

State of Piping & Drumming in California

By Scott MacDonald- Piping & Drumming Chair/USS

All the International Games in Canada and Scotland cancelled. Highland games, solo contests, band practices all put on hold. For the second year in a row, many will miss being at the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow. Only the recent contests in Australia and New Zealand have started again.

Our love of Scottish Piping & Drumming has been challenged to say the least these last 15 months.

Most bands have been on hiatus since the Covid shutdown. Bands have voiced concern that this lack of activity has really hit the bands membership. Some players have retired, and some have simply just lost interest. Not a good sign in keeping together bands that have taken so long to build up. Bands that tried to be innovative with virtual practices and meetings have done their best to keep their bands afloat. Those groups seem to be on track to come through the pandemic with some success and ability to move forward in 2022.

What did I do while I was off you might wonder? Well, I filmed that Geico commercial that was on about 20,000 times. Our house has an issue with the Pipes! With some extra time on my hands, it let me do something I typically would not have done. It was a fun experience, and it did make me get my pipes out.

What's next for the balance of 2021? Local games around the United States have finally started to be scheduled in States that have been "OPEN" for a few months. The recent games in Grand Junction, Colorado a few weeks ago was great to see. In speaking to the games sponsor they indicated that working closely with the State and Local Health department officials to help with covid protocols allowed them the ability to have these games with several bands in attendance.

There is a light on the horizon, my understanding is that California will have games in 2021! Pleasanton appears to officially be the first scheduled in September. I have been told it will be a scaled down version of their traditional 2-day event. More details are coming, check their website for details. Discussions of having Solo Piping and Drumming Events in So Cal later in the year are expected as well. Full Pipe Band competitions might have to wait until 2022 it appears. Keep close to the USS Website for updates and info. Hopefully we will all be back at it by September/Oct.

The LA Scots Pipe Band have begun to ramp up now as well. We just finished recording a few sets for the upcoming USS Virtual Games on Memorial Weekend. This was the first time the band was up on Pipes and Drums in 15 months. Most of us were out of shape, hands a tad rough but the excitement, energy and happiness of being together as a band was amazing. Everyone had a great time being back at what we love to do. It wasn't perfect but that didn't really matter!! It was emotionally a giant step for the band and the motivation seems to have

been kick started for our goals of going back to Scotland in August of 2022. We are back practicing regularly now as a band working on new music for the upcoming year.

I was asked what my predictions are for 2022? I would guess that everyone associated with Piping and Drumming, Dancing, Celtic Bands, Clans, Heavy Athletes and our love of meat pies will drive big crowds to the games in 2022. It will be basically 3 years off from the games circuit. Our events are outside in the fresh air as well. I also think we will see bands that have not been out for some time and hopefully a few new bands. We need this to happen for our games to thrive into 2022.

I look forward to seeing all of you soon and keep healthy!!

Best

Scott