

FIDS – Italian Dancesport Federation

BLACKPOOL 2010: WHY FIDS WILL NOT PARTICIPATE.

Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> 2010

Since months, the dancesport world has been wondering about the decisions Italy – or at least our FIDS, the only Italian dancesport federation – would make with regards to the participation to Blackpool.

The dancesport blogs have attacked Italy and Russia (truly speaking, they have not been so aggressive against Russia and I do not know why).

They have accused us to be illiberal, to have limited human rights and so on. The incredible thing is that we have been attacked not by the members of our federation, but by those ones who could do what they want.

On a web site they have hidden their indignation against our federation behind some interviews with couples made up of Italian athletes (or athletes living in Italy, but handled by English teachers), asking each one of them to explain how scary the Italian system was.

All of them have of course agreed except for our Italian champions, Ghigiarelli –Andracchio. They would have lied, if they had agreed with all the other athletes. In fact, this couple has only received benefits, prizes and support from this “shameful” Italian system (on the contrary, IDC athletes should pay themselves the travel to the world championships). Notwithstanding, Ghigiarelli and Andracchio too were lavish in their praise as they described the English wonderland, the beautiful world by Louis Armstrong. Listening to those interviews you could feel the birth of a new regime against that beautiful world.

We would have our good reasons for feeling offended, if we did not understand the reasons of this crusade: disinformation, interests and fear.

**Disinformation** because they do not know or pretend not to know that FIDS and IDSF system are not those ones who attack, as biased people like depicting us, but those ones who are attacked. In our country we have been attacked by WD&DSC, when they tried to create the WDC Amateur League. IDSF too has been attacked in several countries all over the world.

**Interests** because hundreds of Italian couples, who do not take part anymore in Blackpool, have cancelled lessons with the judges. Those judges who are teachers too and therefore could be useful to obtain a better score in the competition. Everyone knows this exchange of favours taking place in England on the occasion of the three competitions.

**Fear** because they do not know what happens in the future, after in 2005 they mistakenly undervalued our strength. On that occasion, the President - Donnie Burns - refused to recognise the independence of the Italian system, which had reached the same agreement with CIDS (the confederation of teachers, WDC Italian member) as the German system (approved by WDC and IDSF).

In order to face the above three problems, without being polemic, I should piece together what has happened in the last five years, so that all the athletes, their teachers, FIDS local leaders whom athletes and teachers refer to could understand.

I should sum up the extraordinary aggression FIDS – the Federation recognised by CONI – was subject to by WDC, its followers and the English system.

I start from the beginning.

In 2004 WDC President, Donnie Burns, and other directors of the same organization were present at the establishment of IDU - International Dance Union, which in WDC's opinion should represent the alternative to IDSF.

In 2005 Jerry Abrate, counsellor of WDC president, convinced FDSI president, Franco Querzè, to move to IDU. The aim was to give IDU that international recognition to oppose our federation and to convince Italian athletes to leave FIDS.

FIDS replied with diplomacy and democracy (values unknown to a limited liability company such as WDC) to the attacks by WDC in the person of Querzè and by ANMB – Association of teachers known to be WDC original founder – and convinced CIDS to cooperate.

CIDS nominated Piercarlo Pilanio as president and undersigned an agreement with FIDS. The Italian system, such as the German one, reached a cooperation agreement between “professionals” represented by CIDS and FIDS.

On October 10<sup>th</sup> 2005 in London in the picturesque school of WDC President, Donnie Burns, a delegation of FIDS and CIDS along with teachers representing all the associations met WDC President to explain the reasons of the agreement and the Italian legislative system.

WDC felt that the agreement between CIDS and FIDS could thwart their projects to create an Italian Amateur Federation antagonist to FIDS. Therefore, after the above meeting WDC answered with a press release dated December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005 whose slogan was: “Leave FIDS and stay in ANMB”.

As a consequence, FIDS was obliged to find a solution for its professional athletes refused by WDC. Therefore, FIDS created IPDSC, which IDSF countries adhered to and which is going to transform itself into IDSF professional division.

I still wonder why the same agreement undersigned in Germany was not accepted for Italy?

What I have said is the crystal-clear proof that you must avoid doing business with friends. WDC has been badly advised by Jerry Abrate, who wisely created his own business and was even able to achieve ANMB. In this way, ANMB was forced to bind itself to IDC on the basis of that agreement ANMB would have never accepted to reach with FIDS. The said agreement foresaw for ANMB the only possibility to collect teachers, because judges were a FIDS matter, now an IDC matter.

Congratulations to Jerry and Caterina, compliments to their capability to handle their own private affairs to the detriment of the general interests of our country and, for all, of WDC, which has been strongly reduced if compared to its status before 2005.

After IPDSC world championship, the English system stated that IPDSC couples would not dance (truly speaking, Caterina and Jerry wrote this); the honorary president, Karl Breuer, shouted to the participants they ought to be ashamed and all the other things we well know.

At this point one naturally asks: what has this got to do with Blackpool?

Blackpool, the competition embodying the greatest expression of the English system, immediately lost its neutrality taking part in the conflict and therefore losing its image as super partes competition.

The organizers of the English competition could have been neutral between the two parties, but they did not act that way.

I am sure that, if there had been the great men of the past, Blackpool would have been not only neutral but WDC too would have been advised not to meddle in the affairs of a country such as Italy.

But the generation changed. Blackpool organizers have clearly taken sides with WDC. The official excuse is that Blackpool is under the control of the British Council, WDC member.

