



### CALL HER "MS." OR HIM "MR."

At unrecognized or schooling shows, it is sometimes possible to address the judge directly, particularly if the show manager has made prior arrangements to have short question breaks between classes. The proper procedure for addressing the judge is to ask her permission first. Do not use her first name unless you know her on a first-name basis, particularly if you are a junior rider. Call her "Ms." or call him "Mr." Make sure your request is phrased in such a way that she won't think you have a complaint. ("May I ask you one or two questions about your thinking as you judged the last class?")

If the judge says no, either outright or by offering any number of reasons why not, be very tactful, and say either "OK, thank you," or "I understand. Thank you," and immediately depart.

If the judge says yes, tell her your number and the color of your horse, and ask what you'd like to know positively. ("What did you think of my round over fences?"—not "What didn't you like about my horse?") Provided she remembers your individual performance, she

will offer her observations or opinions.

It is usually easiest for the judge to remember your performance if she has in her hand the card she marked for the class about which you are asking, so you should attempt to have the card available when you ask for your consultation.

Quite often, it is not productive to ask the judge's opinion about your performance in a flat class, card or no card, because most judges only write down the best and the worst that happen in a flat class. That means the best eight riders will find their numbers on the card, as will the riders who lost a stirrup or picked up the wrong lead. The rider who isn't among the better or the worst may not be on the card at all.

In a flat class, a judge's job is mentally to separate and rank the competitors. This is accomplished by constant surveillance, which precludes a lot of note-taking about individuals.

So, if you did not win a ribbon, and you did not make any gross errors (wrong diagonals or leads, dropped reins or stirrups, failure to maintain the gait which

had been called for), don't be too surprised if the judge doesn't recall much about what you did.

### ARGUING IS TACKY

Assuming the judge remembers your performance, she may have some opinions with which you do not agree. If you find yourself in such a situation, thank the judge politely for her response, and walk away immediately. *Do not express your disagreement, challenge, or argue in any way with the judge!* Arguing is unsportsmanlike and "lucky." It may prejudice the judge against you in future competitions.

Instead, you can try to see if there's any way you can see yourself as the judge saw you. Be objective, not conceited. If you still disagree with the judge's opinion, so be it. Disparate evaluations abound around horses. It is not unusual for three judges to have three different opinions about a horse or a rider.

If addressing a judge is not feasible, a competitor can gain accurate information about the judge's observations by studying the judge's cards. At AHSA

BOS	RIDER'S HEEL IS PUSHED TO REAR OF SADDLE
WST	RIDER SEEMS TO SIT HEAVY - "A KIDNEY CRUSHER"
LL	RIDER'S LEGS ARE LOOSE, SWINGING, OR OUT OF POSITION
RSTIFF	RIDER APPEARS STIFF OR UNYIELDING
WCKD	RIDER APPEARS TO Wobble ON NECK OR POSE IN AIR
SMO	RIDER SEEMS TO BE BEHIND THE HORSE'S ACTION
JA	RIDER JUMPS AHEAD OF HORSE
LEPT	RIDER GETS LEFT BEHIND HORSE AT A JUMP
JU	RIDER JUMPS UP IN AIR, OR IS JUMPED LOOSE
	CUTS CORNER
PT	POOR TURN, "FALLS" TO INSIDE IN ROUND
B,K	HORSE BUCKS OR KICKS
BV	HORSE BLOWS UP
YRLS	POOR RELEASE (STANBY)
NRLS	NO RELEASE OF HANDS IN AIR
HW	HINGE HORSES WORTH IN AIR
HSTIF	HORSE LOOKS STIFF, APPEARS TO FIGHT RIDER
CWE	RIDER "COMES BACK EARLY" IN AIR
SR	RIDER SITS IN AIR OR TENDS TROOP BACK
AV	RIDER MAKES OBVIOUS MOVE AT FENCE
SABY	RIDER "SHAPS" BODY IN AIR, SWAY OR SIDE MOVEMENT, WEEVLED
JK	RIDER "JACKKNIFES" IN AIR, BENT BACK, FEET & SHOULDERS FORWARDED
RTS	RIDER RODE THRU SPOT, OR NODDED UP TO NOTHING
LIT	RIDER LEANS INTO TURNS
TTO	TURNS TOE OUT
OP	HORSE'S BACK IS "DEAD" - OVERLY CONSERVATIVE
LA	LATE CHANGE OF LEAD
EDIA	LEGS DISPLACED IN AIR
STR	RIDER IS SLOW TO REACT
OS	RIDER "STANDS IN STIRRUPS" IN AIR, LACKING CORRECT ANGLES
DRVE	RIDER DON'T "MOVE" UP ENOUGH IN LINE BETWEEN JUMPS
ROT	RIDER RIDES OFF TIE

