

Call of the Month: Doing it “straight” by Barry Leiba

This month we'll take a look at an old experimental call: the STRAIGHT concept. It's not on any Callerlab list, but it's interesting and, hey, it seemed appropriate. I learnt it a couple of years ago from the caller Roy Leber; perhaps you'll see it around somewhere too.

To begin with, let's take a look at the Plus call CROSSFIRE, and let's look at the traffic pattern in particular. In CROSSFIRE, the ends CROSS FOLD while the centers TRADE and EXTEND. Usually it's called from two-faced lines. The centers have no trouble, nor do the out-facing (leading) ends, who have all the room in the world. But the in-facing (trailing) ends have to CROSS FOLD through the middle of the square, which is already crowded because the centers are trading. For that reason, the experimental call STRAIGHTFIRE was invented. It's the same as CROSSFIRE for everyone except the trailing ends, who walk “straight” across, rather than trying to fold through the middle of the mess. In the process, because of how CROSSFIRE would go, they move to the center a bit to become centers (instead of ends). STRAIGHTFIRE fixes the traffic problems for the trailing ends, but it never really caught on.

The STRAIGHT concept is a generalization of STRAIGHTFIRE. In any appropriate call, the trailing ends walk straight across and move to the center (CROSSOVER CIRCULATE, for the Advanced dancers) while the others do their part of the call normally. It's simple to explain. Thus, STRAIGHTFIRE is shorthand for STRAIGHT CROSSFIRE.

What are some other “appropriate calls”? Well, another call we can do “straight” is RECYCLE. In RECYCLE also, the ends CROSS FOLD, so in STRAIGHT RECYCLE, the trailing ends will walk across, while the others do their parts of the call. Now, this is a bit trickier than STRAIGHTFIRE, because here the leading center, who would have followed the trailing end (usually grabbing hands and being led along) now has to “follow” someone who isn't really there. That amounts to that center doing a tight little loop toward the outside, turning all the way around and ending up about where he started, while the trailing end from the **other** side of the square comes over to join him. If the call started from the standard parallel waves, it ends in eight chain formation, just as a regular RECYCLE would. That's one thing that most STRAIGHT calls have in common — they end in the same formation as does the original call.

We don't have to start from lines or waves. We can start from diamonds and do a STRAIGHT CUT THE DIAMOND (you remember that call; it's an Advanced call that was a Plus quarterly in early 1991). In a regular CUT THE DIAMOND the centers DIAMOND CIRCULATE while

the ends (points) slide together and TRADE. So if we do it straight, the centers have no problem, and will become the ends of the lines, as before. The trailing end will walk across to become the center of the line opposite him. The leading end has to slide in and pretend to trade — there's no one there with whom he can trade, but he must do it as though someone were there. That's another thing that's common to most STRAIGHT calls — the trailing end has it really easy, and that tends to make things trickier for the leading end.

I said that the formation usually ends the same as in the original call. We can see a variation on that by having the Advanced dancers try a STRAIGHT SLIDE AND SLITHER from parallel waves. In that, while the trailing ends start to walk across, the trailing centers SLIDE (nose-to-nose) with the leading ends and the leading centers SLIDE with ghosts. Then the original leading ends (who are now in the center) SLITHER (nose-to-nose) with ghosts, making room for those trailing ends, who are at last arriving to take the place of the ghosts. The call will end in three-and-one lines, rather than ending in two-faced lines, as a normal SLIDE AND SLITHER would.

Not all calls make sense to do STRAIGHT. Calls might be unsuitable because of the traffic pattern, or because of the formation in which the call ends. For instance, STRAIGHT LINEAR CYCLE wouldn't work, because while the trailing ends walk across, everyone else will change the orientation of the square by 90 degrees, and there'll be no place for the trailing ends to go. Some calls might be suitable for higher levels, but not for Mainstream or Plus. For instance, we can do a STRAIGHT FLIP THE DIAMOND, but it ends up with a trailing end walking across into the same spot as the leading end from the other diamond. According to the rules, the two dancers coming to the same spot would take right hands and we'd end up with odd offset lines with a gap in the middle of each - a formation that's not usable at the Plus level (though at C2 we could have the new leading ends RIGHT LOOP 2 and we'd be back into something normal again).

So try STRAIGHT ENDS CROSS RUN (Mainstream), STRAIGHT SWING THRU (Mainstream), STRAIGHT TRADE THE WAVE (Plus), STRAIGHT MIX (Advanced), STRAIGHT SWITCH THE WAVE (Advanced), or STRAIGHT TWIST AND PASS OUT from three-and-one lines (C1). See what other calls you think you can do “straight”. Hmm. You think someone ought to come up with a “gay” concept? It would give a bit of a different meaning to the term “gay square dancing”.