



Barriers to Objectivity

Judging sometimes invites subjectivity. Each one of us has likes and dislikes which can unconsciously affect our decisions. Being aware of some of the barriers we are up against can help us to understand and execute our performance even more objectively. Here are some influences we face:

- **First and Last Performing Groups**

We tend to remember first and last groups in a round best, so they can have an advantage over other groups. The first group because they become a reference point and the last because they are the most recent visual reference. The middle groups can be a bit fuzzier in our memory, which is why detailed notes are so important – even at championships. The first group may also be at a disadvantage of not scoring high enough. Be open and willing to score accurately for every team.

- **Let's Help the Underdog**

Do we need to give a break to the newest challenger for a gold, silver or bronze medal? Potential first-time finalist? The fast tracker? The dark horse? The underdog? Resist the temptation to score highly because a group "deserves" a win. The caption criteria are your basis for scoring. Rely upon your experience!

- **Halo Effect**

A group with a past reputation for achievement should be judged using the same criteria as we employ to judge other groups. Resist giving high marks because of a group's past accomplishments – judge today's contest.

- **Reverse Halo Effect**

This is the association of one unfavorable trait with another unrelated trait. For example, a group that is having a bad run in ensemble is not necessarily having a bad run in effect. Resist the temptation to downgrade a score in your caption because you are sensing that the group is not having a good run in another. Stay focused on the criteria reference for your caption. Be vigilant about remaining within your caption's discipline. Trust that the cumulative score will be correct and that the recap will tell an accurate story of the strengths of the competitors. Never be concerned about lining up.

- **Second Time Around**

Even if you have seen the group previously, they must be judged as a new performance. Always judge as if this were the first time you have seen the group.

- **Give Someone Else a Chance**

Even if a group has won a contest in previous years or this season, that group is entitled to the same judging as every other group and vice versa. We are judging today and today only!

- **Prejudices and Personal Preferences**

We all have them, but in judging our only bias is for our criteria reference and caption philosophy.