A Choreographic Explication of Swing and Double-Up Tournaments: Finding New Ways to Talk

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In the late 1930's a new movement was on the rise among the teenagers of Hamburg Germany. Its followers refused to join the Nazi youth organization, the Hitler Jugend—known as the H.J. They wore their hair long and were obsessed by American movies, British fashion and Swing music... They called themselves Swing Kids.

The movie "Swing Kids" explores philosophical and political positionality on issues and concerns within a specified historical context. Dance is used in the film as a metaphor for positionality and a display of resistance. Hence, in the film, the term "swing" focuses on a ideological movement, a form of political resistance, and a form of dance music concretized in a style of dance. The dance movement engages two partners in a fluid motion across a dance floor. Always in contact with each other, the partners pull and push, catapult and cuddle each other, switch places, and literally swing in a series of intricately choreographed and synchronized movements. The movements speak to the rich tradition of couple dancing, a commitment to intimacy, negotiation, and shared experiences. The movement is undergirded by the music. The music that signifies swing is characterized by polyphonic rhythms that overlay a basic melody often submerged in improvisation, and a collective use of syncopated rhythms. The political implications of the "Swing Kids" is highlighted as the kids dance as a form of resistance against a repressive regime that seeks to homogenize...
individual expression and silence political opposition by viewing energetic couple dancing as collaborative collusion against community.

In the forensic community, a recent trend is to reformulate the notion of a swing tournament by initiating a new choreographic dance step. The initial notion of a swing tournament was based in the denotative sense of the word "swing": to move from one place to another in a rhythmic, progressive pattern. A "swing" was two tournaments, held in succession of each other, in two different locations, moving from one campus to another. As a student and as a coach, we remember traveling in the late 1980s to attend the USC/UCLA Swing tournament (held on two different campuses, and separated by several days), and, later as coaches participating in the "Northern Swing" co-sponsored by Concordia College, Moorhead, MN and by Moorhead State University. In this case, only the distance of three blocks, the strategic circumvention of a graveyard and a residential neighborhood, and a time difference of only an hour and a half separated the two. Each experience, like the original conception of the "swing tournament," covered time and space.

In most cases, a swing tournament is a separate entity unto itself with a specified judging pool and awards ceremony. The accumulated sweepstakes points from one tournament are usually coupled with the accrued points from the second in order to determine an overall sweepstakes award for the entire swing. However, the trend in recent years is to conduct two tournaments in succession of each other, in the same space, on the same campus, yet under differing sponsorship. The denotative meaning of swing then becomes a misnomer.

The purpose of this article is to formulate new language, a new way of talking about and looking at the modern day practice of what we call here double-up tournaments. Using musical and dance terminology, we suggest that the swing tournament experience is a choreographed movement with the strategic placement of bodies. It is the negotiation of a geographical terrain and the intensely repetitive practice of forensics, all of this is executed in ways that
give meaning and sense to the activity by validating and recognizing tournament management and an intense commitment to forensic participation. The purpose for swing tournaments may be to capitalize on qualifying opportunities, to utilize effectively limited funds, and/or to condense a travel season. The same may be true for what we here call double-up tournaments. Yet, we argue that swing tournaments and double-up tournaments, or slow dancing, are pragmatically different experiences. This paper is a descriptive observation of how these two forms are different. It coins new language and new ways of talking about double-up tournaments. And it is a call for further quantitative and qualitative research in developing forensic practices in tournament management.

Like many dance movements that evolve and capitalize on each other—a repositioning here, a flair there, which accommodate different musical genres—the results are experientially and existentially different, and thus require a new name and orientation to articulate their purpose and intent. Hence, in describing the similarity and differences between a swing tournament and double-up tournament, we seek to formulate language that describes a new and emergent form of tournament management. We argue that each form has distinct advantages and disadvantages, which forensic directors should consider in contemplating attendance, for the two forms should not be conflated as the same forensic, and consequently, the same educational experience.

