

DEAR MARY JEAN,

As a participant in only five National Shows over the past two years, I have come to the conclusion that the judging system is broken and needs to be fixed.

This year, I've attended both National shows. Both events brought out the best and worst in the judges ability to follow a consistent format. Even without knowing how Mustangs in other classes are judged, I feel that there is a mounting frustration with the current judging system across the board based upon some of the conversations that I hear at the Nationals. Now, before you judges and those responsible for the judges rise up with pitchforks and two by fours to banish me forever to the gallows of a Toyota car show, please understand that I do respect what you all do. I also feel that of all the MCA's positions, judges have the hardest job and are probably not the most popular people at the Nationals. And before some of you say, "then take the test and see how it really is," I want you to know that I am going to do that and look forward to being in the line of fire with you all next year! In the meantime, as a dues paying member of the MCA, I have the right to complain and if I ruffle some feathers, it is not meant to add insult to what you all do, but to maybe, just maybe, get the ball rolling to get a 'new and really improved' judging system eventually in place.

The judging in Pensacola is where this all started. Having the honor of winning a few first place trophies for my car last year, I was shocked to see one of the judges for my class, take out a white glove and run his white-gloved hand behind my wheels and find the horrors of brake dust on an occasional driven classed car that had been

driven over 500 miles to be at the show. I know that many of you will say that I should have addressed the problem of brake dust. Well, I did and 'thought' I had done a good job of cleaning them, but never in my life would I have expected to have a car entered in occasional driven class get a white-glove inspection! To add insult to injury, four points were deducted. At the most, I would have expected 1 point—for the 1 wheel inspected. I guess that white-glove judging lost me those 3 extra points. If I recall, aren't judges instructed NOT to touch the car and, if closer inspection is needed, to ask the owner for permission to touch a part of the car?

Next was the Columbus show. After arriving much earlier than usual, and driving over 400 miles to the show (some of it in rain), we took to task cleaning the car. This time, the judges 'seemed' to know what they were doing and for the first time (at least for me) they even asked to close the hood, doors, and trunk so they can judge the car from a different perspective. When I received the scoring sheet I saw that I had the most points deducted ever. Based upon the scores and what they deducted, I agreed with some, but highly disagreed with many. I feel there is a problem of consistency and discretion within MCA's judging procedures! Without going into total detail, one deduction was for rust on my trunk hinges; it was not rust. Upon an examination at my Ford dealer it was just a manufacturer's paint defect. Nothing was deducted from four previous shows. What was deemed to be a 'rusty' hinge area never existed. Trust me, if I had seen rust, it would have been gone before I ever drove to Ohio! And don't get me started on the 'dirty wheel.' Learning a lesson at Pensacola, we took

the wheels off and not only scrubbed them down before we pulled into the show site, but even cleaned them off again on Saturday, even though we had not moved the Mustang since we parked it on Friday!

What I found to be a good idea was a judging seminar that was put on prior to the judging on Saturday. So why not take it further? I propose a video be produced with qualified judges (scoring sheet in hand) going step-by-step on the proper procedure to judge a car, converse with an owner, and score a car with the proper rules of MCA judging in place? Once completed and approved by the MCA's governing factor, a copy of the video could be provided to all the judges of that each class so that EVERYBODY is on the same page at ALL the Nationals ALL the time. All it takes is a good camera, a steady hand, and a judge that really knows what he or she is doing, some good editing. You can have a detailed and concise educational video for everyone while improving the judging system.

MCA is a fantastic organization but needs to get itself out of the shadows of the old school and into the light. The times, they are a changin'! If the MCA wants new members and to keep others from leaving, then it's time to stop talking about what needs to be done and actually get it done!

Name withheld upon request.

We would like to hear what's on your mind. Send your letters via e-mail to: editor@mustangtimes.org or via USPS to: LETTERS TO EDITOR c/o MUSTANG TIMES 2920 Drane Field Road Lakeland, Florida 33811-1329

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