

Rules and regulations of brass band contesting

Since brass band contesting came into being in the middle of the nineteenth century there have been regulations (written or generally understood) that attempt to create a shared understanding among competitors of what competing bands had to comply with. When the Victorian impresario Enderby Jackson ran his famous Crystal Palace contests in the early 1860s he drew up precise regulations that suited the different types of brass bands that entered.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, when the brass band movement had moved closer to a standard instrumentation, it was possible to issue regulations that applied to bands throughout the country, and it is interesting that the earliest of the contest regulations given here refers specifically to bands of a maximum of 24 players – approximately the number of players that constitute a modern brass band.

One of the features of brass band rules and regulations is that they are devoted to procedures and an explanation of the processes that are used for entering and taking part in a contest. They do not state the criteria upon which bands will be judged: this information is taken for granted.

Crystal Palace Band Contest, September 1902

1. This great Musical Festival and Contest is restricted to Amateur Brass Bands of not more than 24 player in each band. Any performer who, within six months of the date of close of the entries, has been engaged as a regular member of the bands of any theatre or other public place of amusement, or resort, will be considered professional, and therefore ineligible to compete. Every performer must be in a position to prove that he is in some business or profession from which he derives his chief income, apart from the playing of music.
2. The bands competing at this Festival will be divided into four sections:-
First Section - For the One Thousand Guinea Cup.
Second Section - For bands wishing to be eligible to compete in the first section next year.
Third Section - Limited to bands who have not won a cash prize exceeding £15. in value.
Fourth Section - Limited to bands who have not won a cash prize exceeding £6. in value.
3. All the above sections are open to bands of Great Britain and the Colonies.
4. All the players must be bona fide members of the bands in which they are entered, and each player must have been enrolled as a member of such a band at least three months prior to the day of the contest. No member will be allowed to play with more than one band, and if found playing with two bands, both bands will be disqualified.

5. Every member of the bands must be resident in the town or within a distance of four miles, or thereabouts, of the town from which the band is entered. Special remark must be made, and special permission obtained from the Contest Director, at the time of entry, before any member, whose residence is more than four miles distant, will be allowed to play.
6. Each band must play the test piece selected which will be sent free to each band competing at least six clear weeks prior to the day of Contest. No rearrangement of the music will be allowed.
7. No valve trombones or drums will be allowed.
8. Each band to send the name by which it is known, together with the names of every performer, instrument, conductor and secretary, accompanied by an entrance fee of £1 1s. for the first section and 10s/6d. for other sections. The entry fee and entry forms for first section bands containing the above particulars to be forwarded to the Contest Director, Crystal Palace, London S. E., not later than August 23, 3rd and 4th sections close on August 30.

It is particularly requested that early application be made. No performer will be allowed to play during the contest except upon the instrument entered opposite his name in the entry form.

9. The order of playing to be balloted for in front of the Great Orchestra, Crystal Palace, at 11.30 o'clock. All bands will be balloted for whether present or not. Any band failing to be ready within five minutes to take its place as drawn will be disqualified. Representatives from each band will be expected to be present at the ballot and elect supervision committees for each section.
10. The Contest for first section bands will start sharp at 12 o'clock in the Concert Room as usual. The second, third and fourth sections will start playing at the same time, at stands provided at convenient places in the grounds (that is to say, in the open).
11. The Contest Director will have power to decide any dispute that may arise in connection with the Contest, and his decision will be absolutely final. The decision of the various Adjudicators to be final, and from such decisions there will be no appeal, except where a band is disqualified for an infringement of the rules. Where a prize is withheld for a breach of the rules, such prize will be given to the next in order of merit. All cash prizes will be paid on the day of the Contest.
12. If any band wish to lay an objection against another band the sum of one guinea must be deposited, at the same time such band must enter the protest in writing to the Contest Director, and such protest must be lodged in his hands or at the General Manager's Office within half-an-hour of the finish of the performance of the band objected to. Should the objection not be sustained the deposit will be estreated but if proved genuine the deposit money will be returned.