THE SWING TOURNAMENT

The traditional swing tournament typically require participants to travel to two locations, usually during a school break or holiday vacation period, with a time difference of one to several days between the tournaments. More recently, while still traveling to different campuses, some time periods are reduced to only a matter of hours or less, but still a distance is traveled. The distance between the tournaments, in most cases, has several advantages that become intrinsic to the differentiation of tournament experiences.
The following advantages are inherent to swing tournaments. Students have an opportunity to rest, if ever so slightly, between the two tournament experiences. This rest may be a matter of a day or two, or only several hours, but it is a rest period. This rest not only allows an opportunity for their body musculature to relax after a tournament's intense workout, but it also allows time for mental rest and reflection. This aligns with the current AFA focus on how a tournament contributes to and supports students' "mental and physical health." This rest period is drastically cut when tournaments are scheduled closer in time and in physical location.

Students have an opportunity to reflect upon their performances and the outcome of the previous tournament before engaging the second leg of the swing. Students could read ballots, receive coaching, and review specified judging philosophies of critics who may be encountered at the second leg of the swing. However, this time of reflection may be greatly diminished if the tournaments are separated only by a short period of time and no geographical distance. This factor is, of course, influence by individual coaching philosophies regarding student access to ballots.

At a second tournament, in the traditional sense of a swing tournament with a different campus and some geographical distance, students encounter the potential for a new judging pool, given faculty from the second campus and its hired judging pool. (The assumption here is that the hired judging pool usually consists of a high percentage of local judges who would not normally travel the distance from tournament to tournament.) When a hired judge pool remains basically the same, since both tournaments are held on the same campus, this changes the dynamics of the entire educational nature of the comments on ballots, such as a typical "see my previous ballot from this morning."

Thus, the traditional swing tournament helps students. The change in geographical terrain and two campuses clearly distinguishes the two competitive experiences, for it allows students to adapt to differing physical environments. The change of site, coupled with a new judging pool—assuming that the same judges do
not merely move across a city from one campus to another—encourages and challenges students to adapt to differing judges. Tournament schedules might vary, thus encouraging students to adapt to varying conditions and to manage their time. Additionally, tournament management could differ, based upon the tabbing system and variations, which challenge students and coaches to adapt to different cultural norms. The notion of a swing literally connoted movement, activity, change, variation, and dynamism.

The notion of a swing tournament could also be measured in terms of cost—economic or time. The joint tournament experience condensed within one weekend made it economically feasible for schools to test their skills against a wider competitive pool as well as a wider judging pool. This occurred within a specified region on a specified weekend or week. The cost of time away from school and other professional and educational obligations was reduced to a specified time period.

"Swinging out" was a dance step that signified a cultural milieu. The dance move was the intersection of the artistic and the athletic. Unlike the frenetic jolts of the jitterbug or the fast paced panting of "Saturday Night Fever" fame, swinging out was both a commitment to intimacy and a declaration of independence with each partner exerting individuality, flair, and style. Like swing tournaments, the dance movement joined two partners who were committed to a collaborative effort with the agreement that they individually would not be suppressed in the attempt to move and sway with the music, thus they experienced a mutually fulfilling and physically exhilarating artistic endeavor.

In dance terms, what used to be called doubling up or a slow dance, unlike swinging out, was an intensively sexualized, intimately linked movement that pressed bodies together by swaying in rhythm to the music and simulating a oneness that comes from sharing space and time. The act of doubling up signified the dual effort of both participants to engage in an intense closeness that marked a relational dynamic akin to making out. In many ways this intense, almost indistinguishable closeness of dancers, is symbolic of the kind of
intimacy displayed in the new configuration of swing tournaments or what we here want to term "double-up" tournaments.

**THE DOUBLE-UP TOURNAMENT**

Two tournaments that are held on the same campus in succession of each other can be characterized as double-up. In dance terms, the double-up tournament is really one dance movement that is interrupted by a pause, a kick, or maybe even a dip or an awards ceremony. After the dip has occurred, the movement continues with a new fervor and energy toward an expected conclusion. The double-up tournament format offers the following advantages.