As a matter of fact, the real aim was to offer Blackpool history and importance to WDC in order that they could win the battle by using the athletes' affection for the competition against those bad guys of the federations.

In their opinion, WDC would have no problems winning, defeating FIDS and IPDSC, if they could use Blackpool in the battle against IPDSC.

So, in a few words, we have been attacked in Italy, attacked in England.

What should we do? We had to say Thank you very much. Sorry if we exist and act differently from the previous insubstantial Italian federation guided by people who had only committed themselves for years to developing their own national interests.

They made a big mistake.

Blackpool has evidently lost its neutrality towards FIDS and IPDSC, even if the organizers keep on saying that Blackpool is an open competition where all the participants have the same opportunities.

It is not true that Blackpool is still an open competition.

Open (to cash as much as possible from the entries in the competition) but biased (in favour of WDC friends led by Hilton).

Why am I so convinced of what I have said? Hereunder I have numbered and put well into order a few explanations, the most evident ones:

- 1) As soon as Peter Maxwell, director of Blackpool competition, became IPDSC leader, he was banned, whereas Marcus Hilton, who has strongly committed himself in favour of WDC Amateur League and WDC, was appointed as boss.
- 2) Thanks to his position in Blackpool competition, Marcus Hilton affirms that the couples born and grown up in the Italian system are couples of his own, as it happened to Gozzoli in the past and nowadays to Ghigiarelli. So, Selmi, Filippone and the other teachers who raised the Italian couples were nothing...they only take the couples to the English system.

- 3) Silvia Pitton and Paolo Bosco won, by chance, the Amateur category, since the great judges in Blackpool could not mistake. In fact, the year after the same couple could not reach the semifinal, maybe because they were not able to dance anymore. Or maybe because they decided to dance for IPDSC? The doubt is legitimate, isn't it?
- 4) Even if FIDS in Italy represented 95% of the participants in Blackpool, the professional team match was organised by IDC – WDC Italy.
- 5) A few couples, who had mediocre results in the Amateur category, reached the semifinal in the professional category, after they decided to dance for WDC and to hang around with teachers close to WDC boss. That is strange, isn't it? When the couple Joshua Keefe - Sara Magnanelli took lessons from Cavallini, they hardly reached the 48-round in the Amateur category. Now they take lessons from Gainor Fairweather and they are acclaimed in semifinal, even if they were physically not at their best in the UK. Because of their excellent results, during the interview for the web sites the couple took also the liberty of giving us a lecture...far from Paolo Bosco. This behaviour is due to the importance of the party you belong to. The same could be said about the couple Soldi – Nasato. They only reached the 24-round in the Amateur category and then the semifinal in the Professional division as soon as they decided to dance for WDC. They are really good, we do not deny their capabilities but the doubt is legitimate, isn't it?
- 6) At this moment, the couples representing Blackpool on its web site are, by chance, two Italian couples belonging to WDC “reserve”. It is a little bit strange, isn't it? It seems to be a coarse slogan saying “If you want to count in Blackpool, become member of WDC!”. The champions of resistance to FIDS regime have been crowned Blackpool testimonials. Better than “Dancing with the stars”, do you agree?
- 7) The interview with the Italian champions Ghigiarelli – Andracchio, who described Blackpool as the most beautiful competition in the world, demonstrates the great pressure the English teachers put against FIDS politics to defend itself from the attacks. In fact, in Rimini the same couple with their teacher, Federico Filippone, swore that FIDS, Italy and the project I had illustrated them were exactly what they wanted to create with all of us. Maybe, the above declaration was only made to gain a little of the money prize. The possibilities are two: they were a little bit absent-minded when we spoke together or they were a little bit under pressure when they were interviewed.

For the above reasons, FIDS federal council decided not to authorise member couples to take part in Blackpool.

At the same time, the federal council invites the couples who feel that the above decision represents a problem for their carrier to take into consideration those non-sports realities, which think that the center of the world is England and not the world championship or IDSF sports rules. In fact, in the light of the current events, there is no guarantee that in the future the couples could take part in the English competitions.

We understand perfectly the feelings of those athletes grown up with Blackpool as main target and we respect it. We understand the pain of those people trained to think that Blackpool is the dancesport nirvana. Notwithstanding, we outline the possibility to take part in competitions so important as Blackpool, if not more important, such as the German Open, the Russian Open and the beautiful Italian competitions.

Since we respect the athletes' will, we pretend at the same time to be respected for our unbreakable prerogatives as national sports federation.

We are a national sports federation recognised by CONI and we are members of an international sports federation, IDSF, which is part of CIO – International Olympic Committee.

We accepted the history and what the English competitions represented by supporting them, as long as they tried to be neutral and to praise the quality of dancesport, wherever it came from.

When we see athletes denying the teachers who brought them up here in Italy only to count in the English system, we are even more convinced that today Blackpool has transformed itself into a washing machine taking tokens. The more tokens you have, the more you can make the drum spin.

In conclusion, I read the interviews a web site made to all the Italian mixed couples pressing them to say that the Italian system was sick. You could feel bad by reading the opinions given by the athletes. The only consolation is that in Italy those athletes would have not reached the final.

I have read someone saying “Since we were obliged not to compete in England, we said bye bye to Italy”. Maybe, that person should tell all the story. A story made of partners continuously changed and left without respect, carriers handled without logic, talents wasted to follow who knows what. A missed final due to fading projects and carrier strategies. To tell all the story you need honesty, culture and intelligence.

Better to say “bye bye Italy”.

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