13. No objection will be entertained as to a performer being a professional or being otherwise ineligible (except in connection with the playing of the music on the day as provided in the Rules), unless full particulars are forwarded at least one week previous to the Contest.
14. Bands winning first prize in sections for which a Trophy is provided before receiving possession of the same must conform with the usual regulations which have been provided by the Crystal Palace Company to ensure the safe custody and return during the period of holdership by the band.
15. In order to ensure fairness to all, no band will be allowed to rehearse on the day of the contest owing to the large number of bands competing. This rule will be rigidly enforced. Any band infringing it will be disqualified.
16. A conductor, professional or amateur may act for more than one band, in either of the first, third and fourth sections, but will not be allowed to play in any band. In the second section only the resident bandmasters will be allowed to conduct, no man conducting more than one band.
17. Each band of the first section must appear in uniform. For the other sections it is optional.
18. Admission tickets to the Palace to the number of twenty-six will be forwarded to each competing band, and on no account can a bandsman enter the grounds without a ticket or payment of the usual entrance fee. Bands can obtain railway tickets at special low rates from London to the Palace by applying to the Contest Director.
19. Any band infringing any of these rules is liable to disqualification.
20. The Contest Director reserves the right to add to or amend either of these rules, each band being advised of such alterations or additions, at least fourteen days previous to the contest.

Belle Vue, September 1907

1. In the event of any band winning first prize three years in succession, every man will be awarded a gold medal and not allowed to compete the following year.
2. Every member of the band must be resident in the town, or within a distance of four miles, or thereabouts.
3. A player entered and playing at the July contest will not be allowed to play with another band at the September contest.
4. A professional may be engaged as conductor and may conduct more than one

band, but will not be able to play in any band.

5. The number of competing bands will be limited to twenty.
6. The number of members in each band will be limited to twenty four.
7. No member will be allowed to play an instrument other than the one on which he is registered.
8. All players must have been members for more than three months.
9. Any member, who within six months of the date of the close of entries, has played regularly with a professional orchestra, will be considered a professional.
10. Every performer must be in a position to prove that he derives his chief income apart from playing music.
11. Preference will be given to bands who have gained a prize at the September Belle Vue contest in the past two years, or the July Contest this year.
12. The test piece must not be played in public prior to the contest.
13. Only slide trombones are allowed.

**National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain
Rules issued 1 January 1989**

Definitions

1. These rules regulate the National Brass Bands Championships of Great Britain.
2. In these Rules the expressions listed shall have the following meanings:

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| 'Boosey & Hawkes' | means Boosey & Hawkes Band Festivals Limited, a limited company whose registered office is at 295 Regent Street, London W1R 8JH; |
| 'Championships' | means the National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain; |
| 'Contest Management' | means Boosey & Hawkes in respect of the Finals and the Regional Committees in respect of the Regional Championships; |
| 'National Contesting Council' | means the body made up and convened in accordance with Rule (5) below. |

Basic provisions

- 3 The title of 'National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain' is wholly owned by Boosey & Hawkes.
- 4 Boosey & Hawkes reserves the right to amend or replace these rules in accordance with Rule (5biii).
- 5 The National Contesting Council will be established as follows:
- (a) The Council will comprise one named representative from each of the Regional Committees, the Managing Director of Boosey & Hawkes and a chairman appointed by Boosey & Hawkes.
 - (b) The functions of the Council will be to:
 - (i) recommend persons for inclusion in the approved list of adjudicators;
 - (ii) decide matters pertaining to the Regional Championships;
 - (iii) consider and formulate amendments to these Rules;
 - (iv) hear and decide appeals against the decisions of the Contest Management in accordance with Rule (30);
 - (v) resolve any difficulties arising in connection with the Championships which are not otherwise provided for under these Rules.

