

Approaching a Dressage Judge to discuss a test

Dialogue between riders and judges can be helpful for both parties, providing useful feedback, so long as it is done in an appropriate manner.

Qualifying and maintaining judge accreditation costs judges considerably in time and money. We need to remember that Dressage Judges carry out this important & demanding work in a virtually honorary capacity. Whereas an Australian Football League Umpire earns \$100,00.00 per year for officiating at 22 matches, the remuneration for Dressage Judges barely covers their expenses. Below are some guidelines for riders and judges when discussing tests.

Riders should ask a judge politely if they may discuss a test with the judge. Before any discussion commences, the judge should decide the time, the place, and who will be present at the discussion.

When

Judges are required to stay for 30 minutes after the scores for their class are posted, so rider's should try to be available during that time if they wish to discuss a test with a judge.

Riders must respect the fact that the judge may have other more pressing demands on her/his time – further judging commitments on the day, the need for food or drink, or a 'comfort break', perhaps preparing for & competing on their own horse, or indeed other commitments to meet, after staying at the competition for 30 minutes after scores are posted.

For some judges, a telephone call to a judge several days after a competition to discuss a test is challenging, some judges have very busy lives. Any judge has the right to refuse to do this since they may not be able to accurately recall the horse or the test, and since they will not have the sheet in front of them.

Where

The scoreboard is not an appropriate place, neither is any crowded or very public area. The appropriate place should be quiet, comfortable and private.

Who

The person discussing the test with the judge should be the rider. It should not be the coach, friend, parent or any other person. The judge may request a second official be present when the discussion takes place. In recent years, EWA has dealt with several occasions where bullying of officials has been an issue, so officials are now aware of the EWA Bullying Policy. See the EWA website or Handbook for this information.

What

A rider wishing to discuss a test with a judge should firstly collect their test sheet, and secondly check that the scoring is correct. No one is infallible – regardless of whether they are riders, judges, scorers, or trainers. They should then approach the judge in a polite manner, and arrange a time for the discussion. They should bring their sheet to the discussion. At a recent seminar, highly respected Olympic FEI O Judge Stephen Clarke advised judges to refuse to discuss a test unless the discussion is with the rider, and unless she/he provides the test sheet to refresh their memory.

Inappropriate Behaviour

If a rider or companion to a rider behaves in an inappropriate way, the judge has every right to terminate the discussion and file a written report on the rider to the Dressage Judge's Taskforce. It is helpful to keep a DWA Caution Card in their briefcase at events in case they feel they need to hand one to a person who approaches them or who is speaking inappropriately to a fellow judge.

Different Positions around the Arena May Effect Scores

Discussion with a judge about a test is not a matter of whether anyone is right or wrong, judging Dressage is by its nature subjective, and one reason why judges are placed in different positions around the arena is so that the final score more accurately reflects the horse and rider's performance, because it is an average of the different perspectives judges gain from their different positions.