BBL	RIDER "BOBBLES" UPON LANDING
BSY	RIDER IS "BUSY", MAKES TOO MANY ADJUSTMENTS
CHN	REIN LEADS WITH OR CACKS, CHIN
DUCKS	RIDER "DUCKS" IN AIR
ELB	RIDER'S ELBOWS FLAP OR STICK OUT IN AIR OR BETWEEN FENCES
FP	RIDER'S FEET ARE "FLAT" - NOT ENOUGH WEIGHT IN HEELS
CW	RIDER'S WRISTS ARE CACKED, STIFF OR MANGLED
WW	RIDER'S WRISTS HELD LIKE "POPPY PANS", AT INDIRECTANGLE
HHS	RIDER RIDES "JUNIOR STYLE", HOLD, HOLD, GO. OTTOMOS CHECKS
WV	RIDER CHECKS, PICKS BACK
LS	RIDER LOST STIRRUP A MAJOR FAULT
ED	RIDER'S EYES ARE DOWN
LLL	RIDER'S LOWER LEG IS LOOSE
SWLL	SWINGING LOWER LEG
LAS	RIDER LEANS AT SPOT
RTL	REINS TOO LONG
REH	RIDER'S SHOULDERS ARE "BUSY" OR SHIMMYING
LSH	RIDER LEADS WITH SHOULDER
H	RIDER'S HANDS ARE UNEVEN, ONE IS HIGHER
R	REINS ARE UNEVEN, ONE IS LONGER
R	RIDER RIDES OVER HANDS
CR	RIDER GETS IN FRONT OF CENTER OF GRAVITY
LON	RIDER LIES ON HORSE'S NECK IN AIR
LHN	RIDER'S HANDS ARE TOO LOW
HVEH	HORSE APPEARS HEAVY ON FOREHAND
WOG	HORSE IS WEAK OFF GROUND
PIL	RIDER PULLS UP HIS LEG TO USE IT
GOG	RIDER "GOOGES" HORSE OFF GROUND
LTS	RIDER LEANS TO SIDE
SM	SMART RIDER - GOOD DECISIONS, WELL PLANNED TRIP
GOHN	RIDER'S HANDS ARE GOOD (SOFT, CONSISTENT, EVEN)
PLSH	RIDER IS SMOOTH, WELL ORGANIZED, FINISHED

recognized shows, judge's cards are available for inspection only with the judge's permission. If a judge has not granted permission by way of the show steward, a person who inspects the cards is in violation of AHSA rules and is subject to disciplinary action.

Most judges do not object to having their cards looked at by competitors. In fact, by posting their cards along with an explanation of how they mark them, many judges encourage competitors to read cards so that they may understand the factors which influenced the decisions.

Competitors who inspect judges' cards should remember that the primary function of those cards is to serve as the judge's personal reminder of her observations of each competitor. Therefore, a judge's method of record-keeping is required only to be meaningful to the judge; it is not intended for the edification of exhibitors.

However, if a judge has gone to the trouble of cataloguing and posting her symbols for the benefit of exhibitors and spectators, people should be sure they use the glossary to interpret the cards correctly.

#### INDIVIDUAL PICTORIAL SYMBOLS

Many judges use a system of pictorial symbols and words or letters to describe a horse's round over fences. Ronnie Mutch, the famous rider/trainer/judge and artist, developed a system of marking cards that many judges have adapted to suit their own styles. In Mutch's system, each square on the judge's card equals one fence, and the symbols drawn within that square are intended to actually illustrate what the horse looked like over the fence. In a hunter class, a fence jumped in perfect form, for example, receives an arc drawn like the top half of a circle. A fence jumped from a very tight spot receives an upside down "v." A fence jumped very flatly receives a horizontal line.

