

Can we do it?

As you approach the mid - point of the season, whether that is 4 weeks or 4 months, you begin to ask yourself questions about accomplishments and achievements for the first half of your schedule. Did I make the right choices? Is there enough challenge inherent to the written book? What can't be accomplished for the second half of the schedule that I'd planned?

I believe you need to trust your instincts and if you feel like you are experiencing a positive level of achievement and success, certainly trust what got you to that point. A drastic change now may make things better... but, most likely will throw you off course. Focus is the key.

There is no greater challenge in the pageantry activity than being by yourself and attempting to juggle the responsibilities of arranger, teacher, critic, chaperone, etc. Even with an established staff or group of assistants, the challenge remains high. A high school band director should get a medal for survival at the end of each season, no matter how large or small their band. It is truly a commendable feat not achieved successfully by many.

Focus point 1: Don't worry about what another group can or can't achieve... Focus on YOUR group, YOUR plan and stick to it. Should you watch your competitors? Yes. Can you take lessons learned from their success or struggle? Absolutely. Should you allow their performance to effect the outcome of all your hard work? Not a chance!

Focus point 2: Reinforce fundamentals. What have you lost that you taught when there was enough time to "teach" vs. "rehearse" regarding your fundamental marching/playing/spinning/percussion programs? A short and sweet reminder regarding basics can go a long way to refocusing.

Focus point 3: Breath.... In... out..... In ... out and clear the ensembles mind for the final haul to the finish line. Find the leaders within your organization, not necessarily those filling section leader positions, and take the "pulse" of the group. Address issues, polish the dull apples.

Focus point 4: You vs. the judge. When listening to judges commentary, find the track that will speak to your kids and point out the places where you've succeeded (and why) and the places where you need improvement (develop a plan.) Listen to and learn from the gazillion ways to say "you are not in step."

And as a side note to the "You vs. the judge" idea: when you hear it on the dialogue and you truly don't get it, ask to speak to that particular judge, through the chief judge or judge's coordinator, for clarification. This is especially good for younger instructors or teachers who are learning how to develop a process for performance, analysis, planning and improving. Adjudicators, instructors and band directors can and SHOULD learn from each other. Good communication is the grease that smoothes the competitive process

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