Article Side

A View from the Judgeâ€™s Eyes by Emily Heggan

Article published on August 24th 2012 | Sports

Breeding, knowledge, and high-quality horse tack can land you and your steed at some of the biggest shows in the country. Competing with top Hunter and Equitation horses and riders while simultaneously perfecting your riding, style and form in the show ring is no easy task. And the fact is, a lot of riders come out of the ring empty handed or wonder why they did not pin as high as they thought they would.

The Judges

Judges must watch a large number of horses and riders, paying attention to every move they make and in most cases, there is one judge for each ring at a horse show. Every judge sees and looks for something different. Depending on the judgeâ€™s view, they could have seen a mistake or not seen a mistake at all. Sometimes there can be three or more judges at different places around the arena that score the same course so that it is judged fairly.

Each judge sees the jumps from different angles so there are also several different scores in, for example, a hunter derby. All the judges scores are then added up to make one final score. And since they only have about two minutes to watch and score a horse or rider, Judges must have a good eye and know what certain qualities to look for in the show ring.

There is a difference between each discipline of riding and judges follow specific guidelines and standards to score riders. Additionally, each judge has their own criteria of what they are looking for in a discipline of riding and they tend to score based what they like in a horse or rider. A fair judge will try to evaluate all of these factors simultaneously as the riders take to the ring or course.

The Hunter Horse

A hunter horse is a type of show horse that is judged on its movement, manners, and way of going, primarily while jumping fences. Hunter horses are shown in English tack, like a close contact saddle and a fitted white saddle pad, as opposed to the trail and work styles associated with western tack. Show hunters are shown over a course of 8 to 12 fences and there a few additional classes offered for horses shown in-hand or on the flat.

â€œHunters are judged on quality, smoothness around the course, manners, way of going and style of jumping, said judge Carol Dean-Porter. â€œHorses are compared to each other subjectively. Most judges place highest emphasis on jumping form and smoothness.â€•

The horse should also have a good attentive expression, good scope and tight knees that go up to the horseâ€™s head as they jump in a round form over the fences. Not only should hunter horses possess all of the above qualities, but they should also have a nice calm attitude, sound mind and a pleasant personality.

Ideal Hunter Horse

1. Flowing movement

2. Tight knees

3. Even and steady pace

4. Good round form over fences

5. Happy expression

6. The Equitation Rider

Equitation is judged solely on the rider. The horse is used as a way for the rider to show off his or her skills over a set course.

An equitation rider has a solid leg â€“ the leg is tight around the horseâ€™s stomach and not swinging.

The riderâ€™s seat should be secure and they must have a good upright posture; not too far forward and not too far back. Their hands should be steady and their arms have a nice forward bend. While most riders know the basic equitation position, judging equitation is much more than placing a beauty pageant; itâ€™s scoring that indefinable connection between a horse and a rider.

â€œEquitation is judged based on the riderâ€™s ability to establish and maintain an even pace around the course of jumps. Emphasis is placed on hands, seat, leg and the ability to communicate subtly,â€• said Judge Dean-Porter.

Bottom line is- nothing else can be correct if the leg isnâ€™t correct. Most of your balance comes from your leg down to your heel and up to your upper body. If your leg is too far forward, it can cause your body to be to far back. If your leg is to far backwards, it causes your upper body to topple forward. Your calf should be in contact with the sides of the horse at the girth. If the rider has an insecure seat and leg, the judge will take off points.

Ideal Equitation Rider

1. Secure leg and seat

2. Good posture

3. Steady hands

4. Guides horse through the course well

5. Makes ride look effortless

6. Clear and precise directions to the horse

Errors in the Show Ring

Sometimes things donâ€™t always go as smoothly or as planned in both rings. In the hunter ring, if the horse knocks down a rail or clips the jump with his legs, points are automatically deducted from the overall score. The horse can fail to get a lead charge and show some hesitance in the change or even to a fence. Points are also deducted when a horse chips into a fence or takes off from a long spot. Almost all mistakes in the hunter ring are considered to be the horseâ€™s fault.

In equitation, however, most of the mistakes are considered the riderâ€™s fault due to improper cues. A rider can perform well and have a good round and occasionally a horseâ€™s sloppiness or laziness can contribute to a rail down or a refusal. A more likely cause however, would be a rider â€œgetting aheadâ€• or â€œgetting left behindâ€• of the horseâ€™s motion. Ultimately, it is the judgeâ€™s responsibility to dec whether it was the horse or riderâ€™s fault for the mistake.

There is a lot to take in and consider when judging a horse show. But knowing what the judges look for in your discipline will surely give you a leg up on the competition.

Article Source:
http://www.articleside.com/sports-articles/a-view-from-the-judge-s-eyes.htm - Article Side

Emily Heggan - About Author:
Emily Heggan is a senior at Rowan University majoring in journalism. She currently competes in the 3' hunters with her horse, General, and enjoys writing about equestrian topics like a horse blankets.

Article Keywords:
Horse Blankets

You can find more free articles on Article Side. Sign up today and share your knowledge to the community! It is completely FREE!