

---

---

---

Chapter 6  
by Rick Beckham

The rudiments and styles of drum and bugle corps field percussion may never have been invented if not for the drum's functional use in war. Drill moves that armies developed -- such as the phalanx (box), echelon and front -- were done to the beat of the drum, which could carry up to a quarter mile.

Less than 10 years after the Civil War, fife and drum corps organized and held competitions. These hard-fought comparisons brought standardization and growth, to the point that, half a century later, the technical and arrangement achievements of the "standstill" corps would shape the drum and bugle corps percussion foundation as they traded players and instructors.

From this comes the development of allowing all percussion instruments, no matter the genre, into the pageantry that is modern drum and bugle corps.

**The development of field music competition**

The first major development for field percussion was the organization and explosion of competitions. The desire to quantify the skills of field musicians in order to find "the best" had the added unplanned benefit of setting the stage of field music progress, for the individual skills of the performers in their style development and training techniques, for the skills of the group pushing the envelope of executing increasingly difficult

# The birth, growth and metamorphosis of competitive rudimental drumming

parts played in unison, and for the technological advancement of the instruments and implements of field music competition.

Martial music competition began less than a decade following the Civil War, birthed in

units. To illustrate how serious the competition had become, prizes for best individual drummer included gold-tipped drum sticks, a set of dueling pistols, a safety bike, a rocking chair and a set of silver loving cups, none of which were cheap items. <sup>3</sup>

The growth of competitions continued and, in 1885, the Connecticut Fifers and Drummers Association was established to foster expansion and improvement. Annual field day musters for this association continue to this day and the individual snare and bass drum winners have been recorded



Mattatuck Drum Band, July 29, 1967, on the occasion of the organization's 200th anniversary (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

the state of Connecticut.

The first written account of a competition is 1872, in Wallingford, CT, <sup>1</sup> and the earliest reference to prizes occurred in 1876 when a silk banner made by the Ladies of Rockville was awarded for "best drum corps." <sup>2</sup> "Best drummer" awards were given to representative individual snare and bass drummers selected from all the competing

since its inception.

Sam Hawkins from the Mattatuck Corps was awarded first place snare drummer at the first Connecticut Fifers and Drummers field day held on August 2, 1885, in Wallington, CT. E.R. Parry from the Sassacus Corps was awarded first place bass drum.

To further illustrate the seriousness of these competitions, J. Burns Moore, who later became the first president of the National Association of Rudimental Drummers, became incensed after placing third in 1893 and bet \$25 that he could outplay the two gentlemen selected as first and second. <sup>4</sup>

Connecticut would remain the nexus for rudimental drumming competitions for almost a century, producing prodigal drummers who would be largely responsible for improving the drumming in the bugle corps. "The rudimental explosion did not come in the drum and bugle corps. It began in the standstill fife and drum corps in the 1930s," according to Ken Mazur. <sup>5</sup>

Military music contests rapidly grew



(Above) Connecticut Hurricanes, August 27, 1967 (photo by Moe Knox); (right) Chicago Royal Airs, August 24, 1966 (photo by Moe Knox, both photos from the collection of Drum Corps World).



during the period between the Civil War and World War I. As the bugle replaced the fife as the instrument of choice in the military, the number of drum and bugle corps increased.

John Philip Sousa, who helped popularize brass instrumental martial music starting in the 1880s, insisted on strong rudimental technique before one would even be considered for a position as a percussionist in his band.<sup>6</sup>

As Sanford Moeller later commented, rudimental drummers were the only drummers who could play the difficult quicksteps. The growth of rudimental drumming pervaded and dominated the percussion community.

"In the professional field, drummers were taking the drum rudiments seriously enough to argue about them where previous to 1918 they had been slighted."<sup>7</sup>

Drum and bugle corps continued their growth following World War I. During this period, several classifications of corps competed: fife and drum corps, drum and bugle corps and corps made up of fifes, bugles and drums. The fife and drum corps also divided into the Ancients -- those that played tempos at 110 -- and the Moderns, playing at 120 beats per minute.

A state contest would normally consist of 100 units of the various categories, as well as individual competitions on drumming, bugling, fifing and baton twirling.



Chicago Cavaliers, August 27, 1967, at American Legion Nationals in Boston, MA (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Competitions continued to flourish and, by 1921, the American Legion held a national competition for senior corps in Kansas City, MO, during their convention. The Veterans of Foreign Wars followed suit, holding its first national contest in 1928 at Indianapolis, IN.

Junior corps were added to the VFW National competitions in 1936 and to the AL Nationals in 1937. There were very few differences between the AL and VFW rules, but for membership, the AL required that marchers have served in the military, while VFW members had to have served on foreign soil. Membership requirements only applied to the seniors.

Both organizations remained strong during the decade following World War II. Eventually the AL relaxed the membership



27th Lancers, 1980 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

requirements; a corps only had to be sponsored by an American Legion Post.

Dwindling membership within the VFW forced it to drop the senior competitions in 1964. The following year, Drum Corps Associates was formed in Scranton, PA, as an independent organization dedicated to the continuance of senior corps competitions.

The last VFW nationals for junior corps was held in Chicago, IL, in 1984. The American Legion sponsored a senior and junior corps national championship until 1980 and then discontinued the contest for 17 years. In 1997, the AL once again began sponsoring a national competition, for senior corps only, and continues to this day in conjunction with the DCA Championships.

During the latter part of the 1960s, several junior corps directors felt discontent at the rigidity of the rules. People, some who never marched drum corps within the VFW and AL organizations, were deciding how the corps would be judged. Corps staff felt the need to expand the creative envelope; to swing the pendulum from the militarily judged system where execution, inspection and precision marching were the deciding factors, toward one that allowed more creativity and expression.

In 1971, the Combine, a group of corps directors determined to control the direction of the junior drum corps activity, was formed and,

in 1972, the Combine became Drum Corps International.

With the creation of independent drum corps organizations

-- DCA for the seniors and DCI for the juniors -- the bonding that existed between the two in the VFW and AL days would dissolve. National competitions for both divisions would no longer be held together.

"Big brother"-type relationships would discontinue as junior and senior corps that were sponsored by the same VFW or AL post,

church or other organization would now be independently operated.

