



Edinburgh University Swing Dance
Society notes on:



Balboa: 4) the spike

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The spike is part of Bal-Swing, rather than pure Balboa, and (in its simplest form) comes from a come-around and goes back into a come-around.

The spike differs from a standard come-around mainly because the leader releases the follower from his right arm (only!) on 5-6.

- 1 step
- 2 step (setting up c/w rotation)
- 3 down (rotating)
- 4 hold (with rotation)
- 5 step - release right arm (rotation continues)
- 6 step (rotation continues)
- 7 at this point, the connected arm has tension and you both hit the spike pose (see notes)**
- 8 down – coming back in due to the spring effect of the tension in the arm mentioned above.
- 1 step – lady comes past the man's R side and turns a/c. Man turns a little c/w (so actually she is more crossing his front than passing his R side, by the time she actually does it)
- 2 step – lady continues turning a/c, man c/w; man gets R hand back on lady's back
- 3 down (with rotation)
- 4 hold
- 5 step (rotation ceasing gently)
- 6 step
- 7 hold
- 8 down

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The 'spike' itself is on beat 7: the lady will have come off at a tangent to the circle that she was following until released by the leader. By 7 she will, if the rotation was set up well, have turned not just to face the man, but her lower body will have turned a little further so that the legs face a little underneath the lady's right arm. The upper body cannot follow because the tension on the lady's R arm stops it. The lady does a 'hold' with her left leg at this moment (this is led by the feeling of running out of ability to turn); she has a *slight* 'sitting' position, reminiscent of Betty Boop's favourite poses. Her shoulders still face the leader, but her left arm should reach over the connected arm (the rotation will have taken it there). The leader kicks with his right leg on 7, towards the lady (the kick is small and from below the knee) and he also sits very slightly to give him stability. At the moment of the spike, there is a feeling of energy being stored and waiting to be released.

On the 8-1-2, the leader must lead the lady to come past his right hand side and also to turn anticlockwise. He gives this lead with his left arm, and turns 90 degrees to the right himself, which helps to open up space (actually looking where you want the lady to go can help you get this right). By 2, he will have caught her back as she turns, to gather her up on 3 for the 'step-hold' of a come-around which will take the couple back to the basic.

Common problems:

- As with all moves based on a come-around, the most common problem is the instability caused by the leader stepping outwards on 3 rather than stepping close to the lady's R foot. Leaders are not always aware that they are doing this, and some helpful observer may be very valuable to you (you can do the same for them).
- You barely separate: usually caused by leader forgetting to let follower go with his right arm. Sometimes caused by inadequate rotation – if this is the case, practice simple come-arounds until they work comfortably before going on to the spike.
- Lady feels no urge to wrap in under her arm: again, this means she has not picked up enough rotation – the timing of the release is critical here; experiment by bringing it earlier and later and you will learn the feeling of the move. If you need to, practice with no connection with the leader's left hand so the lady is sent spinning off into the distance – watch where she goes, and how much she is turning.
- Coming in, you get into a tangle with the lady's elbow. This is the most common problem and it has lots of possible causes:
 - The lady is letting her arm drop – always keep idle fore arms horizontal so the hand does not dip below elbow height (this is a general point that applies to many dances).
 - The leader is turning the lady in front of him, not letting her pass his R side. This is the most common problem. Play by deciding not to catch the lady (warn her!) and make sure she carries on past you.
 - The leader grabs the lady too early. This is difficult, but you really have to be patient and let the lady turn freely before reaching out to connect with her.
 - The leader is too keen to grab her close – you can close up during the down-hold (3-4) and do not have to achieve the close hold before it: again, play and experiment. See also our notes on the come-around, which address this problem.

To make suggestions or to request up-to-date copies, e-mail Balboa@swingdoctors.org.uk

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