

# Double Reverse Spin

By Chris & Terri Cantrell

*The following are not meant to be absolutes but suggestions of possible different things to try.*

Recently there was a lively debate by the Round Dance E-Mail Group (*see the end of this article for more info*) on the double reverse spin. This discussion sparked us to throw our two-cents into the ring.

**FIGURE BASICS:** The Double Reverse Spin typically begins CP-DLC (*closed position man facing diagonal line & center*) or BJO-DLC (*banjo position*) and it usually ends DLW (*diagonal line & wall*). The second most common ending position asks the dancer to make one full turn to end DLC.

## **The basic footwork & timings are:**

**M (man):** Forward left, forward right turning LF (*left face*), hold but continue rotating your upper body wait for woman to complete her 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> steps,;

**W (woman):** Back right, close left to right rotating with M, strong forward step around M with right continue to rotate, forward left. The resulting position due to the rotation of the couple will result in the appearance that the woman has crossed her left foot & upper leg in front of her right leg.

### **Waltz timing:**

M - SQ

W - QQ&Q or QQQ&

### **Foxtrot timing:**

M - QQ

W - SQ&Q or SQQ&

Some of the problems that can result when executing the double reverse spin include:

- Loss of balance by either or both partners
- Inability to complete the expected amount of rotation
- Someone stepping on their partner's foot
- The figure is feeling uncomfortable and very difficult

Below are a few items that might help lead to more comfortable and effortless execution.

**TOPLINE & BALANCE:** Two major components in the comfortable execution of this figure (*& for that matter any figure, especially of the turning variety*) are the couple's topline (arms, chest, shoulders, head) and individual balance. For best results try to maintain the same topline throughout the figure: firm & toned but not rigid, stable & well-balanced, wide with relaxed shoulders. Other hints are below. {For additional information on smooth dancing technique, please refer to the Smooth Dancing articles previously published in DIXIE or go to the following website and click on "Clinic Notes", <http://www.ctr.com>}

- **FEET** – We recommend executing most turns going no higher than the balls of the feet. Rising to the toes leads to too many opportunities for loss of balance.
- **KNEES** – Maintain soft knees throughout, the depth of bend in the knees does change during the course of a figure due to rhythm-specific rise & fall. Straightening or locking your knees in the smooth dance rhythms (e.g. waltz, foxtrot...) has a tendency to throw a person off balance in addition to being potentially damaging to the knees. When the individual is unbalanced, the partner is the one picking up the extra weight and support for the couple.
- **ARMS & HANDS** – Men, be aware of how and with what pressure you are holding your partner. The arms and hands should stay in the same position throughout the figure. This includes no lowering the elbow(s), raising the shoulder(s), dropping or raising the hand, and squeezing. These all can result in pulling your partner off balance and give you the feeling that you are dragging her along.
  - If you raise you left arm up above her head level you are most likely pulling her towards you and possibly pulling her onto her toes. Try to keep your left hand level between her shoulder and eye level.
  - Squeezing her hand, shoulder, or back can painfully take her focus away from the figure. Be gentle.
  - Squeezing with your left hand can be minimized by holding your hand perpendicular to the floor palm facing her. Invite her to place her fingers over the ledge between your thumb and fingers. Then tuck your ring & pinkie fingers under her hand. This also helps prevent the 'sweaty palm syndrome'.

- Placing your right hand around her back too far can also pull her onto you. The right arm's main contact point is on your wrist & lower forearm. Make contact under the top of her upper arm. Then gently fold your hand around her back.
- Bend your elbows. The right upper arm should slope down to the elbow keeping the forearm relatively parallel to the floor. The left arm sharply slopes down from the shoulder to the elbow with the forearm sloping slightly upward. The degree of bend in both arms is dependant on your height relationship to your partner. A simple rule of thumb for height adjustment is to hold your arms in such a way that they do not raise her shoulder(s) and they allow both of you to be well balanced over your own feet.

Women, you also need to be aware of how you hold your hands and arms.