### The influential son of Connecticut

Earl Sturtze was born in 1901 and began taking lessons from Carl Frolich, a Burns Moore student, when he was 10 years old in Hamden, CT, playing with the

Fire Department Drum Corps organized by his father. He set the standard for rudimental excellence.

Though he won many local and state individual titles and taught many winning drum lines, his biggest impact was as teacher. He would teach more than 5,000 students in his lifetime.

A list of some of Sturtze's students is an impressive five decades of individual champions and winning drum instructors. The list included Frank Arsenault, a three-time national snare champion who later transformed Midwest drum lines into national prominence; Bobby Redican, two-time national champion, winner of 45 contests and said by many, including Eric Perrillieux, to be the best rudimental drummer of all time; Hugh Quigley, two-time national senior AL snare champion and six-time recipient of the Dan English Trophy, senior class division; Mike Stefanowicz, a national champion who became a Ludwig clinician and wrote many method books and articles on style and technique; Ray Luedee, who steered the Connecticut Hurricanes senior corps drum line into winning the American Legion national contest and taking top drums at DCA four years; and Gary Pagnozzi, three-time winner of the VFW snare individuals, junior division.

As for the accomplishments of his students, consider this legacy. It is said by many that Arsenault's move to the Midwest is the biggest reason for the spread of quality rudimental drumming to the rest of the

nation. Arsenault taught Mitch Markovich, three-time national VFW junior snare champion from 1961-1963 who went on to teach the two-time national champion Chicago



Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights, June 3, 1962 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Royal Airs (1965-1966), a corps that stunned many with an incredible display of drum line solos that were rudimentally demanding and included backsticking.

Arsenault also taught Larry McCormick, who took over the helm of the Chicago Cavaliers' drum line after Frank left in 1961 and remained until 1971, spanning an

impressive 10 years during which the "Green Machine" won many titles.

Bobby Redican gave private lessons to a young Charlie Poole, who later won the All-American national snare drum title (1968, 1970, 1971) and went on to instruct the 27th Lancers' drum line.

There are several reasons for Sturtze's teaching success. One, he refined the grip that had been passed down since the Civil War where he emphasized a firm, but not too tight, placement of the fingers. He spent considerable time with his students



(Above) Phantom Regiment, August 20, 1996, at the DCI Championships in Philadelphia, PA (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World); (below) De La Salle Oaklands, 1973, at DCI Prelims in Whitewater, WI (photo by Jane Boulen from the collection of Drum Corps World).



developing their grip.

Secondly, Sturtze had a strict regimen of teaching the rudiments and their proper execution. He would judge the long roll at the beginning of each lesson. When the student achieved a score of 24 out of a possible 25, he would then allow the student to progress to the next rudiment. The lesson would begin by playing two rudiments.

This would continue, possibly for several years, until the pupil was capable of playing all 26 drum rudiments. The student who

achieved this goal was awarded what Sturtze called the Double A Certificate. Very few students earned this certificate.

Keep in mind that he judged the rudiments the same way rudiments were judged from the 1920s through the 1960s; deductions were from one-fourth of a point for minor mistakes to several points for major infractions. Inconsistency in accents or note volume, starting or stopping on the wrong hand, stick clicks or hitting the rim, flams and drags that were too closed or too open, and tempo jumps were all reasons for deductions.

Additionally, the rudiments were timed. They had to be exactly three minutes long. The acceleration-to-peak and the deceleration each had to equal one and a half minutes. Timing penalties were issued for each second over or under three minutes and for differences of time between the acceleration and deceleration.

Third, he believed in competition. Not only did he urge his students to compete in many individual competitions, he sponsored an annual competition among his students, awarding a ribbon medal to the winner.

"I competed and won against Sturtze students at four straight Connecticut state competitions with Sturtze judging. No one questioned whether he should judge contests where his students were competing. His integrity was a result of his love of the art of rudimental drumming," Poole commented.

Bobby Redican used the same rudiment progression method with his students. "I spent a year working on the long roll with Redican before moving onto the flam, where I spent another year. Two years on two rudiments. How many kids today would have the patience to spend one year on one rudiment?" Poole said.

There is no way to measure the full impact Sturtze had on rudimental drumming. To do so would require measuring not only his and his students'

success, but also the impact they had on competitors who had to crank the notch up to stay in the game.

What better way to sum up his drive to perfect the art of rudimental drumming than with this reflection from Gary Pagnozzi: "Earl was tough. He used to always say, 'Practice doesn't make perfect unless you practice perfectly'." <sup>9</sup>

#### **Standardizing rudimental contests**

Because of the explosive growth of field music competitions during the 1920s, people

were traveling from state to state and into different regions of the country to compete. However, judges from different areas required separate compulsory sets of rudiments.

The New England Drum and Fifer's Association sponsored drum corps contests in the East and had adopted the Strube (1869) method of rudiment breakdowns. <sup>10</sup> That is to say, the rudiments were played open (slow) to closed (fast), with the contestant stopping upon reaching fastest peak speed.

Contests in the Midwest were following the Bruce and Emmett method (1862), where the rudiment was played open to closed, back to open.

[It's not clear at what point or how many contests in the New England area required the Strube method of breakdown. According to conversations with students of Sturtze, who competed in the 1920s, he always advocated the B&E method.]

J. Burns Moore, also from Connecticut, endorsed the B&E method during that first NARD meeting. Additionally, B&E placed an accent on the second beat of the double stroke, whereas the Strube method did not.

Visiting contestants from other regions could be at a disadvantage. Thus, it became evident the rudiments, and their method of breakdown, needed to be standardized.

On June 20, 1932, 13 prominent drummers met at the American Legion National Convention in Chicago and formed the National Association of Rudimental Drummers. <sup>11</sup> J. Burns Moore, four-time individual snare winner of the CFDA (1891, 1895, 1897, 1900) and timpanist with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra for 45 years, was elected as the first president by his peers and he served until 1945.

Those peers included William F. Ludwig, George Lawrence Stone, Bill Flowers, Ed Straight, Harry Thompson, George Robertson, Bill Kieffer, Bill Hammond, Joe Hathaway, Roy Knapp, Billy Miller and M.M. Gerlach <sup>12</sup>; a diverse collection of prominent rudimental, studio and symphonic drummers.

