

NCPF Judge's Training Day

2nd April 2023

Avoiding Judging Pitfalls Stephen Fowler

When you take the booking

- Ask questions of the Competition Secretary to make sure you know exactly what is expected on the night
 - Take responsibility
 - Will you receive the images beforehand or on the night
 - Definition of set subject
 - Running order, timing
 - Will the event be shared on-line?
 - Are you expected to produce written comments?
 - Marks, announce authors, announce results
- Don't be afraid of saying No or asking for changes
 - Too many images
 - NCPF recommends no more than 80
 - Club hang the prints up and expect you to talk to the PDIs

After you take the booking

- What to do if you have to cancel a booking
 - It happens, especially when booked years in advance
 - Give as much notice as possible
 - Try and offer replacement
- What to do when you first receive a box of prints or a file of PDI images
 - Check if all correct ASAP
 - Very embarrassing to say file will not open day before judging
 - Courteous to acknowledge successful receipt of online transmission of images
 - Many clubs use WeTransfer
 - Ask if anything is missing
 - e.g. List of entries in the required sequence

Considering the images

- What to do if you consider an image to be ineligible for a set subject competition
 - Check with competition secretary. Don't second guess
 - Not your job to discard an entry
- No shame in asking for advice from a Judging Mentor
 - A more experienced judge at your club
 - Any NCPF Judges Sub-Committee member
- Should you remove prints presented in clear plastic covers before judging?
 - Yes, you need to see the actual image
- Opening images in Photoshop
 - Don't do it
 - It could tempt you to comment how you could do better
 - Do not refer to any metadata that might be present with the image

When you arrive at the club

- Ask for a glass of water if not offered
- If you are asked to use a microphone or image control pointer, make sure you know how it works
- Take a torch and pointer
 - You can't read your notes in the dark
- What to do if, when you arrive at the club, they give you different instructions
 - Try to comply but complain
- Images projected in a different sequence
 - Give the host the opportunity to correct
 - If this is going to take a long time, work with what you have in front of you.

Avoid the technology trap

- When judging on-line, e.g. Zoom, do not take control of the screen, leave that to the host
 - Their fault if it fails
 - Can get issues if on slightly different versions
- No sight of or interaction with the audience
 - Remember, you are still presenting to them, not just sat at home talking to the computer
- Audience likely to be all muted
 - Make sure you are somewhere quiet away from interruption
- Can be a good experience
 - Opportunity to present to new clubs outside your normal geography or Federation
- Remember, you cannot charge expenses for on-line judging

Commenting on image presentation

- How much notice should you take of badly mounted prints
 - Mention but don't down mark
 - Might be a beginners first entry
- Prints with incorrect labelling e.g. orientation. Judge as presented or as you think was intended ?
 - Competition Secretaries should check before sending
 - As presented but comment, it may be intentional!
 - Don't be too pedantic if an obvious mistake
 - Beginners often reuse mounts
- Should your critique be influenced by the title
 - No but can help explain image
 - Recognise if it makes a positive contribution

Critiquing difficult images

- How to critique an image that you find offensive or inappropriate
 - Don't be afraid to say so, but still judge
 - Unlikely to be a winner!
 - Be wary of personal prejudices
- How to judge an image of which you have no experience, e.g. Astrophotography
 - Do your research but be honest
 - You are not expected to be an expert in everything
- How to judge non-conventional images where there is little or no evidence of a photographic base
 - Be honest and open in your comments and mark appropriately
- How to critique a very familiar scene
 - Judge what's in front of you, do not compare
- Critiquing images from better photographers than you
 - The club have asked for your opinion, be confident
 - Mark as seen, and remember, beginners are often better
- How to compare different genres in an open competition
 - Consider each image on it's own merits
 - Trust your personal preferences

Judging presentation

- What to say if the projection differs significantly from how you judged it at home
 - Make sure home is ok and correctly calibrated
 - Stick to how seen at home if your equipment is ok
- Time management, what to do if you realise you are running behind schedule
 - Speed up, don't repeat yourself
 - Identify half way point on mark sheet to estimate total time
- When giving marks, what lower range is acceptable
 - Follow club guidance
 - Range has to be meaningful without being insulting

You as the judge

- How to critique a truly bad image
 - No such thing
 - Maximum two negative comments, always finish on something positive
- Entering into dialogue with the audience/entrant during judging
 - If appropriate and if you are comfortable to do so
 - You must stay in control
- Humour
 - be wary of making fun of submitted pictures especially portraits, might be family
 - Make general humour or target yourself
- Avoid 'winding-up' a camera club
 - Be aware of how you are being received and don't exacerbate potential issues