



The Judging Process

All Cavalcade of Bands judges have multiple decades of experience in the marching activity as performers, instructors, writers, designers, consultants, directors and ultimately judges. This experience is learned through years at the high school, college, drum corps and indoor guard/percussion level. The amount of time, training, energy, determination and practice involved in judging is endless. Aside from a mandatory yearly clinic, additional conference calls, webinars, handbooks and weekly emails/videos keep the judge constantly moving forward.

The judges' role is twofold:

1. To provide verbal commentary, both constructive and rewarding, to each group.
2. To determine a score for each band. Actually, three scores, two sub-caption and one total score.

There are five judges who independently arrive at scores with very specific and defined criteria. Each caption has two 10-point sub-captions for a total of 20 points. In addition, a Chief Judge, who controls the flow of each show with no scoring involved and a Tabulator, who manages digital files and scores, make up the seven-person core panel. In addition, special award caption judges for Color Guard and Percussion may be offered, whose score does not count in the total, but commentary and placements are given to each band by class. While optional for regular shows, this is a requirement for all championship panels.

Each of these judges is assigned to score one of the following six categories called captions:

- Field Music – Providing details on music for individuals and small groups at the field level

- Ensemble Visual – Concentrating on overall visual details for the total ensemble from the press box
- Ensemble Music – Providing overall details on music for the total ensemble from the pressbox
- Overall Effect Visual – Reacting to the total visual program and performance
- Overall Effect Music – Reacting to the total musical program and performance
- *Color Guard – Drilling down on the details, techniques and performance of the color guard*
- *Percussion – Drilling down on the details, techniques and performance of the percussion section*

Judges must feel confident to make tough decisions, within their caption, which might not always be popular. They must confidently assign scores they believe are correct for the show they are judging. They must judge each contest as a new event, carrying no pre-conceived opinions into the evening's contest. Their mandate is to "judge the show of the day."

- They are given minutes (around 7 minutes) to process thousands of bits of data within each show.
- They are expected to see everything, mentally record it, speak encouragingly about it, offer suggestions or solutions to problems, as well as remain alert and active over many hours of performances.
- They do not have a "warm-up" time; they have to be "on" from the moment the show starts.
- After each performance they have roughly two minutes to reference the sheet criteria, assign scores and prepare notes for the after-show critique.
- They are then expected to hold intelligent and informative conversations with directors and staff at the post-contest critique.
- They also may fall under the scrutiny of the entire school community, administration and, most importantly, students of each band.
- They are as much "on the line" as the students, directors and staffs.

Judges have an intense passion for this work, and this is a wonderful way for us to give back to this activity which has given us so much. Each and every judge strives to do the best possible job for all bands, at every single competition. While we are certainly not perfect, and occasionally make mistakes, we continue to remain committed to the activity, the work and our part of this wonderful world of marching band, as we constantly strive to improve for each performance.