The Bruce and Emmett method of breakdown was chosen. The selected rudiments, which included the "B&E Lesson 25," became known as the *26 Standard American Drum Rudiments*. The first half were named the *13 Essential Drum Rudiments* and became the required rudiments one had to play in order to become a member of NARD.

"In the school field, there was a greater confusion than in professional and amateur fields. Students felt content to take shortcuts and neglect rudiments. This condition prevailed for a number of years, until band directors found poorly trained percussion sections were a serious handicap to the natural progress of the band or orchestra." <sup>13</sup>

When A.R. McAllister, a good friend of William F. Ludwig, became president of the National Association of School Bandmasters, he helped spread rudiments to the nation's high school music programs by adopting the



Skokie Indians, 1957, at American Legion Nationals in Atlantic City, NJ (photo from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review).

NARD list of rudiments for use in all high school bands in the country.

Soon, individual rudiment contests were sponsored for high school band percussion players and, according to Ludwig, "These contests proved a tremendous incentive to individual rudimental practice for school drummers and, as a result, improved the school bands."<sup>14</sup>

Ludwig believed so strongly in rudiments as a way to improve the playing skills of all percussionists, he allowed Ludwig Industries to back and support NARD.

Membership applications and rudiment sheets featuring the standard 26 were handed out at band and drum corps conferences and mailed to music stores. Ludwig sponsored as many as 200 clinics a year for students, teachers and instructors promoting rudiments and rudimental drumming.

It was Ludwig who hired Frank Arsenault as a clinician and spokesman for Ludwig Industries in 1954. "Today all drum contests are judged on the basis of the NARD rudiments. Bandmasters as well as drum teachers became conscious of their importance with the result that today America can justly boast that we have the best drummers of any country in the dance field, concert, drum corps and schools," Ludwig wrote.<sup>15</sup>

The truth of that quote can be directly attributed to the promotion of the rudiments by NARD and Ludwig.



Sons of Liberty Fife and Drum Corps, 1957 (photo from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review).

The second president of NARD was George Lawrence Stone, serving from 1945 to 1954. He was author of the most popular drum book ever printed, *Stick Control*, a book of more than 800 exercises that explored various coordinative rudimental combinations.

Stone played percussion in the Boston Festival Orchestra and the Boston Opera Orchestra. He also ran a popular drum school in Boston, the Stone School of Drum and Xylophone. His most famous student was jazz legend Joe Morello.



Reilly Raiders, 1968 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Stone also privately instructed Gerry Shellmer, who not only won the 1962 VFW snare individuals for seniors, but led the Boston Crusaders' drum line to a national championship in 1970.

Arsenault took over as president of NARD after Stone and remained in that position until 1966, at which time Ludwig took the helm.

Members of NARD were told by mail in 1975 that they had the opportunity to elect the new president. A booklet was included listing 16 candidates and their credentials.

Mitch Markovich won the election by an overwhelming majority, becoming the fifth president of NARD.

NARD folded in 1978, having close to 10,000 members in its ranks. If it was so popular, why did it fold? Explains Markovich, the last president, "The majority of the members were not paying their yearly dues and paying for 10,000-piece mailings was very costly to the Ludwig Company."<sup>16</sup>

The following year, the Percussive Arts Society

began a five-year study on revising and updating the list of rudiments with the intent of organizing the rudiments into a more reasonable structure and including rudiments non-traditional to NARD that had gained popularity through the 1960s and 1970s.

Many years prior to this, some members of PAS had openly questioned rudiments. For instance, George Allan O'Connor, while agreeing that rudiments increase control and facility in performance, openly challenged the validity of rudiments as the primary training tool for percussionists.<sup>17</sup>

Dick Berkley stressed teaching only the most basic rudiments necessary for concert application; that is, singles, open and closed rolls, flams and ruffs.<sup>18</sup>

By 1982, a committee of 20 PAS members had drafted the PAS International Drum Rudiments, a proposal that included 40 rudiments split into four groups: the roll, diddle, flam and drag families. Seven of the 40 were identified as essential.<sup>19</sup>

Even though the PAS proposal was finalized in 1984, neither the committee nor PAS in general made a commitment to actively promote the rudiments as beneficial toward increasing percussive skills.

Rudiment breakdowns continued to fall out of favor at individual contests and band auditions, beginning after the breakup of NARD and continuing to the present despite PAS's efforts.

Imagine if a trend developed where scales were no longer considered mandatory for wind players.



Hawthorne Caballeros, 1972 (photo from the collection of Peter Bishop).

### The metamorphosis of field percussion

Since military musicians organized field music competitions, it was natural that the basis of field percussion was rudimental drumming. Rudiments became the "alphabet" and language of drumming, which began as troop signals, each unique enough to distinguish by ear.

Creating new troop signals was a simple matter of playing combinations of rudiments. It's evident some drummers during the Civil War prided themselves on how many rudiments and signal calls they knew, as well

as how well one could play the rudiments.

When discussing the flam rudiment, George Bruce commented "Some practitioners have accomplished a flam roll!"<sup>20</sup> Much like scales to melodic instruments, rudiments are the foundation for increasing one's percussive development.

Judging developed objectively as proper sticking and correct execution of the rudiments, whether by the unit as a whole or by individuals, could be examined.

Playing styles during the Civil War period were very similar to the one advocated by Sanford "Gus" Moeller. He visited Civil War retirement homes during the 1920s and interviewed drummers in an effort to preserve their drumming heritage.

The style was a flowing, high arm movement with a loosely held grip. Playing high was necessary, since the drum was the primary communication device for troop signals from the commanders during the war. The louder played the better, so the sound would carry to the troops.

The reason for the looseness was to minimize playing fatigue; a happy medium of just enough tension to execute, but not enough to produce exhaustion. A drummer during the war was expected to play all day, from the first morning wake up call to the *Taps* "time for bed" signal.

Bass drummers during the Civil War period usually played the rudimental bass style with two sticks. Cymbals were sometimes included in the drum lines, but most lines primarily consisted of snares and bass, and were assessed not as a separate unit, but, rather, in conjunction with the fifes.

