

# What the Score on Your Sheet Really Means

A judge, after listening to your performance, may assign it a point value and note it on your adjudication sheet as well as—hopefully, but not always possible—lots of constructive comments. (Depending on your association guidelines, points will be assigned either immediately after your performance or after *all* competitors have played.)

Piping scores aren't like a math test where you get points for each question. You don't earn a set number of points for each properly played embellishment or for consistent tempo or for each correct melody note.

You should consider the points you get for a performance for that event only. If you score 50 on one day, it could be an 85 from another judge for the same performance. The only truly meaningful comparison of your own performance scores over time would require the same judge, the same event, the same competitors playing the same tunes in the same playing order, under the same circumstances—impossible.

It is the opinion of some judges that the primary purpose of a score sheet is to justify the result, not to be used as a lesson for improvement. Since in many instances there are more faults than can be covered on the form, especially given the time constraints, many judges just comment on the fundamental flaws first. This means that even if the *mentioned* flaws were corrected in advance, that piper still *may not* have won a prize for that event.

The judge will listen to the sound quality of the instrument: both tuning and timbre.

1. Are the drones tuned together and in tune with the chanter?
2. Is the chanter well balanced and in tune?
3. How is the tonal quality - full, or thin, or dull?

The judge will evaluate the technique and execution.

1. Are the embellishments and notes played accurately and precisely?
2. Is blowing steady throughout or does it degrade with time or during difficult passages?
3. Does the player have control of his instrument?
4. Are there "chokes" (i.e, the melody cuts out for a note or two) or "squeals" from the chanter?
5. Is the tune appropriate for the player's ability and the level of the contest?

The judge listens to the "music".

1. Does the player understand and play this type of tune correctly?
2. Does the music "flow"?
3. Is the interpretation correct?
4. Is this an appropriate "setting" of the tune?

Let's take a look at one of my early score sheets as an example:

**CELTIC HIGHLAND GAMES OF THE QUAD CITIES 2003**  
**Midwest Pipe Band Association**  
**INDIVIDUAL PIPING**

COMPETITOR: Heuvelman, Peter DATE: AUG. 23, 2003  
 EVENT: \_\_\_\_\_ CONTEST: GRADE 4 JUDGE: David McNally  
Walter Douglas MBE

EVALUATION	COMMENTS
<b>TONE</b>	
<b>CHANTER</b>	1st ✓
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BRIGHT <input type="checkbox"/> DULL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FULL <input type="checkbox"/> THIN	
<b>DRONES</b>	2nd - a little roundish
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WELL TUNED <i>Not w/chanter</i> <input type="checkbox"/> SLIGHTLY OUT <input type="checkbox"/> OUT OF TUNE	3rd - more on LA's before Tairnath
<b>EXECUTION</b>	4th Nicely Expression - small fluff on Hit
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VERY GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	
<b>EXPRESSION</b>	Well played + expressed - though in some spots there was some round playing
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VERY GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	Drone together but not locked into chanter.
<b>TEMPOS</b>	Nice job
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VERY GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	
<b>BREAKS</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT <input type="checkbox"/> VERY GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	
<b>FINISH</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CLEAN <input type="checkbox"/> RAGGED	
<b>TOTAL POINTS (100 MAX)</b> ( no fractions )	
74	
<u>David McNally</u> SIGNATURE OF JUDGE	

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Not a bad performance but still needing improvement. Notice the comment about "rounding." This means I didn't play the "dot cuts" crisply...does that sound familiar? The chanter was also not in tune with the drones.

Where you place in an event is much more telling than the score on your sheet. Use the feedback to polish your performance and improve your piping skills.