunity for ‘new to the sport’ local athletes and their families to become involved in the competition.

Level C events were run using single age divisions (age 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, etc). We used 7 lanes for the open competition. In total there were 44 athletes registered for the Open competition. Scores were flashed so that athletes knew immediately if they were eligible to enter the Provincial Winner/Championship events, and more importantly, providing the tabulation team time to prepare the masters and scoresheets. In total 28 Level C performances received a score of 2.5 or higher, of which, 22 chose to enter the Provincial competition.

The Provincial Winner and Championship events (W/C) followed the Open Competition. Six judges provided double judging on 3 lanes. In total, there were 55 athletes registered for the Provincial W/C events.

Consistent with the CBTF’s proposed age restructuring, we ran single age divisions for the juvenile and junior Level Bn events, as follows:

- Level Bn, Ages 4-8
- Level Bn Age 9, Age 10, Age 11, Age 12, Age 13, Age 14
- Level Bn ages 15 -17 (offered, but had no entrants)

Standard CBTF age divisions were used for all of the Level Bi and A divisions. Athletes in the juvenile division competed on the same lane (i.e., Bn age 9, Bn age 10, and Bn age 11 ran back to back on one lane) while junior athletes (Bn Age 12, age 13, and age 14) ran on a separate lane. This was necessary to ensure consistent judging within a division and provide a more accurate system for selecting divisional winners.

No scores were flashed for the Provincial W/C events and awards were planned for 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> place.

**Competition Schedule:**

08:30 am	Processional for all Provincial and Open athletes
09:00 am	Pre events (7 lanes, 21 sets in each)
10:00 am	Level C events (19 sets)
11:00 am	Provincial Winner/Championship Competition begins
4:30 pm	Official warm up for groups and teams
5:45 pm	Provincial and Open Group Competition begins
7:00 pm	Provincial Awards Ceremony

### **3. Member Feedback:**

*Through the use of structured survey (paper or email) get feedback from persons affected by this change (example: judge who judged at competitions where the project was tested, athletes, coaches, parents). This should be done within 1-2 weeks of your province's last competition where the pilot project was implemented.*

#### **3.1. Host Committee Feedback**

*a) Running single age divisions helped shorten the competition:*

- Running single age divisions allowed us to avoid running preliminary rounds in the solo, medley, solodance and two baton events, which we believe would have added an additional 2.5-3.0 hours to our day.

*b) Single age divisions helped us minimize our expenses:*

- Not having to run semi finals saved us approximately 3.0 hours of gym and judging time (estimated at approximately \$420 in total). This helped offset the additional 54 awards that were required (estimated at \$297).

*c) Single ages created a more positive atmosphere for athletes as they did not feel so disadvantaged by competing as the youngest in the age division:*

- This was especially important for the “new” Level Bn athletes who had just received their 2.5 in the Open competition. More athletes “upgraded” to enter provincials this year than in previous years. This had the spin off benefit of increasing our competition revenue by \$440 without increasing our expenses.

*d) Not flashing scores was also an important component of our pilot project:*

- Not only did it help us run the event in record time with very few glitches, it most importantly provided for a very exciting awards ceremony! Using single age divisions made the awards ceremony meaningful to MANY athletes, as more athletes had the opportunity to stand on the podium. Athletes actually paid attention for the entire ceremony and were enthusiastic in their applause for each other. Not flashing scores also provided for a happier group of athletes during the course of the day – those who did well didn’t need a score for validation, and those who did not perform as well as they had hoped did not need to immediately see their score.

*e) Selecting Divisional Winners:*

- SBTA has traveling trophies that are shared by the Bn Primary, Juvenile, Junior and Senior Provincial winners as well as a scholarship/entry fee subsidy to attend Canadians. Short of purchasing a whole new group of traveling trophies, it was necessary find a suitable method of selecting the divisional winner. Knowing this in advance, we ensured that all athletes in the same age division competed on the same lane and were judged by the same judges. Thus, the Tabulation Team was able to treat all the judges’ scores as if the athletes were all in one division. Athletes were ranked 1<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, for example, and then “divisional winners” were calculated using ordinals as if they would have had we not run single ages.
- Critics of this method have suggested that judges will inadvertently let their scores creep up as the age of the athletes went up. We found no evidence of this occurring, as our divisional winners represented all 3 of the single age groups.