Moeller taught drum set legend Gene Krupa, who became the first person to use the trap set as a solo instrument, and Jim Chapin, who wrote "Advance Techniques for the Modern Drummer," a best selling drum book widely regarded as the most ground-breaking book for independence ever written.

Moeller was a staunch advocate of the rudiments, not just for rudimental drummers, but for all areas of drumming. He traveled with a musical show across the continent teaching drummers everywhere the



Blue Rock, July 17, 1971, at the World Open (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

importance of rudiments. His belief was so firm, he decided to write the most comprehensive book on rudimental drumming up to that time. "The Moeller Book" was published by the Ludwig Drum Company.

Despite the beliefs of some, the drumming

maneuvering corps until the 1960s.

The AL rules book from 1929 shows that the scores were broken down as follows: 15 points for inspection, 10 points for cadence, 15 points for marching ability, 20 points for maneuvering, 20 points for the bugles and

second only to the snares. Even though rudimental bass had been a part of the fife and drum standstill corps, the marching corps used the bass drum to keep tempo for marching. Rudimental bass would not be introduced to the marching and

fifes and 20 points for drumming. The sub categories of the drumming caption included position of instruments, execution, ensemble, expression, rhythm, originality and flash, and repertoire.<sup>22</sup>

In 1946, the New York Skyliners senior corps ushered in the big drum line concept, marching eight snares, four tenors, two bass drums and two cymbals.<sup>23</sup>

De La Salle

Oaklands from Toronto marched 32 snares one year in the 1940s.<sup>24</sup> The number dropped in the early 1950s to a standard three or four snares, three tenors, two bass drums and one or two cymbals, and would remain that size until the 1960s.

of drum and bugle corps went through many changes through the years. Following World War I, tenor drums were added to the drum and bugle corps,<sup>21</sup> adding a middle voice between the snares and bass drums.

The tenor drum parts were rudimental,



Archer-Epler Musketeers, July 1959, in Bridgeport, CT (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Reading Buccaneers, July 3, 1971, in Bridgeport, CT (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

John Dowlan, who would become the three-time national VFW senior snare champion from 1949-1951, inadvertently invented backsticking in 1938. He states, "At the time, I didn't think of it as a visual. I would turn the left stick over in a matched grip fashion to help me

limber my wrists before a competition," he said.<sup>25</sup>

Field percussion had always been visual, especially with the high sticking unison arm motion of the fife corps drum lines. Backsticking would later become the first stick trick to augment the visual element of drum lines and individuals.

Dowlan showed his backsticking trick to the Reilly Raiders in 1951, under the instruction of Harry Ginther, with the intention of incorporating it into the show, but it was turned down. At the time, it was viewed as too difficult to clean and, due to the rigid atmosphere of the VFW, any new change was viewed as a potential to get penalized.

Several major developments occurred during the 1950s that would revolutionize field percussion. The first was when Arsenault was hired by Ludwig to be a spokesman for his drum company, located in Chicago, in 1954.

Arsenault brought with him to the Midwest the powerful, high precision drumming of the fife and drum corps which propelled the Skokie Indians senior corps into the nationals three years running (1955-1957).

At the same time, his Chicago Cavaliers line was largely responsible for breaking the East drumming stranglehold when they won the 1957 VFW Nationals in Miami.

[While some attribute the Cavaliers' drum win that year to the fact that they were the only line to sport plastic heads in the hot, humid Miami climate, being the only snare line to maintain a crisp snare sound, the accomplishment could not have occurred, plastic head or not, without Arsenault's involvement.]

Eric Perrilloux is credited with introducing bass drum rolls with Reilly Raiders senior corps in 1956, a very unorthodox move that allowed the bass drum to eventually move from traditional timekeeper to an independent voice.

His major contribution occurred in 1957, when the drum line solo first appeared front and center, winning the Reilly Raiders the VFW National Championship. Perrilloux also used Swiss rudiments in his arrangements, breaking the mold for further experimentation with accents and texture.<sup>26</sup>

As a percussion instructor, Les Parks would begin a remarkable run of seven consecutive national AL titles with the Hawthorne Caballeros senior corps starting in 1958. He also developed the "teacup" grip, later mastered and refined by Bobby Thompson, which eventually became known

as the "Bobby Thompson Grip."

This grip, along with low grace notes, would help establish the Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights as a powerhouse drum line in the 1960s.

Marty Hurley, who marched in Blessed Sac, would later teach this grip to the snare drummers of the national contending Phantom Regiment junior corps.

Parks and Thompson marched together in one of the most prestigious drum lines ever, the Sons of Liberty Fife and Drum Corps.

During the 1950s, Dowlan, John Flowers, Rodney Goodhardt and John Bosworth had entered the Air Force to play in the Bolling Field Air Force Drum & Bugle Corps in Washington, D.C., and the four formed a rudimental drum quartet.

Recalls Dowlan, "John Flowers came to me in 1958 and said, 'Why don't we use that thing you used to do?' referring to the backsticking. Our quartet was scheduled to play as an exhibition for Blue Rock's winter I&E in Wilmington, DE, and we figured we had nothing to lose since, as an exhibition, we couldn't be penalized.

"So we modified our quartet score to include some backsticking and practiced.

1960s.

In 1961, Parks successfully argued before the AL governing body that timbales were, in fact, drums, opening the floodgates for non-traditional marching equipment. Parks had to argue again the following year to get bongos and congas, the instrumentation which eventually gave the Caballeros their trademark Latin sound.<sup>27</sup>

Dowlan comments, "In 1961, while teaching the Vasella Muskateers junior corps, we were penalized for not playing Swiss



St. Lucy's Cadets, July 26, 1969, in Bridgeport, CT (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

rudiments."

This clearly demonstrated how change had become accepted, where less than a decade prior, the fear of penalties kept drum lines from experimenting.

