



Managing Bias in Judging

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What Is Prejudice?

- Prejudice is a central cause of unfair bias in judging
- Prejudice = “an unreasonable **dislike** of or **preference** for a person, group, custom, etc., especially when it is based on their race, religion, sex, etc.” (Oxford English Dictionary)
- In the case of dog dancing, it is often related to either:
 - The handler (age, looks, gender, movement, personal relationship etc.)
 - The dog (race, type, size etc.)
 - The team (previous achievements, memories of old routines, hearsay...)
- Prejudice is completely natural – BUT must not interfere with scoring
- Manifests as thoughts and emotions –how do we manage these?

Why Are We All Prejudiced?

- Inherently human phenomenon
- Necessary to help us function: there is so much information that we don't always in everyday life have a chance to process everything in a situation we have to react to
- We all process more efficiently stimuli that are emotionally significant
- In the history of humankind, prejudice has kept us safe on many occasions
- It is related to our personality and beliefs
- It makes us faster and more efficient...
- ...but creates a lot of erroneous decisions that we want to avoid when judging.

Why It Is Crucial to Control Prejudice When Judging?

- To be fair towards everyone
- To avoid having irrelevant factors guide our judgement
- For our verdict to be solely based on the rules
- If our scores are not unbiased, it undermines the whole sport for many competitors. What is the point of entering a competition, if one can't know that what is judged is what was trained and presented (and stated in the rules)?
- Avoiding letting our prejudices affect our judging will affect the credibility of us all as judges

Typical Sources of Prejudice in Judging

- The type/race of the dog
 - Judging our “own” breed
 - Judging breeds, we don’t personally like
- Previous routines seen presented by the same team
 - When we liked the previous routine better
 - When we disliked previous routines
 - When we know the team has failed many times before
 - When they have “always” excelled either overall or in a certain category
- The reputation of the team
 - Previous titles we know of
 - Things we have heard from other people
- Our relationship with the handler
 - Friends, trainees, enemies, trainers, fellow judges...
- The handler’s person
 - Age, gender, presence, behaviour...
- Their taste in music...
 - Our favourites
 - Music we can’t stand
- And a lot of other things!
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How to Manage Prejudice? 1

- Know yourself! What does your personal set of expectations/prejudices look like?
 - Who am I? What things do I easily respond to (positively or negatively)?
- Recognizing one's thoughts and emotions **before** judging
 - What do I expect to see (before I've seen anything)?
 - What emotions does the team raise in me even before their performance?
- Dealing with the emotions:
 - Accepting that they are a part of who I am as a person...
 - ...but must not influence who I am as a judge.
- Seeing the risks as to how my prejudices could influence my judging
 - Which part of scoring would suffer if I didn't recognize my bias?
- Knowing, which categories to control in my scoring
- Don't overcompensate!

How to Manage Prejudice? 2 - Emotions

- The role of emotions is what makes it tricky
- When judging artistic merit, emotions are an intrinsic part of the evaluation
- But since we have simultaneously other emotions in play (prejudices, exhaustion, everyday annoyances...) we need to be able to distinguish where each emotion comes from and ignore the things that have nothing to do with the routine
- It is easier to check, if we know what we expected in advance
- Sometimes we have very little prejudices/expectations and sometimes a lot. When we know there is a lot, we need to be extra careful!
- As with all things related to judging, having trained managing bias makes it easier for us

Conclusion

- Prejudices are natural
- Knowing oneself helps to recognize them
- Our only way to manage them is by recognizing them...
- ...and then double-checking our criteria when judging.
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- This can be practiced - just like all other skills required in judging

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