Eligibility for Championships

- 6 (a) Bands will be graded into championship, second, third and fourth sections in accordance with the Grading Rules set out in Appendix I.
- (b) Bands must enter the section in which they are currently graded by the Regional Committee. A band which has not yet been graded will enter the fourth section or support its application to compete in the section of its choice by providing evidence of its status as required by the Regional Committee.
- 7 All players taking part in the Championships must be registered in accordance with the Rules of the British Brass Band Registry or an accredited registry.
- 8 The Championships are open to brass bands only which will be subject to the following:
- (a) they will, subject to Rule (10b) below, consist of a maximum of 25 players (plus percussionists) or recognised classification, namely:
 - Eb soprano cornet, Bb cornet, Bb flugel horn, Eb tenor horn, Bb baritone, Bb euphonium, slide trombones, Eb and EEb bass, Bb and BBb bass (Eb trumpets are not permitted);
 - (b) the maximum number of percussionists allowed will be three;

- (c) no brass player will be allowed to play more than one brass instrument. It will be permissible for a brass player to play a brass instrument and to assist on percussion if so required;
 - (d) a professional conductor may be engaged to conduct a band or bands at a contest. A conductor must not play an instrument in the band he/she is conducting;
 - (e) bands must play in uniform, or in dress of a uniform nature, unless special exemption has been obtained in writing in advance from the Contest Management;
 - (f) no band may rehearse on the day of the contest within hearing distance of the place of the contest;
 - (g) a player in the process of transfer may not play with more than one band at the same Regional Championship.
- 9 Regional boundaries will be designated for the Regional Championships in accordance with the terms set out in Appendix II. Bands must take part in the Regional Championships in the region in which their bandroom is situated.
- 10 (a) No player may take part in the youth section if by the date of the Regional Championship he/she has attained the age of 18 years. Players must, if required, produce their birth certificates to the Contest Management.
- In the event of a band qualifying for the Finals, all players who competed with the band at the Regional Championships will be allowed to play with that same band at the Finals.
- (b) The maximum number of players in a band in the youth section shall not exceed 35, including percussionists.
- 11 Particular provisions for the Finals are as follows:
- (a) entry forms for the Regional Championships will state the number of prize-winning bands that will qualify at the Regional Championships in each section for the Finals;
 - (b) if a band which has qualified under Rule (11a) above is unable to compete in the Finals, the next band in order of merit may, at the discretion of the Contest Management, be invited to compete;
 - (c) the first prize-winning band in each section at the Regional Championships will be Regional Champions for that section for the current contesting year;

- (d) the winners of the Championship and Youth Sections in the Finals for any contesting year (the Champion Band of Great Britain and the Champion Youth Band of Great Britain respectively) will qualify automatically for the following year's Finals and will not compete in the Regional Championships that same following year;
- (e) any band having won the Championship Section in the Finals for three years in succession will not compete in the Finals in the fourth successive year, but will be invited to compete in the Finals in the following year (year five).

Contest procedure

- 12 (a) In order to enter the Regional Championships a band will properly complete and return to the Contest Management the entry form together with the appropriate fee before the closing date for entries. The fee and closing date shall be as stated on the entry form. The fee is not refundable.
- (b) Whilst every effort will be made to publish the dates of the Regional Championships and to send out entry forms, it is the responsibility of the secretary of each band to obtain the entry form from the Contest Management to allow the band to enter the Regional Championships.
- 13 (a) When the Contest Management has accepted an entry form, it will send a contest signatures form to the band secretary. The band secretary must arrange for the form to be properly completed and signed by all players who are eligible to play in the relevant contest. The secretary must return the form **TOGETHER WITH THE PLAYERS' REGISTRATION CARDS** on or before the date stipulated by the Contest Management.
- (b) Any additions or amendments to the contest signatures form must be received by the Contest Management **NOT LATER THAN FOUR WEEKS** before the date of the contest and must be accompanied by the registration cards of the players concerned.
- 14 (a) The signatures on the registration cards will be compared by the Contest Management with the signatures appearing on the contest signatures form. Provided the Contest Management is satisfied that the signatures on the registration cards match the signatures on the contest signatures form, it will return the registration cards to the band secretary to arrive no later than one week before the contest.
- (b) The responsibility shall rest with the band secretary to ensure that all players included in the personnel of the band on the day of the contest are registered members of that band.
- 15 A contest schedule will be prepared by the Contest Management and sent to all

bands competing in the Championships.

