The 80/80 Rule

This is another example of judgment and balance in your square dance program.

Each night when I call a square dance, I have a general idea of what I'm going to do. Even if I have never called for a group before, I've been given general guidelines. The club will have advertised a program level. Mainstream? Plus? Mainstream with Plus tips? Advanced? Basic? Class? Rounds between tips? Line dances?

Once I have been given these guidelines, the balance and judgment is in my hands again. How "hard" am I going to call? This is where I employ the 80/80 Rule.

The 80/80 Rule is simply this: As I am calling to the floor, it is my goal to make sure that on average 80 percent of the dancers are dancing 80 percent of the time.

Why 80/80? Again, everything comes back to judgment and balance. If I employ the 80/80 Rule to my dance, I am ensuring that I am offering enough challenge and variety to keep MOST of the people entertained without beating up the rest. By keeping 80 percent of the floor moving all night long, the dancers succeed. At the same time, the dancers are challenged.

Why not use a 100/100 Rule? If every dancer on the floor is successful on every figure I call, I am not offering enough challenge to keep the better dancers entertained. The stronger dancers would be bored. At the same time, a 50/50 Rule would result in many frustrated dancers.

As always, there are exceptions to every rule. If I am calling a Fun Night or a Class Dance, my rule will be closer to 95/95. Yes, I want those new dancers to succeed at nearly every opportunity.

At a demo, I absolutely want 100/100 as that demo is NOT for the dancers. When we do a demo, we are selling our activity to the spectators, and they are looking for a show.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are DBD dances or Take No Prisoner Dances, or a particularly strong dancing group that may thrive with more challenge. Even in the most extreme case, however, you won't see me striving for anything less than 70/70. In my eyes, it's still a square DANCE, and I'll always try to keep that floor moving.

I have been accused of being somewhat boring with my choreography. I accept that critique. It is more important for me to keep a high percentage of the floor moving than it is to challenge the strongest dancers. I try to offer as much balance as possible, but that can disappoint the dancers on the far ends of the spectrum.

Bottom line, as many other things in life, you can't please all of the people all of the time. If you strive for 80/80 you're going to have a successful dance that people will want to come back to.