

This has been a huge week for Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band and pipe band drumming, sadly not for all the right reasons. The first thing I must get out of the way is the elephant in the room, which is, have I retired or not? I appreciate many of you are champing at the bit to find out and you need to know.

This is the first statement which deals with my ultimate removal from the band by Ryan Canning. The other statements to follow will confirm the previous sequence of events and issues that forced me to stand up for and protect members of my drum corps.

The truth is I did not stand down as has been reported by the Shotts band, and I have not retired as many people have concluded for themselves. I was removed from my position and the new leading drummer was appointed without any constitutional process involving the membership of the band. As a result of my removal, the vast majority of the Shotts drum corps took the decision to resign from the band. I wish the remaining players the very best in their future pipe band drumming careers.

I truly do feel embarrassed and sorry for all of the people who took the time to send, call or visit me with their beautiful messages wishing me well in my retirement. As much as they have touched me, it has been equally upsetting for me to read them because I know that these people have been misled, not by me, but by the band's press release. Part of me wonders if this was actually a ploy to get me to accept these kind messages and embarrass me into accepting early retirement gracefully. I hope not.

I know many of you out there will be wondering why the band's press release included no quote from me or why I have not released my own statement before now. I have been under pressure to release a statement this week to clear up the situation, but there are two reasons as to why I haven't done so. The first reason is one that I made very clear to Ryan Canning from the outset I was removed, which is I did not want anything to be released by the band or myself in the week leading up to the World Solo Drumming Championships because I believed it would be disruptive to the band's drummers in their preparations for the contest. I believe that was the honourable and respectful thing to do under the circumstances, but the band went ahead with the press release regardless without my knowledge and contrary to my wishes. I am sorry if the band releasing their "official version" of my removal has in any way caused any upset or distraction for any of the competitors this week, but I can assure you this was out of my control and was not something I approved of.

The second, but most important reason, is that there are some damaged people in my family and drum corps as a result of the circumstances surrounding my removal. The people in my drum corps are, and always will be, the people I hold most dear to me in my life along with my family. They are my priority. I have never made a secret of the highest regard I have for the people in my drum corps. They truly are the best people and they mean the world to me. They have been badly hurt and some are struggling to come to terms with what has happened. My wife Fiona and I have had to put our own emotions and commitments to the side this week to be there for all of them through this difficult time. Some of them have become sick and need all the emotional support their families and we can provide. My drum corps is one big family and we are all there for one another trying to understand and recover from the situation. As much as

I know the public and all of my well-wishers deserved to hear from me, it was my responsibility to place the health and welfare of the people in my drum corps ahead of myself and anyone else, as frustrating as I know that must have been. Fiona and I have barely had a moment to ourselves to eat, sleep, rest or recuperate, let alone have the time to sit down and take stock of the situation and gather our thoughts coherently in a statement. I do hope you will understand my reasons and excuse the delay of my statement until now.

Stories of leading drummers being fired by their bands are nothing new. Although they make interesting news stories at the time, people generally accept the situations after a day or two and move on. Had my removal from the Shotts band been told truthfully, it would have become just another one of those interesting stories after a few days. I would have accepted the situation and moved on, unpopular as the decision might have been, but most importantly, I would have had no reason to dispute it.

The press release circulated by the Shotts band was both disingenuous and ambiguous. This allowed the public to form misguided conclusions about my future. The hundreds of beautiful and kind messages I have received from friends, pipe band musicians and enthusiasts from all over the world are testament to the false messages that are circulating about me. Depending on which link you came across on social media, the headlines were “KILPATRICK RETIRES FROM SHOTTS...” and “JIM KILPATRICK STEPS DOWN...”. Neither one is true. I was removed.

I have heard different stories of why I am no longer in the band, the first being the one told by the band. I have also heard that I had committed to stand down as leading drummer at the end of the 2015 competition season, but changed my mind after the band won the Worlds. Once again, neither story is true.