### **3.2 Tabulation Feedback:**

The Tabulation Team was able to comfortably enter the newly moved up athletes into the existing set system, as the entire program had been designed to accommodate this. Score sheets were prepared and masters were modified focusing on the medley event, as this was the first event to be run. The fact that only 1 of the 6 athletes who received a 2.5 chose to enter Level Bn medley worked to the tabulation team's advantage, as there was only approximately one hour to prepare the medley score sheets and masters.

### **3.3 Parent and Athlete Feedback**

The week following the competition we distributed a survey to club presidents via email asking for their opinions regarding the pilot project. Club presidents circulated the following questions to their club members and encouraged them to submit their responses. The following results were obtained:

**Question #1 “Level Bn athletes usually compete at the Provincial championships in ‘divisionals’: 4-8, 9-11, 12-14, and 15- 17 yrs. This year, we pilot tested a project allowing Bn athletes in the 9-11 and 12-14 yr old divisions (our biggest age divisions) to compete in single age categories (e.g., Bn Age 9, Bn Age 10, etc). How did you and your daughter/son feel about the use of single age categories for our Provincial Championships? Would you like to see this used at the Canadian Championships?”**

Fifteen parents representing the viewpoints of 18 athletes affected by the pilot project responded to the survey. In general, 14/15 families favoured the use of single age divisions and thought it should be implemented at the National level. The most common reasons provided were:

- Faster competition without have to run preliminary rounds
- More chance for athletes to be rewarded – they enjoy this
- The competition seems ‘fairer’ to athletes and their parents –not as intimidating to compete in such a large division with such a broad spread of ages.

One parent indicated that the use of single age divisions was not favoured by her daughter because even though she felt more confident competing in single age divisions, she enjoyed seeing how she ranked within the larger division. This same athlete also preferred having her scores flashed. Another parent (who supports the use of single age divisions) suggested that there should be a minimum number of athletes in a group before going to single age divisions. For example, in some of the 13 and 14 year old divisions, the numbers were lower. Thus, this parent suggested that these groups could have been collapsed to make a 13-14 year old group.

**Question #2 “At the Provincial Championships, judges’ scores are usually flashed to the audience and athlete immediately after each performance. This year, we chose not to flash scores and keep the results a surprise until the awards ceremony. How did you and your daughter/son feel about not having the judges flash their scores for the provincial events?”**

11 of the 15 families that responded to the survey supported not having scores flashed because it encouraged athletes to work for their personal bests, reduced the stress resulting from not receiving the score they had hoped for (deservedly or not), and finally, made the awards ceremony more exciting.

*"What I liked best was that it helped the athletes focus on the important thing and that is, to offer their best. Man, go out there and perform...worry not! But the best part is that there really is an element of surprise at the end of the day which is so-o-o-o rewarding. The best part comes at the end of the day, which the girls could hardly wait for. In fact, I made them read it to me while I was driving home. Because really, what helps an athlete improve? A fleeting moment with a score, or the judges' comments on what needs improving?"*

*"I think there would be less competitiveness in the stands between the parents if the scores were not flashed and may make a more enjoyable day for the parents and their sons or daughters not knowing how each athlete scored until the end of the competition."*

Of the four families that were not in favour of withholding scores:

- Two families indicated that their daughters are not affected by their scores and enjoy seeing how they did right away.
- One parent said she was annoyed that she had to wait until the end of the day because she wanted to leave the competition as soon as her daughter was done. Not flashing made her day longer because she had to wait until the very end to find out the results.
- Another parent indicated that it made the day too stressful for them not knowing. They would like to prepare their son/daughter if their name is not going to be called at the awards ceremony.

