

Call of the Month: Tag the Line by Barry Leiba

Last month we talked about formation awareness. This month we'll look at the Mainstream call TAG THE LINE while we think about what happens to the formation during the process.

TAG THE LINE can be done from any general line (including waves, two-faced lines, and so on - see last month's description of lines). Everyone faces the center of their line, putting the line into a DOUBLE-PASS-THRU formation. We can think of this as "zero tag". Then for each quarter we're asked to tag, everyone extends once (sometimes called EXTEND THE TAG), passing right shoulders, of course. There is an **implicit adjustment** in all the tag-related calls, so that QUARTER TAG makes a wave in the middle with in-facing couples on the outside — the outside dancers must adjust to move close to one another and to line up with the centers of the wave. The adjustment is part of the call, and the caller doesn't have to tell you to do it; this is in contrast to most calls, like FOLD (which we discussed two months ago), where there is no adjustment. At the Challenge levels it's particularly important that you make that adjustment. That's the first important point to note here. HALF TAG ends in waves, THREE-QUARTER TAG ends with a wave in the middle and out-facing couples on the outside, and a full TAG THE LINE ends in COMPLETED DPT formation. (In this discussion we're assuming that the call is done starting in parallel lines. From grand lines, phantoms, and so on, things are somewhat different.)

So we've come to the second important point: TAG THE LINE (full) ends in COMPLETED DPT formation. **Usually** the caller will tell you to face left, right, in, or out (or to ZIG-ZAG, at Advanced, for instance), but she doesn't have to. The next call could be CENTERS IN, LEADS TRADE, or TRACK 2, so don't get in the habit of assuming that you'll be told to face one direction or another afterwards.

Now let's look at what the dancers are doing to their positions in a full TAG THE LINE. Since everyone's facing the center of the line, the centers are leading the tag, so afterwards they become ends. Similarly, the ends become centers. If we start from facing lines and TAG THE LINE and FACE IN, we'll end in facing lines, but the original centers are now ends and the original ends are now centers. That's the third important point to remember: if you start a TAG THE LINE as an

end, you'll finish as a center, and vice-versa. That can be helpful if you get a little lost.

Now, one effect of all this is to half-sashay the couples. If we started with "normal" couples (boys on the left, girls on the right), then we'll end with half-sashayed couples after we do the tag and face the appropriate direction. That changes the results of some other calls. For instance, from "normal" right-handed two-faced lines, if we BEND THE LINE and STAR THRU we end in EIGHT CHAIN formation. But from those same lines let's TAG THE LINE RIGHT (shorthand for "and face right") and then do the BEND THE LINE and STAR THRU. Because we switched the sexes, we'll now end in TRADE BY formation.

For the Advanced dancers, compare TAG THE LINE IN from lines facing **out** with CROSSOVER CIRCULATE from the same starting lines. They're the same (just as from lines facing **in**, CROSSOVER CIRCULATE is the same as CROSS TRAIL THRU).

A fourth important point that we've been talking about throughout this discussion is that TAG THE LINE is done **in your own line**. You ignore the dancers in the other line and work with those in your line only. Challenge dancers can contrast that with VERTICAL TAG, in which you work with the dancers in your **box** and ignore those in the other half of your line.

Now let's get a little weird and look at TAG THE LINE from a grand line such as a tidal wave. To set it up from a squared-up set, have the heads LEAD RIGHT and TOUCH, then everyone FAN THE TOP and the girls TRADE. We're in a tidal wave with the heads on the ends and the sides in the center. If we do a TAG THE LINE from here, everyone will face the centers of **their own waves**. That means the sides will turn their backs on the other sides and face the heads. When we finish the tag, everyone will be in single file with the head girls facing each other in the center and the side girls facing no one on the ends. Now if we have everyone face right and BEND THE LINE (remember to bend the two lines separately, even though they're end-to-end) we find ourselves in EIGHT CHAIN formation in half-sashayed couples. CROSS TRAIL THRU (careful - the boys cross in front of the girls) and have the leads PROMENADE $\frac{3}{4}$, and if the sides take a step backwards, we're home! (Alternative ending for the Challenge dancers

instead of PROMENADE: REVERSE WHEEL AND
STEP BACK.)