- Gently place your left hand on the man's upper arm with your thumb placed gently in the area between his two upper arm muscles. Try to avoid putting your hand behind his shoulder or arm as you might pull him into and possibly on top of you. Your left arm should slope down from your shoulder with the elbow sharply bent allowing your forearm to be almost parallel to the floor.
- Keep your right elbow slightly bent to avoid the ramrod effect.
- Hold his left hand in your right hand gently and avoid squeezing his thumb.
- SHOULDERS - Throughout your dancing, keep your shoulders relaxed (*out of your ears*) but still upright. The natural tendency for many dancers is to lift their shoulders during rotating figures. Try to do the complete opposite by taking a breath and push your shoulders down at the beginning of the figure or the beginning of the rotation. A few shoulder shrugs and head rolls before dancing the routine or at the beginning of the evening might help by releasing any unnecessary tension from your body (e.g. drop your chin from shoulder to chest to shoulder; drop your ear from shoulder to shoulder). A few other things to avoid include the 'vulture' look, bending over your partner, and the dipping your shoulder to indicate that you want to turn. You need to indicate which way you want to turn to your partner by using your entire topline, not just your shoulder.
- JAW – Keep your jaw relaxed and your teeth unclenched. If your jaw is sore after dancing a routine or at the end of the evening, try a few mouth stretches before the next time you dance or between sets (e.g. yawn; with an open mouth shift your lower jaw from side to side, then repeat with a closed mouth).
- HEAD – The head can play an important role in balance. It typically helps to have your head over your weighted foot. Most of the extreme head movements you see on the dance floor are actually optical illusions. For example, in the same foot lunge a woman executing a nice position with her head well back & up and her left leg outstretched in front with her toes pointed is faking out the viewer to believe that she is being supported by her partner, but in reality her head is directly above her weighted right foot.

1st & 2nd STEPS: The first two steps of the double reverse spin figure are virtually identical to the first two steps of the foxtrot reverse turn, telemark, and telespin. The 1<sup>st</sup> step of these figures for both the man & the woman is typically a preparation step taken along the line of dance you are currently moving (LOD, RLOD, DLC, DLW...). The rotation of most figures in waltz and foxtrot generally begins on the 2<sup>nd</sup> step.

Men, how do you convince the woman to put her feet together on the 2<sup>nd</sup> step? Answer: Cut strongly across your partner's line of dance and rise to the balls of your feet. Even though the man's 2<sup>nd</sup> step begins forward, after the rotation is complete it will look like more of a side step. At this point, in freeform dancing, the woman does not know which figure from this family (foxtrot left turn, telemark, double reverse spin, telespin, or any of their variations) that you will eventually execute. This may take some practice as if you step too strongly across you might put her too far back on her heels knocking her off balance. If not enough, the woman's tendency is to take a forward step towards you. The woman can assist the man in this diagnostics by taking whatever action is lead by the man. Keep trying until the woman is able to close her feet and still be on balance. Men keep in mind "that you lead what you want, and follow what you get".

Women, the resulting 2<sup>nd</sup> step for you is a closing of the left foot to the right foot. This action is called a 'heel turn' but the name tends to be misleading. Refrain from ending with your weight too far back on your heels and your toes up in the air. The resulting look is not very attractive, but more importantly it puts your weight too far back resulting in a loss of balance and pulling your partner towards you. After putting your feet together, it is quite acceptable to slightly rise to the balls of your feet to finish the turn.

3rd & 4th STEPS: At this point the man has completed his foot changes until the next figure, BUT he still needs to continue bringing his left side back to continue the rotation. It is also very important for the man to WAIT until the woman has completed her 4<sup>th</sup> step before moving into the next figure with either his body or his feet. If the woman has not completed her 4<sup>th</sup> step by the top of the next measure, delay taking the 1<sup>st</sup> step of the next figure slightly in order to give her time to complete the figure and recenter her balance. In our opinion, balance is far more important than beginning the next figure at the very beginning of the next measure. In fact, in standard foxtrot figures the 1<sup>st</sup> step is generally not fully taken until the end of the 'slow' count (2<sup>nd</sup> beat).

Women, begin your 3<sup>rd</sup> step by strongly stepping forward with your right foot around the man. At the end of this step your body rotation will result in it looking like you took a large side step around your partner. If you take a strong 3<sup>rd</sup> step you and your partner have a much better chance of making the amount of rotation necessary to set you up for the next figure and with less effort.

The 4<sup>th</sup> step for the woman is also forward, with your left foot. At the end of this step your body rotation will result in the woman's left leg being tightly crossed at the upper thigh in front of her right leg.

WRAP UP: If we were to pick one thing to be the key to the double reverse spin, we would have to go with the woman's 3<sup>rd</sup> step. The further the woman can step around the man, the farther the potential rotation of the figure. This action also leads to the couple exerting less effort, thus leading to more comfortable dancing.

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**Round Dance E-Mail Group (Weavers)** - Go to the following webpage for instructions on how to join the group and enjoy the lively dance related discussions. [http://www.rockinrs.com/weavers\\_join.htm](http://www.rockinrs.com/weavers_join.htm)