There is much I need to say, but I must first address the facts surrounding my future. Ryan Canning revealed in the press release that I engaged in private discussions behind the scenes with him and Blair Brown about my future and my decision made as a result of those discussions. Ryan Canning did not have my permission to disclose anything that took place during any such private discussions and I view this as a betrayal of confidence. Now that he has disclosed his version of what was discussed in private, I am happy to reveal that I did not at any stage indicate to Ryan Canning or Blair Brown that it was my intention to stand down at this time. On the contrary, and right up to the final moment of my removal, I made my position clear that I would remain as leading drummer of the band for one more season in order that I could retire at the end of the 2016 competition season. My reasons for doing so were that 2016 would be my 30th year as leading drummer of the band and that my retirement would coincide with my 60th birthday, which occurs the same week as the Worlds. Given that the drum corps has been performing to such a high standard, 2016 would have been the perfect time for me to retire from the band with dignity and introduce a new leading drummer with as much or as little support from me as they would have liked. I am sad now that this could not come to be. With this plan in my mind, there is no plausible reason that I would stand down from my position now or tell any lies about what my plans were for the future.

2016 would indeed have been a year of transition, which would have resulted in any

one from a possible five candidates from the Shotts drum corps being considered for my succession. My mind was open on the subject and Blair Brown was not in any way selected by me as the new leading drummer ahead of any such considerations being made of the others. At the time of my dismissal, Ryan Canning told me Blair Brown was the new leading drummer. The only thing that remains unclear to me is whether Ryan Canning appointed Blair Brown or Blair Brown appointed himself.

Other facts became apparent during the course of the year, which revealed to me something wasn't quite right and that Blair Brown was either positioning himself or being positioned to overthrow me as leading drummer:

1. Sources close to the St Thomas Episcopal School Pipe Band informed me Blair Brown had been openly telling his drumming students that he would be leaving his job at the school later in the year and moving to Scotland to become leading drummer of the Shotts band.
2. During the course of the 2015 competition season, Blair Brown openly approached other drummers in the Shotts drum corps to tell them he was taking over the corps as leading drummer at the end of the season and asked them if they would play underneath him. All of the players who were approached reported this to me.
3. Glenn Brown told a drummer in the Shotts drum corps during a car journey that Blair was taking over the Shotts drum corps and asked if he was willing to play under him. The player declined to discuss the matter and reported this to me.
4. I am in possession of correspondence received from Ryan Canning in the days leading up to my removal in which he states Blair Brown is the future leading drummer of the Shotts band.
5. Ryan Canning confirmed to me the appointment of Blair Brown was discussed openly between he, Blair, and other family members during their recent time in Pleasanton.

Given that Blair Brown has now been appointed leading drummer, it is evident to me that his appointment was in fact predetermined between he and Ryan Canning without any consultation with me, the Shotts drum corps and the broader membership of the Shotts band. In view of all the information I now know, no doubt exists in my mind that my removal was the final act in what has been a long-running, premeditated and well-planned coup d'état orchestrated by Ryan Canning, Blair Brown, Glenn Brown and perhaps three other members of the Shotts band.

What can I say? These things do happen in pipe bands. I'm not the first and I certainly won't be the last leading drummer to be removed in this way. It's absolutely not how I planned to end my career with Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band and I certainly didn't believe my future would be decided for me by the people I supported and trusted 100%. The outcome is especially sad given the fantastic career I have enjoyed with the band, the friendships I have made and the incredible result we achieved at this year's world championships.

The fifteen members of the drum corps who resigned following my removal remain together with me as a drum corps and we will look ahead to the future together once everyone is ready.

Hopefully this clears up any confusion that existed in the public domain about my departure from the band and provides the remaining members of the Shotts band with the full picture of the circumstances surrounding my removal and the resignation of the drum corps.

Unfortunately, there is more to come. There are much more serious matters I must address surrounding the conduct of senior band members that played a significant part in my removal from the band and affected members of the Shotts drum corps and their families. These issues have already damaged the band through loss of sponsorships of the band and its forthcoming Junior Solo Piping and Drumming Competition.

I will release further statements on these matters in due course.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Kilpatrick." The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Jim Kilpatrick MBE
17 October, 2015