

Last updated: 8-Nov-2007

## 2007 US Open Brass Band Championships

### Runner and Riders

4BR's Pat Herak looks at the eight runners and riders for this year's event at Arlington Heights.

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#### Brass Band of Central Florida

**Conductor:** Michael J. Garasi

**4BR Ranking:** 28

#### Principal Players:

Soprano Cornet: Dee McAfee

Principal Cornet: Bob Hinckley

Flugel: John Copella

Solo Horn: Nicole Kline

Solo Trombone: Kerry Couch

Solo Euphonium: Gail Robertson

Bb Bass: Robert Tucker (principal)



#### Recent Form:

2007 NABBA Championships: 4th Place (Championship Section)

2006 Brass In Concert: 4th Place

2006 U.S. Open Championships: Winners

2005 U.S. Open Championships: Winners

2005 British Open Championships: 15th

2005 NABBA Championships: Winners (Championship Section)

#### Background:

The Brass Band of Central Florida was formed in June of 1999 with 30 of Central Florida's finest brass and percussion players. Even though a relatively young band, they have already won both the US Open and North American Brass Band Championships, a feat that no other band has accomplished. At last year's US Open they won their third title in a row and will certainly hope to keep the streak going this time around.

#### Outlook:

Central Florida will be one of the main players and a favourite to take the title again. However, as many bands have found out in the past, it can be very difficult to stay at the top, especially when the rest of the field keeps improving. It will be exciting to see what tricks Michael Garasi and the band have up their sleeve this year.

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#### Eastern Iowa Brass Band

**Conductor:** Casey Thomas

**4BR Ranking:** Not in top 200

#### Principal Players:

Soprano Cornet: Joan Force

Principal Cornet: Paul Waech

Flugel: Dan Davies

Solo Horn: Judy Stine

Solo Trombone: Dave Parsons



Solo Euphonium: Todd Bransky  
Eb Bass: Dawn Stephens  
Percussion: Dave Huntley

**Recent Form:**

2006 U.S. Open Championships: 5th Place  
2005 US Open Championships: 6th Place  
No recent NABBA appearances

**Background:**

The Eastern Iowa Brass Band is one of the oldest American bands at this years US Open (formed in 1985). It has been 10 years since they last won a prize (Honors Section Champions in 1997) but they will certainly be looking to put that record straight here this year.

**Outlook:**

Eastern Iowa has struggled in recent years but still has a solid core group of players. They seem to be searching for their identity recently as the "American Brass Band" is continually being redefined. They have a new and highly qualified MD in Casey Thomas that can help them get back on their feet. It will be interesting to see if they can be one of the pleasant surprises that seem to pop up every year at the US Open.

**Fountain City Brass Band**

**Conductor:** Joe Parisi  
**4BR Ranking:** 57

**Principal Players:**

Soprano Cornet: Steve Molloy  
Principal Cornet: Alan Wenger  
Flugel: Matt Vangjel  
Solo Horn: TJ Menges  
Solo Trombone: Mike Davidson  
Solo Baritone: Helen Tyler  
Solo Euphonium: Lee Harrelson  
Eb Bass: Tom Stein  
Percussion: Mai Tadokoro



**Recent Form:**

2007 All-England Masters: 8th Place  
2007 NABBA Championships: Winners (Championship Section)  
2006 U.S. Open Championships: 3rd Place  
2006 NABBA Championships: 3rd Place (Championship Section)  
2005 US Open Championships: 3rd Place  
2005 NABBA Championships: 4th Place (Championship Section)

**Background:**

In only its 5th year the Fountain City Brass Band has already made quite an impression on the North American banding scene. The band made its first trip to the UK in May and competed at the All England Masters and Whit Friday contests. They won their first NABBA Championship last spring but have yet to break through at the US Open. They are very appreciative to be welcomed back to the US Open one more time and are keen to take the title after a fine 12 months of achievement.

**Outlook:**

Since last year's US Open they've added Raquel Rodriguez on solo cornet (NABBA high brass technical Champion), Helen Tyler on Baritone (Fodens) and Matt Vangjel (two time NABBA high brass champion whilst with JMUBB). Look for another "out of this world" performance from FCBB and a run at their first title.

**Illinois Brass Band**

**Conductor:** Dr. Ryan T. Nelson  
**4BR Ranking:** 111

**Principal Players:**



Soprano Cornet:  
Principal Cornet:  
Flugel:  
Solo Horn:  
Solo Trombone:  
Solo Baritone:  
Solo Euphonium:  
Eb Bass:

**Recent Form:**

2007 NABBA Championships: 3rd Place (Championship Section)  
2006 NABBA Championships: 7th Place (Championship Section)

**Background:**

Founded in 1991 by George Foster and William Homer, the Illinois Brass Band is made up of volunteer musicians from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. Throughout its illustrious history, the band has won six NABBA championships, hosted a NABBA competition, and competed at the British Open in Birmingham, England, all while maintaining a regular series of 15 – 20 concerts per year.