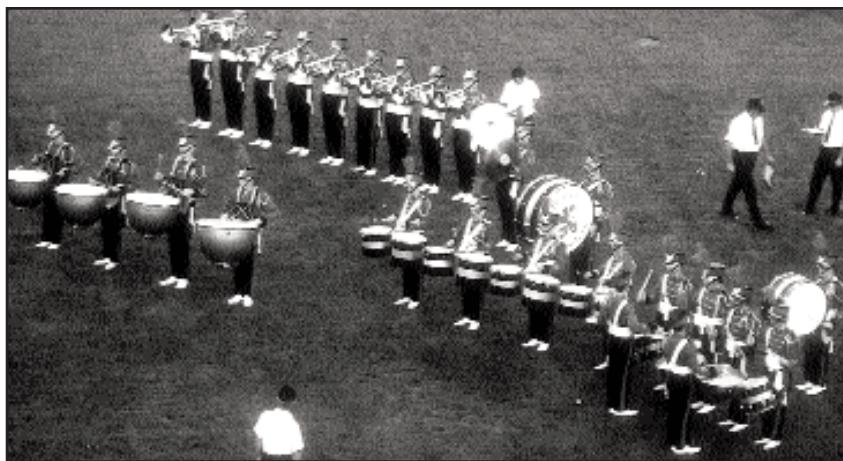
Blessed Sacrament is credited for not only being the first junior corps to use backsticking (1960) and rudimental bass (1962), but taking both to new heights, playing more complicated rudimental patterns with each.

"Without a doubt, Blessed Sacrament was the best junior corps drum line I ever saw. They executed cleanly and took chances with risky arrangements," Pagnozzi said.

Markovich introduced tuned bass drum parts in the Royal Airs' *Watermelon Man*, in 1965, forever changing the bass drum from a unison third voice to one with rhythm and pitch. He published an article in the Spring 1965 issue of *Ludwig Drummer*, titled "New

Concepts in Bass Drumming." He said that two to six bass drums, all pitched differently, would provide a more interesting line, melodically and rhythmically.

Also in 1965, Flowers, of the Westshoremens senior corps, introduced a snare-tenor combo unit, where tenors were mounted to each side of the snare. Although this didn't catch on, it was the precursor to the timp-tom trios first



Boston Crusaders, 1970 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

When we performed at the exhibition, the crowd went crazy. They loved it!

Dick Filkins was there that night, so the very next year, in 1959, credit goes to the Archer-Epler Muskateers senior corps for being the first to use backsticking, featured in their concert number, *Dipsy Doodle*."

The impetus for change had begun in the senior corps and would eventually spread to the juniors that would snowball through the



Long Island Sunrisers, July 5, 1969, at Bridgeport, CT (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

marched in 1968.

Percussion instructors successfully lobbied for marching tympani at the 1967 AL Rules Congress and the following winter Al LeMert and Jim Sewrey developed the marching tympani and timp-tom trios for the Ludwig Drum Company.<sup>28</sup>

John Flowers, with the Reading Buccaneers senior corps, introduced the marching cymbal rack in 1967, later used by St. Lucy's Cadets junior corps in 1969.

The Boston Crusaders junior corps and the Sunrisers senior corps are credited with marching keyboard instruments in 1969, both instructed by Gerry Shellmer. Boston used a vibraphone, the Sunrisers had bells and a xylophone.

Due to VFW restrictions, the Crusaders dropped the vibraphone at the national championship. DCA allowed the Sunrisers to use their mallet instruments.<sup>29</sup>

Shellmer, who had studied under Stone, would naturally be influenced by the jazz playing of another Stone protege, Joe Morello. Shellmer's marching percussion arrangements for Dave Brubeck tunes like *Unsquare Dance* for Boston in 1968 and *Blue Rondo A La Turk* for the Sunrisers in 1969,<sup>30</sup> would open the doors for odd-time meter arranging and non-traditional marching music to fit the rudimental idiom.

At this point, rudiments were still the basis of the percussion arrangements and still considered important for coordinative and physical development. "Everyone, no matter what they played -- snare, tenor, bass, cymbals, whatever -- was given a snare lesson at every practice."

The size of the drum lines started to grow from the mid- to late-1960s, with some lines marching four or five snares and four or five tenors. Adding the accessory percussion, the

numbers could easily reach 15 to 20.

In 1971, Blue Rock junior corps, under Joe Marella, marched eight snares and the Reading Buccaneers senior corps, under John Pratt, marched nine snares. The nine snares of the Bucs were split into three separate snare voices.<sup>31</sup>

This started another growth spurt that would continue through the mid-1970s, where some lines would reach 32. Styles had to change to accommodate more players. Among some corps, maximum playing heights went from 24 to four inches or less. This meant decreasing arm motion and increasing the use of the wrists.

Matched grip wasn't feasible when slings were used to carry the drums until the level bar was invented. The Royal Crusaders junior corps from Finleyville, PA, was the first corps to use matched grip in 1972, but it wasn't until Santa Clara Vanguard, under the instruction of Fred Sanford, won the DCI drum title in 1978 that matched grip gained a short-lived popularity.

The invention of the snare harness eased the transition to matched grip much more than the level bar. By 1981, almost half of the top 12 DCI corps played matched grip, but by the late 1980s every drum line in the top 12 would return to traditional. The last drum line to win a title using matched grip was Empire Statesmen senior corps when they won high drums at DCA in 1997.

The introduction in the early 1970s of tape recorders for adjudication was a milestone for increasing the analysis and general effect portions of the score.

In 1973, DCI approved the use of two marching mallet instruments and all hand-held percussion. The following year, DCA decreed that any percussion instrument that could be carried could be played.

Empire Statesmen, August 30, 1997, at DCA Prelims in Allentown, PA (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).



The capitulation of adding more percussion instruments reached a climax in 1977 when the Spirit of Atlanta junior corps, under the percussion direction of Dan Spalding, used a total of 120 separate playable instruments within the percussion section in a show in Atlanta.<sup>32</sup> This occurred five years before the advent of the pit.

DCI drum corps were scored in 1980 as follows: 25 points for marching and maneuvering, 25

points for brass, 20 points for percussion and 30 points for general effect, which was further broken down as 10 points for GE percussion, 10 points for GE brass and 10 points for GE M&M.

The 20 points for percussion was divided



Santa Clara Vanguard, 1978 (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).

into 12 points for execution and eight points for percussion analysis, which was subdivided into four points for exposure to error and four points for degree of excellence.