Time and money are saved. No additional travel between tournaments is necessary because the tournaments are held in the same location. One does not need to re-negotiate for rooms and schedules, although more money might be required for additional nights in order to accommodate tournament schedules and travel time.

Students' anxiety and uncertainty may be reduced, for they do not have to adapt to a new tournament site. They will likely be less anxious and have a greater sense of comfort on the second leg of the tournament.

A potential utilization of the same tabbing system may add to the consistent administrative policies that govern the two tournaments. Although each tournament may utilize a different tab room staff, students usually encounter a consistency in scheduling and rules. Similarly, a utilization of the same judging pool could confirm consistent and committed judges.

Repetition of the same tournament schedule, in terms of timing, rooms, and facilities may contribute to a certain consistency between the two tournaments. However, great care should be taken to ensure that the pairings and judging assignments are not the same in the preliminary rounds for both tournaments.

The immediacy of the double-up tournaments, usually scheduled with only an hour or two between the awards ceremony
of one and the first round of the other, may capitalize on and extend the
adrenaline and performative drive to engage. This implies an
understanding that contestants and judges need to be aware of time
management and how to pace one's energy and sense of focus.

The doubling up of tournaments at a specified site has the
advantage and disadvantage of expanding the number of tournaments
within a specific district. In some cases, this method is used when
one of the hosting schools may not have adequate facilities on its
home campus. Thus, hosting a tournament on a neighboring campus
affords the opportunity to "host" a tournament and overcome the
limitations of its home campus. Also, this method works when there
are limited weekends within a specified month, for tournament
directors simply double on the same weekend on the same site.

However, double-up tournaments can accrue disadvantages
that far outweigh the advantages, which are mostly drawn from
convenience and proximity.

Double-up tournaments can actually serve to increase the
number of total tournaments attended or offered within the season.
Hence, this would mean keeping students away from their academic
studies for longer periods of time on a weekend. This has certainly
been an increasing concern in the public discourse in the forensic
community.\textsuperscript{4}

As more double-up tournaments are scheduled, this could
actually cost more money. With additional fees and perhaps an
additional overnight stay, double-up tournaments could create
financial burdens. However, some programs might deem it
competitively and politically necessary to attend and support
neighboring programs.

Ultimately, double-up tournaments work in contradistinction
to some of the advantages of a swing tournament. Double-up
tournaments not only reduce the judging and competitive pool of the
two consecutive tournaments, they actually concretize those pools by
negating the need to swing, to move, to reflect, and to initiate some
element of difference. The replication of judges and competitors
within the specified site may simply insure the replication of results
and instigate an oppressive educational environment. Individual programs may want to consider these variables when deciding the relative merits of double-up tournaments and how many to attend.

The renaming of the new configuration of swing tournaments to double-up tournaments literally describes the phenomenon. Two tournaments are buttressed against each other in time and space. They are intimately interconnected by a dance movement choreographed by the directors of each. The rhythm is paced by how the tournaments are scheduled. In double-up tournaments, the second tournament moves in a space that is always and already occupied by the rhythms and resonant traces of the preceding competition. The competitive impulses of the first are spliced to and foreshadowed in the second.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the film "The Swing Kids," the prophetic and declamatory Duke Ellington song, "It don't mean a thing, if it ain't got that swing," is used as a secret code. The song marks a political and ideological positionality. It is used as a mantra, for the repeated line and tune serve as a reminder of self and other, and it is used as a underlying impulse, a rhythm of life and social practice. At the end of the movie, the dancers persist in their expression of a choreographed movement against Hitler's political regime. But through dissension, political pressure, physical force, and social alienation their ranks are broken and most dancers succumb to the pressure of change and the Zeitgeist of the time: "Hundreds of Swing Kids were sent to work camps. Thousands more were forced into the army and died in war. But the movement continued to grow, and a new generation of Swing Kids survived to see the defeat of the Nazis."\(^5\) For some time, those who accomplished this task performed a silent resistance by maintaining the spirit of swing. Their resistance was far from being a simple rhythmic movement from side to side, a progressive pattern, or a musical genre. They maintained an ideology that contributed to a democratic ideal,
personal growth, separateness, and individuality.