Judge Penny Rosenthal marks her hunter cards with a combination of pictorial symbols derived from Mutch's system, plus abbreviated words. Her equitation cards show simple checks for each fence jumped, along with abbreviations. For example, "Flt. Fl." means the rider doesn't have enough weight in his heels. "Lns. on hnds." means that the rider leans on his hands over a fence. "Pls. bck." indicates a rider who pulls back on or interferes with the horse's mouth in the air. Ms. Rosenthal then assigns a

numerical evaluation of between one and 100 to the round, with the average round receiving somewhere between 65 and 70, and an excellent round scoring in the high 80s or low 90s.

Michael Page, who last year judged the prestigious AHSA Medal Finals, has an entirely different system of marking his cards. Each jump is described in an individual box, with a number between one and eight. Eight represents a very good jump. When horses are being judged, Mr. Page adds a letter if necessary to further describe the fence. For example, a horse that gets a little close to a fence might get a "TT" (for "tight"). A particularly bad fence is noted with a circle around the number, usually a six or lower. Similarly, equitation riders are scored on each fence individually with a number. Mr. Page adds words to describe either a major trend in the round ("reins too long"), or a rider fault at a particular jump ("ahead"). Like Ms. Rosenthal, Mr. Page assigns both horses and riders a final numerical evaluation.

#### THE CHENKIN-JOHNSTON SYSTEM

I developed my own system for marking cards after studying Ronnie Mutch's system, as well as the systems of 16 other judges when I was learner judging. My system consists of some 80 symbols and abbreviations. Some of the symbols are direct illustrations of how the horse looked over a fence, others are a kind of shorthand. Each fence is depicted individually in its own box, for both hunters and equitation. I use a few abbreviations for hunters ("Q" for a horse that got "quick," "HK" for a horse that "hung its knees," "FE" for a horse that jumped off its "front end," "WOG" for a horse that is "weak off the ground," etc.) And I use a lot of abbreviations above and below the symbol in each jump box to represent rider errors. Some examples of these are: "LDIA"—rider's "Leg is Displaced In Air," "JK"—rider folds like a "jackknife" in the air; "ROT"—rider "Rides Off Toe"; "GOG"—rider "Gooses horse Off the Ground."

I give both hunters and equitation riders final numerical scores with a few "absolutes." A refusal is an automatic score of 40 or less; a dropped stirrup or rein is an automatic score of 30 or less; an extra stride in an in-and-out gets an automatic 40 or less. A class would have to be pretty awful for someone with one of these major faults to get a ribbon!

I assign the final numerical score based on an idea of about 10 points per

fence, and on a general assumption of eight fences in a course. A horse that navigated a course well (got all his lead changes, held a good pace at an even rhythm, and had good distances to jumps) will get a least an 80, assuming he jumped in good form. A horse who jumps in great form and is a breathtaking mover will score higher, possibly into the 90s. A horse with poor form will score considerably lower than the 80, even if he made no errors. Similarly, a rider who makes no distance, pace, or gait mistakes will get marked down for form or style errors. A rider with great form and style will score higher than another rider even if both had error-free rounds.

#### THE NUMBERS COLUMNS

Most judges mark cards for flat classes by writing numbers in a column on the left side of their cards, with the number on top being what at first glance seems to be the best horse or rider in the class. As the class continues, they make adjustments where necessary in the column. If a rider is more capable at the canter and the sitting trot than he initially appeared to be at the posting trot, he may move up the line. Similarly, if a horse looks good at the trot and gets strong at the canter, he may move down the line a few numbers.

Horses or riders who make serious errors generally get their numbers written at the very bottom of a card, with some kind of notation of their errors. Sometimes after the class reverses, the column may be rewritten more towards the right side of the card, reflecting the judge's revised ranking of the competitors. Cards for flat classes are not generally informative for readers; there just isn't enough time to write more than numbers.

What happens if a competitor wants to read the cards of a judge who has made her cards available, but who has not posted an explanation of her marking system? Someone with show savvy will look to see what symbols characterize the performances of the top ribbon winners. He will check to see what the first-place winner had more of than the second-place winner, and so forth, down the line.

Assuming the rider has a clever mind and good deductive reasoning powers, a pattern should emerge. Upon comparing the ribbon winners' performances with his own as described on the judge's card, the rider can get a fairly accurate idea of the impression his ride created. ■