Ticks could also be tabulated for visual errors such as variance in stick grips, position and angle of the drums, height of stick rise and arm motion.<sup>34</sup>

In 1982, multi-tenor drummers for the Bridgemen junior corps, taught by Dennis DeLucia, would start a trend. During the drum solo, *Black Market Juggler*, the tenor players executed sweeps, where each note of a double stroke was played on a separate drum.

The Bridgemen only used right hand sweeps in a Swiss Army right-right-left pattern, but it was enough to open the door. In the following years, more sweep patterns were invented, such as helicopters and butterflies, and by the late 1980s, some tenor lines had taken center stage as the focal point of the battery (snares, tenors, bass).

Three events occurred during the 1980s



that lessened the impact of rudiments for field percussion arranging.

First, in 1982, DCI created a grounding zone, later called the pit, on the front sidelines between the 40 yard lines for any concert percussion equipment. The pit area was expanded in 1987 to stretch between the 35 yard lines.<sup>33</sup> Adding concert percussion created a new genre, where integrating concert percussion into a martial music idiom diminished the importance of the battery, subsequently altering the rudimental characteristic arrangements.

Second, in 1983, Drum Corps South eliminated the tick system of execution, thereby changing to a complete buildup system. The focus was now on the ensemble rather than on individual units within the ensemble. DCI followed suit in 1984.

Without execution to temper the demand of the drill, marching speeds increased to running tempos, making it more difficult for players to play rudimentally challenging arrangements. The general effect caption also increased, absorbing the points that were once allocated for execution.

Third, the invention of free-floating snare drums necessitated a style change where the grip had to loosen to accommodate the kevlar heads, made from the same material used for bullet proof vests. Additionally, over-torquing of the kevlar heads, coupled with a reduction in size of the snare line down to four or five players, created concern that the snare voice had been lost. Perhaps that concern was what drove the movement to increase the snare lines back to eight or nine members by the late 1990s.

Drum solos started to wane in the mid-1980s. Integration of judging elements continued and, in 1994, the DCI percussion score was reduced to 10 points while percussion ensemble and effect were consolidated with the brass to create music ensemble and effect.<sup>35</sup>

DCA currently uses two judges for percussion that is broken into two 20-point captions -- field percussion and ensemble percussion. The two captions are averaged for the total percussion score.

### **Individual and ensemble competitions**

When field days began having separate individual contests in the 1880s, contestants were judged on proper rudiment breakdown, execution and timing. Much later, a one-minute solo was added to the requirements to judge the contestants' rudimental repertoire and transitional flow from rudiment to rudiment, the beginning of more complex coordination.

The timing judge determined if a steady tempo was maintained throughout the solo.

As an example of the staggering number of individual competitions, Frank Fancher, a student of J. Burns Moore who played with the Chapman Continentals Fife and Drum Corps and Gramophone Corps, won close to 200 first prizes in individual snare

drumming.<sup>36</sup>

Daniel English, another Burns Moore student, was considered one of the finest snare drummers of his day. He played with the Lancraft Fife and Drum Corps, winning two national snare titles during his tenure. After dying at the young age of 28 from heart disease in 1931, Lancraft began the Dan English Trophy the following year, to be awarded annually in honor of the best Connecticut senior and junior drummers of the year. Those who have received this distinction were considered the best of the best. The last year the trophy was awarded was in 1988.

By 1939, individual contestants were judged on four rudiments and a solo, requiring a total of 13 minutes minimum

playing time for each contestant -- three minutes for each rudiment and one minute for the solo. Snare duets and rudimental quartets had been added to the competitions by this time, and at most individual contests, each caption was divided into male and female.

NARD and the Ludwig Drum Company sponsored an "East meets West" national individuals contest to decide which region had the best rudimental drummers. The contest was held September 23, 1940 in Boston, MA, and judged by Moore and Ludwig. In this contest, five top drummers from the West or Midwest competed against five top Eastern drummers. The results placed all the Eastern drummers well over the Western drummers."<sup>37</sup> Bob Redican won.

A week later, Connecticut drummers dominated the 1940 World's Fair American Drummer's Association National Contest, with 11 of the 21 total junior contestants coming from that state, taking the top nine places. For the senior division, seven of 11 total, and the top six finishers, hailed from Connecticut.

Dowlan recalls an interesting anecdote. After he won his third straight snare title for the senior division of the VFW in 1951, Tony Schlecta, who was in charge of VFW rules, approached him. "Don't come back next year, you've won enough," said Schlecta.

Dowlan, who at first thought Schlecta was joking, responded, "I didn't realize it was in the rule book." Schlecta looked Dowlan dead in the eye and replied, "It isn't. I just made it

up."<sup>38</sup> Who knows how many titles may have been won by champions like Dowlan had it not been for Schlecta's iron rule.

Contestants at the 1950 American Legion national individuals had to break down four rudiments, demonstrate playing a 2/4 or 6/8 piece of music not to exceed 16 measures while marching, and play a solo not to exceed three minutes. Only one rudiment, the long roll, was known ahead of time. The other three were drawn from a hat that day.

The scoring had 10 points allotted for inspection, five points per rudiment for a total of 20 points, 10 points for proper military marching, 20 points for playing while marching and 40 points for the solo selection.<sup>39</sup>

The solo was judged on execution of



Bayonne Bridgemen, 1982, at DCI Championships in Montreal, QUE (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

rudiments, accents and dynamics. Each contestant could take as much as 15 and a half minutes of judging time. Additionally, the AL National Individuals, at least from 1950-1954, had four categories of entries: the senior veteran, for veterans of the Spanish-American War and World War I; the junior veteran, for veterans of World War II; the senior open, for anyone 21 years and older; and the junior open, or anyone between the ages of 14 and 20.

The winner of each category was engraved on a perpetual trophy, awarded a medal and given a \$25 U.S. Savings Bond. Anyone who won twice was automatically inducted as a life-time member, had yearly fees waived for the Rudimental Drummers of America<sup>40</sup> and was awarded a special plaque noting a twice-won national title. Medals were also presented to second and third place.

Connecticut drummers won three of the four divisions in the 1952 AL national individual snare competition. The rudimental quartet had remained popular at local contests and was reintroduced at the national level in the 1961 VFW junior division. Rudimental tenor drumming individuals began the following year at the 1962 VFW Nationals.