- 16 If a substitute conductor is to be used on the day of a contest, the Contest Management should be informed of the details by the band secretary. It shall not be permissible for the original conductor to take over from the substitute conductor at any point after the band has commenced playing.
- 17 The order in which the bands in each section will play at a contest shall be decided by a ballot organised by the Contest Management. The ballot will take place on the day of the contest at the time and place stated by the Contest Management in the contest schedule. Bands must play in the order they are drawn.
- 18
 - (a) Each band shall appoint a representative to attend the ballot and act on its behalf in all matters pertaining to the Rules. The representative must properly complete and present to the Contest Controller the card supplied by the Contest Management in order to establish his/her authority as the representative appointed to attend the ballot. Any queries regarding the Rules must be raised by the representative before the ballot takes place.
 - (b) Should a representative fail to attend the ballot at the time and place stated, an official of the Contest Management will take his/her place for the purpose of the ballot, and the relevant band must accept the result.
- 19
 - (a) Screened adjudication will be used for the Championships.
 - (b) The representatives appointed to attend the ballot will, immediately prior to the ballot taking place, elect a supervision committee of two of their members who will escort the adjudicator/s to the adjudicators' box, inspect the box and report to the Contest Controller and the other representatives at the ballot that they are satisfied with the adequate screening of the adjudicator/s.
- 20
 - (a) If a player is unable to compete due to personal illness or injury, the representative may, immediately prior to the ballot taking place, apply to the Contest Controller for a deputy player and support the application by providing documentary evidence (eg. medical certificate. Self-certification forms will not be accepted.)

Providing the Contest Controller is satisfied that the application is genuine, he/she will instruct the band drawn to play immediately before the band making the application, to supply the relevant deputy player, complete with instrument and band part. If the band making the application is drawn No 1, the band drawn last must supply the deputy player.
 - (b) The secretary of the band supplying the deputy player, or the representative attending the ballot, shall be held responsible for

ensuring that the deputy player fulfils this commitment.

A player acting as a deputy must not accept any payment for his services.

- (c) Only one application for a deputy player per band will be considered.
- 21 The band drawn No. 1 must assemble at the registration table at least 15 minutes before the time stated by the Contest Management in the contest schedule for the section to commence.
- 22 (a) Each player must present his/her registration card to the officials at the registration table for scrutiny and endorsement, and must sign his/her name on the contest signatures form.
- (b) Any discrepancy will be reported by the registration officials to the Contest Controller. In cases of doubt the Contest Controller must notify the band secretary, or the individual acting on his/her behalf, that the player concerned and the band may risk subsequent disciplinary action.
- 23 If any band is not ready to play within four minutes of the time stated for the section to commence, or of the preceding band leaving the platform, the band may be disqualified by the Contest Management.
- 24 The adjudicator/s will place the bands in order of merit for the announcement of prizes and awards. The awards will be presented at the conclusion of the contest. Cash prizes will be distributed in accordance with Rule (26) below. The decision of the adjudicator/s shall be final.
- 25 (a) Any objection at the time of the Championship concerning any alleged breach of the Rules must be presented in writing to the Contest Controller before the prizes and awards are announced.
- The band or individual making the objection will deposit an amount of £20, which will be returned if the objection is sustained but not otherwise. No deposit will be required when an objection is presented by an official of the Contest Management.
- (b) Any protest made after the prizes or awards have been announced concerning any alleged breach of the Rules or error in the results must be submitted in writing to the Contest Management within 14 days of the Championship.
- The protest must be accompanied by an amount of £30, which will be returned if the protest is sustained but not otherwise.
- (c) Where the Contest Management finds that there has been a breach of the Rules or an error in the results, it will revise the list of prize and award winning bands and, where appropriate, order awards to be

returned.

- (d) Where either the Contest Controller or the Contest Management finds that there has been a breach of the Rules, it may take disciplinary action under Rule (29) below.

Objection and protest forms will be available from the Contest Controller on the day of a contest or from the Contest Management.

- 26 If at the expiration of 14 days from the date of a contest the Contest Management is satisfied that no breach of these Rules has occurred, the cash prizes will be sent by post to the band secretaries of the prize-winning bands.
- 27 Challenge awards will be competed for each year unless otherwise decided by the Contest Management.

A band winning an award must give an undertaking signed by two officials of the band to keep the award in good and safe condition and to protect and insure it against loss or any damage whatsoever, and to return the award in good condition upon instructions from the Contest Management.