**Outlook:**

Perhaps the band most likely to break through the pre match favourites and possibly take the title. Lots of quality and plenty of experience too they are poised to make a huge impression.

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**Milwaukee Festival Brass**

**Conductor:** Dr. Patricia Backhaus  
**4BR Ranking:** Not in top 200

**Principal Players:**

Not known at present

**Recent Form:**

2006 U.S. Open Championships: 8th Place  
2005 U.S. Open Championships: 7th place  
2003 U.S. Open Championships: 5th Place



**Background:**

The Milwaukee Festival Brass was formed in 1985 and regularly performs across the Milwaukee Area. They have recently become a staple at the US Open making the short 1.5-hour drive down the motorway to compete - and gaining strength and experience with each visit.

**Outlook:**

Milwaukee Festival Brass does not really have the top class soloists as many of the other bands, nor the worldly experience. They don't figure to finish in the prizes, but will certainly add to the atmosphere of the day.

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**Motor City Brass Band**

**Conductor:** Craig Strain  
**4BR Ranking:** Not in top 200

**Principal Players:**

Soprano Cornet: Wilbur Jones  
Principal Cornet: David Dahl  
Flugel: Debra Koepele  
Solo Horn: Jennifer Kmet  
Solo Trombone: George White  
Solo Euphonium: Michael Schott  
Eb Bass: Mark Gallop  
Percussion: Suzanne D'Ambrosio



**Recent Form:**

2006 U.S. Open Championships: 6th Place  
 2005 U.S. Open Championships: 2nd Place  
 2004 U.S. Open Championships: 5th Place  
 2004 NABBA Championships: 6th Place (Honors Section)

**Background:**

Motor City Brass Band, having been formed in 1996, is the oldest contesting brass band in the State of Michigan. They perform a full schedule of subscription and community performances averaging over 20 performances a year including joint concerts with some of the finest ensembles from Detroit and the surrounding area.

**Outlook:**

Like Eastern Iowa, Motor City has struggled on the contesting stage a bit of late. However, their performances have always been entertaining and including a cleverly thrown together theme. We also hope to hear another fine vocal performance from John Martin.

**Prairie Brass Band**

**Conductor:** Dallas Niermeyer

**4BR Ranking:** Not in top 200

**Principal Players:**

Principal Cornet: Mark Fenne

Soprano: Lev Garber

Flugel: Chuck Otis

Tenor Horn: Jeff Phillips

Euph: John Meling

Baritone: Paul Eakley

Trombone: Erich Zicher

Tuba: Kim Witek

Percussion: Chris Karabin

**Recent Form:**

2007 NABBA Championships: 3rd Place (Honors Section)  
 2006 U.S. Open Championships: 4th Place  
 2005 US Open Championships: 4th Place  
 2005 NABBA Championships: 6th Place (Honors Section)

**Background:**

The Prairie Brass Band was founded in 1997 by Roger Menning, and is based out of Arlington Heights, Illinois (a suburb of Chicago). They compete regularly in the Honors Section of the NABBA and are the hosts for the US Open.

**Outlook:**

Prairie traversed Elfland last spring winning high praise from the composer, Rodney Netwon, at the NABBA Championships. Mark Fenne steps in as the new principal cornet and his leadership has been evident thus far. New arrangements from MD Dallas Niermeyer and a quest to entertain the audience once more should give Prairie a good chance to make a run at the prizes.

**Wingates**

**Conductor:** Andrew Berryman

**4BR Ranking:** 25

**Principal Players:**

Soprano Cornet: Ben Godfrey

Principal Cornet: Andrew MacDonald

Flugel Horn: Lizi Sawyer

Solo Horn: Lucy Pankhurst

Solo Euphonium: Gary Curtain

Solo Baritone: Katie Smallwood

Solo Trombone: Peter Moore

Solo Eb: Mick Morris

Solo Bb: Mark Hart



Percussion: Patrick Noone

**Recent Form:**

2007 French Open: 2nd Place - Entertainment Contest (1st Place audience vote)  
2007 Senior Cup: Winners  
2007 Northwest Areas: 3rd Place  
2007 Butlins Mineworkers: 10th Place (7th Entertainment)

**Background:**

The Wingates Band is not unfamiliar with travel, having attended both the French and Scottish Open contests in recent years. They will be looking forward to representing the UK at this years US Open (a bit more substantial of a journey) and with good recent form to fall back on they should be confident of doing well.

**Outlook:**

Given their strong performance at the Senior Cup and the high level of competition they are accustomed to facing in the North West of England, Wingates should be in the hunt to bring the cup back to the UK for the first time since their counterparts, Fodens won the inaugural trophy in 2003.

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Story from 4barsrest.com:

<http://www.4barsrest.com/articles/2007/art757b.asp>

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