A new trend in the forensic community to reformulate the notion of a swing tournament, is initiating a new choreographic dance step. Yet, unlike the politically potent climate and historical period chronicled in the film, this new forensic trend is only a variation. Both swing and double-up tournaments can provide a service to the forensic community. We believe that these two configurations, the traditional swing tournament and the double-up tournament offer existentially different experiences.

The implications of whether the swing or the double-up tournament is more desirable are realized in how a coach determines which kind to attend and how many of either to include in the travel schedule, which will be resolved by the goals, objectives, available resources, and how one evaluates the costs and rewards of each. The naming of this trend in the forensic community marks the differences embedded in how they are configured in time and space, with special emphasis on tournament management and judging pools.

The purpose of this article has been to formulate new language, for it is germinal to the nature of human communication to invent language to reflect and demarcate the differences in perceivable phenomenon in our lived experience. The practice of conducting two tournaments consecutively, on the same site, with different sponsorship, is a relatively new phenomenon in forensics. Though it capitalizes on a rich heritage of swing tournaments, it is in essence a variation—a new practice. It is a new praxis that influences the nature of the activity. Thus, our naming of the double-up tournament seeks to assign the practice legitimacy and difference as a unique form, while still offering it associative credence in its relation to the establish practice of swing tournaments.

This paper has been a descriptive observation of a new trend in forensic management and tournament configuration. Hopefully, it can serve as a precursor for more extensive research into the quantitative and qualitative differences between swing and double-up tournaments. The authors of this article do not wish to demonize the
practice of double-up tournaments. The purpose of this article is not
to create a hierarchy of difference between swing tournaments and
double-up tournaments. Yet, the purpose is to mark different
approaches to a commonly held practice in tournament management
and forensics competition. Hence, we encourage further research by
our colleagues on the historical development and origins of swing
tournaments. We offer the following questions as fertile ground on
which the forensic community can survey and make intellectual
inquiry into its practices.

Do competitors encounter significant differences in
tournament results in a double-up tournament—two tournaments held
in succession on the same campus—as opposed to the results of a
swing tournament—two tournaments held in close proximity divided
by time and space? What are the differences based on the amount
of time and the amount of distance?

Do students experience swing tournaments and double-up
tournaments as existentially different? Is the notion of "swing" in
swing tournaments a necessary descriptor of the dual tournament
experience?

Do schools or teams attending swing or double-up
tournaments have the same reasoning for participation (i.e.
convenience, economics, diverse judging pools, diverse competitive
pool, concentrated opportunities for national tournament
qualification)?

The word "swing" suggests a movement, a shift in time and
space. The closing scene of the film "Swing Kids" depicts a swing
kid being arrested and taken away by the Nazi youth organization.
As a form of his resistance, he proclaims the sentiments of the film:
"It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." The guiding
impulse of this paper might be: "It means something totally different
. . . if it ain't got that swing." The final line of the movie is an
echo of resistance and a politically imbued appropriation of a Nazi
salute, "Swing Heil." The forensic community should continue to
explore new and varied methods of presenting and formulating
tournament experiences. Yet in that process, we encourage a clear
demarcation of the differences. The process of naming is ultimately the process of giving credence. It also helps to identify the individuality of one convention, form, or identity so that it is not usurped, mistaken, or confused with another. It ensures that the uniqueness of a form is not overshadowed by the lack of clarity in a linguistic descriptor and the accompanying expectations and educational consequences of new practices.

ENDNOTES


4. Summer Development Conference in Forensics, August 16-17, 1997, Rice University, Houston, TX.