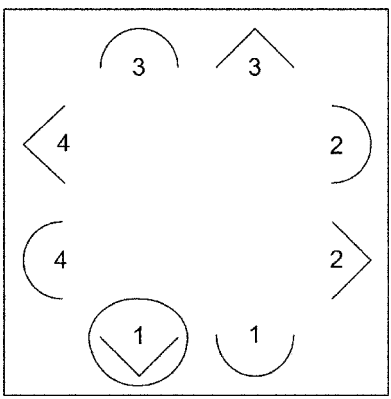
Berichte aus der Sportwissenschaft

Rollo Leppin

Calling Mental Image
And How to Survive It



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Phone: 0049/2407/9596-0 • Telefax: 0049/2407/9596-9
Internet: www.shaker.de • e-mail: info@shaker.de

To

All the dancers who suffered while I was practicing

Calling Mental Image
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Preface

When I started calling, I found out pretty fast: square dancers are an ungrateful bunch. You might be the best singer in the world (I'm for sure not, I know), you might bring them the best combinations, you might show them how to perform their figures out of positions they would have never dreamt of, but if you can't resolve the square and bring all the dancers home, they will judge you as a lousy caller.

So you go to caller school to learn how to resolve the square. There they tell you about different methods, about modules, zero's, Rubber Band and Ferris Wheel Method, they teach you sight calling and limited sight calling, and then they will say: „Yes, and there is one more, called Mental Image." End of lesson. Some more sophisticated teachers will give you additional information such as: „And there is a brilliant book called 'Out of Sight' by Don Beck"; or even they tell you that you can recognize mental image callers on stage by the way they constantly keep crossing and uncrossing the fingers of the hand that does not hold the microphone, just to keep track with the square dancers. Did you ever meet a teacher who really told you how to do Mental Image?

When I started calling, I was in the lucky position to get hold of my own copy of Don's book, went thru it several times, and worked with it. It opened a whole new world for me.

It took some time to understand what Don wrote, even more time to understand all those points that Don did not write about. But this was fun to the analytic mind. I analyzed call after call, sequence after sequence, moved my checkers, and made my drawings to document them for me.

And one day my wife said to me: “You spent so much time and brain on Mental Image, it works for you, but how about others? How about those who just heard about it, but never used it, and how about those callers who are not even dreaming about becoming a caller yet? Why don’t you write down all your notes, your drawings, your analysis, your rules, for your own reference as for the next generations?” I think she was right.

So one night, just after class, I started with the first lines to explain how Mental Image works for me. Don wrote his book about 30 years ago, since then there were a lot of changes, new commands, new figures, new sequences, new routines, so an update was more than necessary. Here is mine.

One thing right from the beginning: You might say calling square dance is something between art and science. I agree. Some may say Mental Image is something between magic and miracle. I definitely do not agree. Mental Image isn’t magic and has nothing to do with miracles. Every caller should be able to learn Mental Image, either to use it while calling, or to use it to analyze any call sequences. Mental image is nothing else than 10% knowledge and 90% practice. This book gives you the base knowledge needed. It is up to you how much you practice.

I’ve tried to make the learning as easy as possible. In the first chapter we will start with a model of calling that is very limited, with a much reduced set of commands, with limited positions, and with limited possibilities. This is just to get the basic idea of Mental Image. In the following chapters we will lift all the limitations, one by one, and we will add commands to our portfolio, until the entire Mainstream and Plus programs are at our fingertips.

As said, Mental Image needs a lot of practice, you will need to speed up your mind to keep track with the calling you do and your dancers. A big help will be the chapter about shortcuts. And I can promise to you, every now and then you will find a new position or a new call sequence where you have problems to explain. I know, I ran into the same. More than once I was attempted to throw everything into a far corner and let it rot there. But after a day or two, maybe even a week, I got back to it, found the missing explanation and could go on. I had

to, as I was partly even dreaming about those issues, it were real nightmares, I can tell you. No doubt, you will experience the same.

You will notice that I adopted the drawing style used by Jay King in his book ‘Fundamentals of Hash Calling’, same as used by Don Beck in his book ‘Out of Sight’. I still do not see any reason to invent the wheel twice. Additional this shall help those callers who read one of these books, they will see the same style, the same look and feel, and so they can move on more easily.

I want to say thanks to all who contributed to this book, caller colleagues mainly, those who read my first drafts and helped me correcting it. And I want to thank and apologize to all the dancers who suffered under my first attempts to bring them home using Mental Image. Last but not least I want to thank my wife who accepted that I was unavailable to her for many hours and days, while reading, writing, and drawing to make this book happen. (It was her own fault anyway; she said I should write it.)

Rollo Leppin
Oberursel, Oct 2010

Wer Druckfehler findet, darf sie behalten.

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