

# One Standard of Judging

-Or-

# Double Standard?

by John Cox

There are three important sections in **CHAPTER 2** of the Obedience Regulations that help define good judging, and should be kept in mind at all times if you choose to judge.

**SECTION 1.** Standardized Judging: "Standardized judging is of paramount importance. Judges are not permitted to inject their own variations into the exercises, but must see that each handler and dog executes the various exercises exactly as described in these Regulations. A handler who is familiar with these Regulations should be able to enter the ring under any Judge without having to inquire how the particular Judge wishes to have any exercise performed, and without being confronted with some unexpected requirement."

**SECTION 2.** Standard of Perfection: "The Judge must carry a mental picture of the theoretically perfect performance in each exercise and score each dog and handler against this visualized standard which shall combine the utmost in willingness, enjoyment and precision on the part of the dog, and naturalness, gentleness, and smoothness in handling. Speed is not to be considered as the equivalent to willingness and enjoyment. Lack of willingness or enjoyment on the part of the dog must be penalized, as must lack of precision in the dog's performance, roughness in handling, military precision or peremptory commands by the handler."

**SECTION 6.** A and B Classes and Different Breeds: "The same methods and standards must be used for judging and scoring the A and B Classes, and in judging and scoring the work of dogs of different breeds."

You can make the choice to judge - but once that choice is made, you must NOT pick and choose which Regulations suit your fancy and by which you will judge. **EVERY Obedience Regulation has a purpose and it is your responsibility to enforce ALL of them.** This is one of the main objectives that goes with the title of Judge. If you wish to be considered fair and consistent in your judging, don't overlook the above sections!

Standardize your judging habits and avoid creating a double standard. Case-in-point: One must strive to judge breed specialties, breed nationals, all-breed trials, obedience specialties or The AKC Obedience Championship Invitational in the **same** professional manner. **Handlers demand good, CONSISTENT judging** and there is no reason to judge differently depending on the type of Trial; or judge A classes different than B classes. Furthermore, ALL breeds MUST be judged with the same standards.

A few important areas in which to avoid double standards in judging are:

1. Making the tough decisions
2. Judging Breed Specialties
3. Judging A and B Classes and different breeds
4. Judging different when an AKC Field Representative is present
5. Judging different between Regular and Non-regular Classes

## **MAKING THE TOUGH DECISIONS**

There are going to be times when a **correct decision** may not be pleasing to the handler or spectators. A couple of examples, (1) the cute Saint Bernard may have CLEARLY anticipated a Recall and you will have to enforce a non-qualifying score. You cannot choose to overlook the fact that the dog failed or pretend you did not see the anticipation. (2) There will be other times when one dog heels better than another dog, but the **HANDLER** (of the better heeling dog) made errors and thus places behind the poorer heeling dog. Your decisions will not always be obvious to others. We all see things differently but

YOU are the Judge, and YOU should be able to explain and back up your decision(s) [using the words in the Regulations] if asked so others may learn. **Sometimes it takes just plain guts to enforce a Regulation(s), but that is a responsibility you accepted when you pinned on the Judge's badge!**

### **JUDGING BREED SPECIALTIES**

The same Regulations are used to judge breed specialties and all-breed trials and National Trials. Avoid developing a double standard in scoring. It may appear that breed specialties are a little more laid-back, but guard against letting your judging standards loosen. "Giving out" high scores at specialties to encourage handlers, or trying to gain popularity as a "nice Judge," is a misconception. Such actions will create confusion in the minds of new handlers when they are later scored more realistically under other Judges. **It is not fair or consistent to judge a handler differently depending on what kind of show they chose to enter.**

### **JUDGING THE A AND B CLASSES AND DIFFERENT BREEDS**

You cannot choose to "get tough" on Golden Retrievers and Border Collies with "competition handlers" in the B classes and then loosen up when you judge a "green" junior handler with a cute Saint Bernard in the A classes. **This type of judging serves no purpose but undermines the sport and demeans you as a Judge.** New handlers and those going for titles in the A classes need to be encouraged, but "giving away the store" is not the way to accomplish this goal. Score ALL dogs and handlers with the same standards and after the class is over, encourage the handlers to come and talk about their scores. You can be sympathetic if they had a not-so-good performance and point out the errors that you observed. This will help teach them the areas that need a little more practice for a better day next time. This is how new handlers learn to respect our sport and its Regulations.

### **JUDGING DIFFERENT WHEN AN AKC FIELD REPRESENTATIVE IS PRESENT**

Have you noticed how some Judges change their ring procedure and scoring when an AKC Field Rep. is present? Why? If they had only ONE standard by which they judged there would be no problem or reason for uneasiness. **One should judge the same whether at a breed specialty with only one entry in the wilds of Wyoming or at the most prestigious obedience specialty with a class of 48 in Utility B.**

### **JUDGING DIFFERENT BETWEEN REGULAR AND NONREGULAR CLASSES**

The Non-regular Classes have (in most cases) the same exercises as the Regular Classes. Just because there are no Qualifying Scores or titles earned is NOT a reason to judge different. The same standards of judging are to be applied in both classes. For example, guard against judging a dog correctly for WALKING in on a Recall in Utility, and then giving that same dog (the next day) a PERFECT score for WALKING in on the Recall in the Veterans Class. If you judge like this, then what are you going to do when the ten-year-old Saint Bernard veteran RUNS in on the Recall? Are you going to score the Saint Bernard by giving bonus points?

### **SUMMARY**

Keep a good perspective... judging should be taken seriously but not to the point where the fun and common sense are lost. **At the same time, don't overlook the dedicated, experienced exhibitors who have invested countless time and work into the sport, or the novices just starting out. They deserve and demand good, fair, consistent judging and it will be up to YOU to meet these demands.** Develop a good standard of judging and keep JUST that ONE standard for ALL classes ALL dogs.