

Star Ball 2017 Amateur Latin report by Joanna Leunis

Ok Joanna... sit back relax and enjoy the competition.... that is what I told myself sitting down to watch the semifinal of the beautiful Starball championship....well that did not happen... I had to really focus on the task in hand... observing and analysing in depth every couple made me feel as if I was with them dancing on the floor. The atmosphere was electric and everyone was turning the heat on which made for a fantastic energy in the hall.

1) Petar and Zia

Starting to become a regular finalist in this field. Always exciting to watch their enthusiasm and full energy. They sure give it their ultimate all which is wonderful to see. I would now maybe start to trust their body a bit more and That the body can also sometimes speak for itself. In other words: body first than expression.

4) Joel and Kristina

Also a very energetic couple with lots of power. Sometimes however could be a little more specific into changes of mood playing with contrast and flavour. Not to make only the loudest strong outer speak but also the softer more subtle and intangible aspect speak loud too.

11) Nasko and Anna

A very stylish couple always very nicely groomed. Sometimes I find Nasko a little too withdrawn and introvert and would want a little more presence and intention. Anna is such a beautiful dancer with a great positive energy I would try to focus on dynamic changes sometimes to be more sudden in space especially in shifting from foot to foot.

17) Matteo and Viktoriya

An exciting new partnership. Some kind of steam going on between them; still in the "honeymoon" period maybe!?!? I would maybe push a more detailed specific work of actions.

18) Luca and Alessandra

Both very charismatic performers with lots of passion and commitment to their beliefs which is nice to see. I entered the ballroom in the midst of their first round and my eyes were drawn by their rumba performance love to see that kind of intention and depth. In other dances I would focus on clearer changes of mood could drive on one mood too long.

24) Petur and Polina

A very promising couple from Iceland. Lacking a bit of presence on the floor could miss them easily. Would focus on projection and connecting with people being more aware of the strands of the medium: setting, music, lighting...how to relate to it.

26) ferdi and yulia

A definite champion look dominating from the first round and not taking anything for granted always giving it their best. In my opinion their Rumba stands on its own. With a great full body awareness combined with a lovely atmosphere and mood between them and the audience making the intangible speak. Ferdi could trust his own qualities at times it can come across as a lack of confidence. Yulia is sensational when she goes into her senses. Connecting relating letting the expression come from within, this makes her stand on her own planet I believe.

28) Pasha and Gabrielle

Another very recognisable couple with lots of positive vibes and energy. Was very impressed with the content and shapes created in Paso felt like a strong dance for them. In other dances I feel the energy could be too bound and held in and Pasha could allow his upper body to move a bit more freely giving it a more relaxed look sometimes.

29) Sergey and Elisaveta

Was very attracted to their inner rhythm and tick in Samba. Creating very exciting changes in that dance. In general could have a bit more "saying" to the movement. The self feels a bit detached and disconnected from the doing.

32) Tang and Huanna

A very beautiful and charismatic couple from china. Always nicely stylised with a very clean inoffensive approach. Nice posture, nice fluidity of rhythms, nice shapes. Would focus on "what is the statement" could there be a bit more personal input to the dance.

34) Howard and Jessica

A very sympathetic couple always attractive to look at. Would focus on body precision and giving the actions more effort and energy so it doesn't come across as too casual at times.

35) Tagir and Alexandra

A great looking couple groomed slick and slender. Would love to see more personal input. Finding their own trademark on the floor putting some emphasis on their personal touch.

Star Ball Professional Ballroom report by Amanda Dokman

1st – Eldar Dzhafarov & Anna Sazhina Azerbaijan

A good win tonight for Eldar & Anna. I thought Anna's grooming was beautiful this evening. Although they don't always show the best shape or top line Eldar and Anna are accomplished dancers with a great sense of quality and awareness of everything they do. They also have a very good shift of weight. Lovely Waltz and Slow Foxtrot. Congratulations!

2nd- Stas Portanenko & Natalia Kolyada Ukraine

Its hard to believe that only a year ago Stas and Nataliya were Amateurs! They look very at home as professionals and really challenged for top honours tonight. Stas has fabulous floor craft and they manoeuvred around the floor with ease. Recently Natalia has improved her position considerably and she is looking softer in her back now. Wonderful Quickstep.

3rd – Gaetano Iavarone & Emanuela Napolitano Italy

I enjoyed watching Gaetano & Emanuela a lot tonight. Emmanuel looked beautiful in pink and they are another couple that seem to have really improved recently. They showed wonderful quality and understanding of the leg action in the swing dances.

4th – Gianni Caliandro & Arianna Esposito Italy

Gianni & Arianna are a real 'no nonsense' couple, always getting on with the job in hand and always competitive, in a good way. Lovely to see. Tonight they got better and better as the evening progressed and the final was clearly their best round. They danced a cracking Tango and now seem to be refining their style to allow some softness. Congratulations.

5th – Steffen Zoglauer & Sandra Koperski Germany

Stefan & Sandra have a fabulous feel and musicality in their dancing. Always fully immersed in what they do and how they do it. Their sense of intention is always clear. They just need to be careful that the look and hold doesn't become small as sometimes they appear to lack volume.

6th – Go Hashimoto & Keiko Onda Japan

Go & Keiko must have been very happy to make this fabulous final. They must be one of the most improved couples on the floor. Their dancing has become much more substantial and gone are the weak body lines they used to have. Congratulations on a great improvement over the last year, keep up the great work.

7th – Vladislav Shakhov & Ekaterina Popova USA

Vladislav & Ekaterina have a very special feel and quality about their dancing. Often showing a fabulous sense of time in the slower Swing dances. If they can make sure their top line is always 'clean' and show the same quality in Tango and Quickstep they will surely become a force to be reckoned with! Lovely dancing.

Making this prestigious Semi Final but not the Final;

Sergei Sutyryn & Natalia Sazhina Russia

Sergei & Natalia are tidy dancers with easy motion across the floor. They are exceptionally together although sometimes Anna crosses into Sergei's space making their shape and top line appear small. Good solid dancers.

Igor Mikushov & Eketenne Romashkina USA

Igor and Eketenne are powerful and strong dancers who now need to refine what they do in order to show off their quality and motion.

Rudiger Homm & Katia Kanevskaya USA

Rudi & Katia have amazing musicality and feel everything they do. To challenge higher placed couples I would love to see them now work on cleaning up the shoulder line and shape as it has a tendency to become untidy.

Weiping Li & Cen Zheng China

Danny & Angela as we know them are lovely dancers. They have improved technically but Angela tends to get out of position too frequently especially in promenade position and this causes them to lose a sharpness in their upper body shape.

Steven Grinbergs & Rachelle Plaas Australia

Steven & Rachelle have got themselves back on track they look more competitive and dynamic now. Well trained dancers with a lovely quality to what they do.