

# Rudimental Challenges in Quad Drumming

BY BILL BACHMAN

The connection between the rudiments and quality quad drumming is often overlooked. In contemporary marching percussion, a good quad line will meet the same rudimental demands as the snares while adding color and excitement. Some percussion programs are putting their most advanced players on quads, rather than snare drum, and as a result, the center quad player is the best rudimental performer in the drumline.

What path must a quad player take to achieve this level? The first priority in achieving quality quad drumming is rudimental development of the hands, focusing on one drum. It is recommended that quad players spend 80 percent of their time developing technique on one drum, and the other 20 percent of their time moving patterns around the drums. As vital rudimental basics are built and refined, the ability to take patterns around the drums correctly will follow. Focusing on one drum first will produce the best results with less effort than making drum-to-drum movement the first priority.

Developing rudimental vocabulary involves mastering two tasks per rudiment: individual hand motion and coordination between the hands. Because both hands are connected in the same manner to the brain via the spinal cord, it would seem that each hand would work exactly the same way. In reality, and no matter how hard we try, our hands will never be truly matched. Nevertheless, quad players must strive for hand equality by practicing slow, repetitive motions to develop muscle memory when developing a rudimental vocabulary.

Once a technique has been mastered at a slow tempo, resist the urge to speed it up; instead, do at least ten minutes of repetitions at the slow tempo. Increasing the speed will then be easier because the hands will feel like they are on automatic pilot. Repetitions will reinforce proper hand motions only at a tempo at which the hands are completely comfortable and in control. Once each hand has been trained to execute its part in a rudiment, mastery becomes a matter of coordinating the hands.

In my book *Rudimental Logic*, the 40 PAS rudiments and a selection of hybrids are broken down into many hands-separate exercises. Exercises follow that gradually put the two hands back together to complete the rudiment. These exercises work to develop a complete understanding of each hand's motion as well as the necessary coordination. See Example 1.

Once playing a rudiment is comfortable, the traditional rudimental breakdown (open/closed/open, or slow/fast/slow) is the ultimate tool used to attain mastery. Every rudiment should be broken down over the course of one minute: accelerated evenly for 25 seconds, maintained at high speed for 10 seconds, and then slowed down evenly for 25 seconds. Spend as much time (or more) practicing the slowing-down portion of the breakdown, which can be more demanding.

The technique used to play a rudiment will change gradually

Example 1: Paradiddle-diddle Builder

in correlation with the speed. In order to conserve energy and motion, stick heights will drop the faster the rudiment is played. With much practice, the slow-fast-slow rudimental breakdown will result in mastery of the technique(s) required to play rudiments at any tempo, and the muscle memory to execute them in any musical context.

After focusing on rudimental development, the next step is to relate each rudiment to the quads and move it from drum to drum. My book *Quad Logic* explains the X/Y axis of quad drumming. The Y axis is the vertical axis, relating to how you play on one drum; the X axis is the horizontal axis, relating to the lateral movement from drum to drum. The Y axis should always be the priority, because once excellence has been achieved on the Y axis (on one drum), the player will be able to play the rudiment around the drums with better sound quality, rhythmic accuracy, and dynamics/stick heights. So while the X axis is crucial in moving around the drums, one must maintain focus on the Y axis to achieve excellence in rudimental quad drumming.

For rudimental development, quads actually have a large advantage. They can separate the hands on two different drums and expose the execution of each hand individually during the performance of the rudiment.

Example 2: Flam Tap Builder

The days of less accomplished quad players executing simple patterns merely to color the snare voice is no longer the standard. A quad player should be as accomplished a rudimental drummer as a snare drummer. Mastering the rudiments must happen before adding drum-to-drum movement to increase mu-

sical and technical challenges. Again, the quad player's rudimental ability along the Y axis should be the priority, because a quad player will then be able to play more demanding music around the drums with much better sound quality, rhythmic accuracy, and dynamics/stick heights. The progression of tenor drumming will continue and gather momentum as more and more programs put emphasis on quad players' rudimental proficiency.

For an in-depth discussion of tenor drumming techniques, the tenor drum's evolving role in the indoor/outdoor ensemble, and a look at the history and potential future of tenor drumming, I encourage all to come to my and Sean Vega's PASIC clinic on "The Evolving Role of Tenor Drumming," which will include a lively discussion and demonstration of "all things tenor." We look forward to seeing you.

**Bill Bachman** has studied percussion performance at the University of North Texas and is a graduate of the Berklee College of Music. He has played quads with the University of North Texas indoor drumline and the Cadets of Bergen County Drum and Bugle Corps. Bill's awards include DCI's first-place percussion with the Cadets at the world finals in 1994 and first place at the PAS 1996 Indoor Drumline Competition with the University of North Texas. Bill has been an instructor for the Bluecoats and Blue Knights, and he is now with the Carolina Crown Drum and Bugle Corps. He's the author of *Quad Logic*, *Rudimental Logic*, and *Bass Logic* (all published by Row-Loff) and co-founder of HeavyHitterPads.com. PN

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