### **3.4 Judges' Feedback**

A similar survey was sent to the 7 judges. All of the judges provided favourable feedback regarding the initiatives being pilot tested, and below are some of the comments we received.

*"From a judge's perspective trying to slot 22 athletes is not easy, and sometimes errors happen. It is much easier to assess what is in front of you in a smaller category. I'm not sure about using it at Canadians. Provincially yes, that way we can determine the best in each Province. Nation wide could be the same, or is it better to put them back together, to get the top athletes country wide? I am not certain yet."*

*"From the point of view of a judge I can do single ages or divisionals. A judge should never agree to this for the sole reason the divisions are smaller and easier to judge. The number of athletes competing is already so much smaller than before, judges hardly have the opportunity to tackle the challenge of large divisions. That does not prepare us for judging International Cup events - although, that is not the goal of all judges."*

*"This is definitely better for athletes in the middle of the range. I think in a large division, the top athletes rise to the top and the bottom to the bottom - it is the middle athletes that don't get a good comparison to others and they don't make the next round."*

*"I like that judges are accountable when we flash. However, I do feel that the event is much more positive for all without the flashing (athletes, parents and coaches can focus on personal best routines and not that score or placing). The day felt very positive! I really like the surprise of awards, but understand that as a sport the flashing should occur. I am torn about offering it at Canadians - maybe for winner/champ we don't flash- but for team trials we do?"*

*"I liked not flashing as it allowed everyone to enjoy the moment and not worry about the number (which I feel is irrelevant until Advanced)."*

### **3.5 Coaches' Feedback**

All of the coaches were unanimous in their support for both of these initiatives. Some of the comments received are provided below:

*"The athletes left on a positive note. It gave the opportunity to see where you are for your age, as compared to someone with three more years experience."*

*"This method gives athletes the power to decide whether they did a good job or not and not have their efforts damped most often by the scores. It also gives them the opportunity to go onto their next event without being too over confident or crushed, or predetermining whether that judge likes them or not. Happy athletes make happy parents. Happy parents and coaches probably have less to contend with".*

*"I liked this approach, but wonder if it will make athletes work less, because they know they have a better chance at a good placing since there are less people. I think good competition is a big influence on how hard an athlete works to improve themselves. I would hate to see the caliber of twirling in Canada suffer because it was made easier for them to place."*

#### **4. Lessons Learned:**

*(Describe what you would do differently next time. What worked well? What didn't work so well? Was there a cost implication?)*

We were pleased with this project on many levels. We think it was good for athletes and it was financially advantageous for the province. We were satisfied with the way the pilot project ran, and that is a direct result of the support that we had from coaches and their clubs going into the competition. There are always little things that you will do differently "next time", but quite honestly there was nothing major that we would have wanted to change. Perhaps the only thing we considered doing differently in subsequent years, was "officially" recognizing the divisional winners at our awards ceremony. Some of the coaches thought it would have been nice to acknowledge the Divisional Winners, by presenting the Top 3 Juvenile Division winners with gold silver and bronze medals. The SBTA traveling trophy, along with a letter notifying them of their scholarship to attend Canadians, could also be presented to the Gold Medalist at that time to further increase the prestige of being the divisional winner.

#### **5. Conclusions**

*(Given the choice, would your province recommend that this pilot project become standard policy for the CBTF? Answer "Yes" or "No" and provide a reason "why".)*

We are pleased with the results of our pilot project. To answer the question regarding the feasibility of running Provincial Championships using single age divisions, the response is a definite "YES"! We were able to run an efficient, cost effective competition that still allowed us a means of determining the Level Bn divisional winners. We think a similar process would work equally well for the Canadian Championships. The utility in this approach is can be found in the overwhelmingly positive response this initiative had on our athletes:

#### **Expenses:**

Cost of extra awards (estimated at 54 medals)	\$297
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#### **Revenue**

Savings in gym and judges fees	\$420
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Entry fees from Level C athletes receiving a 2.5 in the open contest	\$440
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Happy athletes, parents and coaches	PRICELESS ☺
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