Discipline and appeals

- 28 Disciplinary action will be taken by the Contest Management against any player who submits a false signature or who at any time improperly gives his/her signature to documents for more than one band.

Disciplinary action will also be taken by the Contest Management against any band secretary who submits a false registration or countenances a false signature.

- 29 In the event of any player, official or conductor of a band being found guilty of a breach of these Rules, or failing to comply with the conditions as may be set forth in the contest signatures form and contest schedule, or who commits any act which in the opinion of the Contest Management would be prejudicial to the proper conduct or reputation of the Championships, the band may be subject to disqualification and /or forfeiture of prizes and awards and /or suspension from entering the Championships for such time as may be decided by the Contest Management.
- 30 Any appeal against any decision made or disciplinary action taken by the Contest Management must be submitted in writing to the Managing Director of Boosey & Hawkes.

The National Contesting Council will hear and decide any appeal at its next meeting and the following procedure will apply:

- (a) the individual or band making the appeal will be invited to put the case at the meeting. Where the appeal has been made by a band, its case will

be put by the band secretary or other representative of the band appointed for that purpose.

- (b) the decision of the National Contesting Council will be communicated in writing to the appellant by the Managing Director of Boosey & Hawkes within seven days, giving the reasons for that decision;
- (c) the decision of the National Contesting Council shall be final and shall not be subject to any further appeal or any legal proceedings whatsoever.

Appendix I Grading rules

The National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain will apply the following grading system or an accredited grading system approved by the National Contesting Council.

- a) Grading will be carried out annually immediately following the regional championships. New grading will become effective from 1st Jan. of the following year.
- b) The Regional Secretary will maintain the grading register and grading will be based only on the results of the regional championships.
- c) Bands affected by promotion or relegation will be notified by the Regional Secretary as soon as possible after the grading has been completed.
- d) Any band given exemption from competing in a regional championship under Rules (11d) and (11e) will be positioned equal first for that year.
- e) The Champion Band of Great Britain of the second, third and fourth sections will be promoted automatically.
- f) In the second, third and fourth sections, the bands with the two best aggregate placings over the previous three years will be promoted. In sections where there are ten bands or less on the grading register, only the band/s with the best aggregate placing will be promoted.
- g) In the Championship, second and third sections, the bands with the two poorest aggregate placings over the previous three years will be relegated. In sections where there are ten bands or less on the grading register, only the band/s with the poorest aggregate placing will be relegated.
- h) Any band entering a regional championship for the first time will on its first grading be given an average position for the previous two years for that section. The average position will be calculated by totalling the placings awarded and dividing by the number of bands competing in that year. The average position will be corrected to the nearest half number.

- i) When two or more bands receive equal marks, each band will be given the same numerical placing. The next band will be placed the equivalent number of places below.
- j) Any band failing to compete will be placed on position lower than any competing band in that section.
- k) Any band failing to compete for two consecutive years will be relegated. The Regional Committee may waive this rule at its discretion. Any such relegation will be in addition to any action taken under rule (g).
- l) Any band failing to compete for three consecutive years will be removed from the grading register before compilation of the grading tables at the end of the third year. If such a band wishes to resume contesting, it will be treated as a first time entry in accordance with Rule (6b).
- m) Bands promoted or relegated will, for grading purposes, be given an average position for the years prior to their promotion or relegation.
- n) Any band, whether or not affected by promotion or relegation, which considers it has special reasons to be regraded must, within four weeks of receiving notification of its grading, submit an appeal to the Regional Committee.

Appendix II
Regional boundaries

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| 1. | Scotland | |
| 2. | North of England | Northumberland, Durham, Cleveland, Cumbria, North Yorkshire except the District of Selby |
| 3. | North West & North Wales | Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Merseyside, Gwynedd, Clwyd |
| 4. | Yorkshire | West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Humberside, the District of Selby |
| 5. | North Midlands | Salop, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire |
| 6. | South Midlands & East Anglia | Hereford & Worcester, West Midlands, Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Norfolk |
| 7. | Wales | Dyfed, Powys, Gwent, West Glamorgan, Mid-Glamorgan, South Glamorgan |

8. London & Southern Counties Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Greater London, Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex, Kent, Hampshire
9. West of England Devon, Cornwall, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Avon, Gloucestershire