Mike Stefanowicz, a Sturtze student, was the final VFW senior snare drum champion in 1963. Senior drum corps drummers would

not have another national level competition until 25 years later, in 1988, the year DCA gauged the potential interest of an I&E competition by hosting a snare drum contest. The VFW would discontinue the junior division following the 1966 season.

By the 1960s, individual snare and tenor players had to break down a long roll and flam-paradiddle and play a solo between two and three minutes. The quartets played a selection, without leadership of direction, timed between two and three minutes.

Pagnozzi of the Bridgeport PAL Cadets, the last Sturtze student to win a national title, won the junior individual VFW national snare title three years running from 1964-1966, the final years VFW held the junior individuals at their nationals. He received a perfect score on the flam-paradiddle in 1965 and in 1966, an incredible accomplishment.

He recalls, "There was tremendous pressure at contests. The timing judge nodded to you when to start each requirement. You couldn't look at your sticks or the drum. You could lose the contest after playing the first five notes of the first rudiment. The solo was judged on execution, how many rudiments you could play and how those rudiments segued from one section to the next."

His streak of winning may have continued had he not enlisted in the Navy when he turned 18. [He enlisted to avoid being drafted into a military service not of his choice which, having A1 status, was guaranteed to occur on his 18th birthday.]

The mayor of Bridgeport, CT, wrote a letter to Connecticut Sen. Irwin asking for Pagnozzi's enlistment to be deferred until after the 1966 nationals giving him a chance to become a three-peat national champion. Strings were pulled. Two weeks after he won his third snare title, he shipped out for active military service.<sup>41</sup>

"There were individual competitions all through the winter, every weekend you could compete at a contest and some weekends you had to pick between several. No one lifted sticks higher than Connecticut drummers and we loved competing in the local contests in Pennsylvania and New Jersey to prove we had superior technique," recalls Pagnozzi.

Charlie Poole reflects, "I can remember going to individual contests with my father and the competition would last through the night. We'd go have breakfast in the wee hours of the next morning and come back for the awarding of the placements."

In 1967, a group of drum instructors decided to continue a national level competition for junior drum corps members and formed the All-American Contest. Mike Meyers from the St. Mary's Cardinals drum corps was the first All-American snare champion at the contest held in Boston.

The All-American lasted until around 1974 and was probably discontinued since DCI started hosting individual and ensemble competitions in 1973. All-American Nationals was very similar to VFW, with

respect to rules, requirements and categories.

Rob Carson won his first of three national snare drum titles at the 1972 All-American held in Sarnia, ONT.

"The first year I won All-American in 1968, there were a few contestants who were experimenting with backsticking and stick tricks," Poole said. "The judges were primarily looking for how well the performers could execute cleanly at faster tempos and how well they could mirror the execution of a rudimental passage off the left hand. You had to show left hand control. Some people say we weren't very musical back then, which is arguable. One thing no one disagrees with is that we were technically proficient to the highest degree."

During this time, some judges were recognizing that stick tricks increased the difficulty. Ken Mazur reminisces, "I remember at a local individuals contest in 1968, tossing a stick in the air and losing it in the lights. I held out my hand as I had practiced and, boy what a relief when the stick fell right into my palm."<sup>42</sup>

The individual competitors between the years 1968 and the mid-1970s were the inventors of GE as applied to solo competition. Backsticking was very popular and competitors were constantly experimenting with new tricks. The general effect sub category began gaining points to accommodate crowd-pleasing visuals.

When DCI began the individuals competition, the flam-paradiddle was dropped. One rudiment, the long roll for snares and the single stroke roll for tenors and mallets, and a solo were required. The solo and rudiment each had to be between two and three minutes, and the acceleration and deceleration times of the rudiment had to be within five seconds.

The score breakdown was 15 points for the rudiment; the solo was broken down into 25 points for execution, 30 points for exposure to error and 30 points for general effect.

A timing judge subtracted one-tenth of a point for each second timing infraction and execution of the solo and rudiment was judged using the tick system. Playing time for each contestant was now between four and six minutes.

"The early 1970s is where speed drumming began to outscore coordination

difficulty in the individual snare contests. Rudiments would fly by the judges so fast, they couldn't pick them all out. Most of us played a section slow to make sure the judges understood the difficulty, then sped the hell out of it for demand points," Mazur said.<sup>43</sup>

With the advent of timp-tom trios in the late 1960s, the tenor individuals in the early 1970s changed. Incorporating rudiments with drum-to-drum and crossover maneuvers became the fashion as judges, as well as competitors, learned to adapt.

In 1984, DCI dropped the tick system of judging execution and the rudiment requirement. The contestants since that time have been judged solely on a two- to three-minute solo. Execution is still on the judge's sheet, but along with the demand and GE captions, it is judged subjectively.

In 1983, PAS began sponsoring an individual competition for snares, tenors and mallets at the annual PAS International Convention. Snares and tenors have to break down a rudiment -- the long roll for snares, the single stroke for tenors -- and play a solo. Mallet individuals played a solo only. The maximum time requirement for the rudiment is one minute and between three and four minutes for the solo, allowing a maximum of five minutes total playing time per contestant.

The PASIC rules state that contestants will be penalized for timing infractions, but timing judges are not used. Contestants have been known to play the required rudiment in 20 seconds or less and not be penalized for time differentials between the acceleration and deceleration. PAS has made no effort to enforce a standard for the rudiment breakdown.

For the solo, contestants aren't so much



Spirit of Atlanta, August 18, 1977, at the DCI Championships in Denver, CO (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

judged on rudimental proficiency as they are on displaying a wide range of percussive skills, some of which bear no relevance to snare drumming.

For instance, demonstrating four-mallet technique on a snare drum is equivalent to a mallet player using 3S marching sticks to



St. Mary's Cardinals, August 27, 1967, at American Legion Nationals in Boston, MA (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

demonstrate high-lifting rudimental rolls on a marimba.

In 1994, the PASIC individual competition was divided into two separate divisions -- high school and college. Each contestant at PASIC must be a member of PAS and be a full-time student at a college or high school.

DCA resisted hosting an I&E competition for many years because it was felt that there was not enough time during Labor Day weekend, the traditional time for the DCA Championships, to fit in an additional activity. The organization finally acquiesced in 1988, though snare drummers were the only ones judged in the beginning.

John Neurohr stated, "As soon as we came off the field from prelims, we had to report to the judges stand, which was under the stadium. We had no time to warm up." 44

Reports Frank Nash, "There were about 10 to 12 snare drummers who competed that first year." 45

The next year, DCA opened the I&E competition to all captions. It has become one of the more popular events of DCA weekend. The only requirement for the contestants is a prepared piece of two to three minutes in length.

### Summary

Field percussion and individual competitions began rudimentally; the skills of the drum lines and individual competitors were measured by how well they executed the

Bridgeport P.A.L. Cadets, 1966 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).



rudiments. Eventually difficulty was included in judging considerations, followed later by general effect.

Not only did the rudimental arrangements set the activity apart from the other idioms of percussion, orchestral and trap set drumming, but rudimental drumming played a tremendous role in increasing the skills

of all percussionists.

Consider this quote, taken from the 2002 DCA yearbook: "Drum and bugle corps percussion has had a profound impact on the entire percussion field, from rock drummers to symphony orchestras to high school bands." 46 The rudimental element is what made that quote possible.

"Without rudiments, we're just rhythmists," observes Pagnozzi.

The collapse of NARD, the shift of paradigm from unit judging to percussion ensemble and later to music effect, and the increase in drill demand have all played a part in diminishing rudiments, that which made the percussion element of the activity unique, producing a brand sound and image distinctly drum corps!

*The author wishes to extend a thank you to all those he interviewed and that sent him e-mails (see references). He is especially indebted to Ken Mazur for sharing conversations and research about the history and evolution of rudimental drumming.*

### References

1. Jodeen Popp, "Competitive Drum Corps: There and Then to Here and Now," 1979, p. 23
2. Susan Cifaldi, historian for the Company of Fifers and Drummers Museum, Ivoryton, CT, e-mail to author
3. Cifaldi
4. Cifaldi
5. Ken Mazur, "Who Took the Drums Out of Drum Corps?," Part 2, 1998, p. 2

6. Dan Spalding, "The Evolution of Drum Corps Drumming," *The Percussionist*, Vol XVII, No. 3, p. 122
7. William F. Ludwig, "My Life at the Drums," 1972, p. 22

8. Charlie Poole, phone interview
9. Gary Pagnozzi, phone interview
10. Ludwig, p. 22
11. William F. Ludwig, "The Development of Drum Rudiments," two-page flyer published by Ludwig Industries, 1960s.

12. William F. Ludwig, "National Association of Rudimental Drummers," four-page flyer published by Ludwig Industries, date unknown.
13. William F. Ludwig, "My Life at the Drums," 1972,

14. Ludwig, p. 23
15. William F. Ludwig, "The Development of Drum Rudiments," two-page flyer published by Ludwig Industries, 1960s
16. Mitch Markovich, 1986 interview
17. George Allan O'Connor, "Where Are We Going -- What Are We Doing?," *Percussive Notes*, December 1968
18. Dick Berkley, "A Practical Approach to Rudiments," *Percussive Notes*, March 1970
19. Jay Wanamaker, "PAS International Drum Rudiments," *Percussive Notes*, February 1982
20. George B. Bruce, "The Drummers' And Fifers' Guide," 1861, p. 7
21. William McGrath, "The Contribution of Senior Drum and Bugles Corps to Marching Percussion," *The Percussionist*, Spring 1980, p. 157
22. Jeff Mitchell, 1929 AL Scoring, e-mailed to author
23. McGrath, p. 160
24. Earl Orf, editor, "The Drum Corps Book of World Records," 2nd edition, 1980, p. 13
25. John Dowlan, phone interview
26. Jeff Hartsough and Derrick Logozzo, "The Timeline of Marching and Field Percussion: Part 3," *Percussive Notes*, December 1994, p. 31
27. McGrath, p. 161
28. Spalding, p. 127
29. McGrath, p. 162
30. David Vose, "An Interview With Gerry Shelmer," *The Rudimental Percussionist*, Vol 4, no. 2, 1997, p. 4-6
31. McGrath, p. 167
32. Orf, p. 11
33. Jeff Hartsough and Derrick Logozzo, "The Timeline of Marching and Field Percussion: Part 4," *Percussive Notes*, February 1995, p. 32
34. "1980-1981 Rules and Interpretations Manual," 1980 DCI
35. Mitchell, e-mail
36. Joe Gillotti, historian and librarian of Company of Fifers and Drummers Museum, e-mailed scanned copies of Frank Fancher files
37. Bob Redican, short bio mailed to Ken Mazur
38. Dowlan
39. Stuart Stack, Rudimental Drummer's of America scoresheet for 1950 AL Snare Individuals, e-mailed pdf files.
40. Stuart Stack, Rudimental Drummer's of America Organization and Contest Rules, e-mailed pdf files.
41. Pagnozzi
42. Ken Mazur, phone interview
43. Ken Mazur, "Who Took the Drums Out of Drum Corps? Part 2"
44. John Neurohr, First DCA Snare Champion 1988, e-mail to author
45. Frank Nash, three-time DCA Snare Champion, e-mail to author
46. The 38th Annual DCA World Championships 2002 program book



*Rick Beckham is an active rudimental advocate, writer, teacher and performer. He lives in Princeton, TX. He marched snare with Garfield Cadets in 1980 and 27th Lancers in 1981. He was also the drum line instructor for the University of Southern Mississippi's Pride drum line between 1980-1982. He has taught or consulted with various drum corps and marching band drum lines since.*

*He is three-time DCA individual snare champion for the years 1999-2001 and is a former member of the National Association of Rudimental Drummers and the International Association of Rudimental Drummers.*

*Beckham received his bachelor of science degree in computer science from the University of Southern Mississippi and a masters of science in computer science from the University of Texas at Dallas.*

*He has worked at Nortel Networks in Richardson, TX, since 1990, teaches private lessons on the side, maintains a Web site dedicated to rudimental drumming ([www.rudimentaldrumming.com](http://www.rudimentaldrumming.com)) and has two published books of rudimental snare solos, "The Rudimental Drummer" and "The Beckham Book."*