

January 2026 WGI Judge Summit Takeaways

Sam Gervaise and William Chumley

Equipment and Movement Caption Meeting

- Judges were able to articulate and describe the physicality of an unfamiliar skill incorporating elements of sensation, muscle memory, and risk.
- The use of Andy Toth's video - breaking down a 30 sec segment of an IW show from last season provoked thoughtful and lively conversation about how to say less, but with proof that we "get it."
- Using AI generated excerpts from 2 files, judge pairs discovered that touching on multiple POCs in a relatively short time occurs both explicitly and implicitly.

General Effect & Design Analysis Caption Meeting

- Judges were challenged to consider their judging process anew:
 - What is their process?
 - How might that evolve?
 - What will they adjust and change in the coming season to better cover the complete caption?
- Judges answered individually and in groups strategies to approach innovation and imaginative choices from designers.
- Judges focused on the score sheets and comparison points to ensure alignment of understanding and ultimately to see that applying the whole system is key to recognition and reward.
- **Key Takeaways:**
 - The bullets are reminders and windows into our complete understanding of the scoring system.
 - The ultimate outcome is for us to internalize the scoring system, adjudication manual, and integrate that into our judging.
 - We can always work to better cover the complete system WHILE being present with each team and providing that team with its unique information in real time.

Where We Align

- Positive feedback with regard to pairing judges up upstairs/downstairs.
- Enthusiastic conversation in each session revolved around common challenges. Ideas were shared throughout the day for navigating these challenges.
- Question surfaced about build up vs. tear down perceptionDerived achievement conversation tended to be the most "lively" in most sessions. We revisited Karl's "hot-air balloon" analogy as a way to frame how we approach this.

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Expanded Recognition

Video examples of movement and equipment skills served as the centerpiece for this session, giving participants an opportunity to sharpen observation and develop plain language to describe what judges are seeing and the training it takes to achieve the demonstrations.

Key Takeaways:

- Consider more options and ways to “achieve.”
 - Achievement is not just about precision.
 - Expressive and dynamic excellence and training is critical.
 - Uniformity may not be “all there is” to the phrase.
 - Achievement includes everything asked of the performers: details, nuance, dynamics, context, intention, environment.
- Perhaps, start with dynamics or excellence first, achievement of “what?”
- Be in the impression moment without filtering first, then analyze.
- Speak more to “what it took to make this seem effortless?”
- Acknowledge the environmental understanding and risk required to achieve the skills/challenges.
- Filter through the scoring system and ensure credit for innovation and imagination

Overall Thoughts

- People responded very positively to breaking into smaller cohorts on Saturday.
- Conversation throughout the day was energetic and well-balanced.
- Feedback received suggests that the diversity in the programming of the weekend worked well. People responded positively to a cross section of sessions.

Questions to Explore, Ideas to Refine

- How to reset following each team (best practices, tricks of the trade, etc.)?
- How to be reactive and authentic in an analysis caption - what if this doesn't come naturally?
- Efficacy of AI with respect to speech or voice recognition.
- Craftsmanship conversation - what if judges' collective understanding of a term (this was the prime example) doesn't align with instructors?
- Effort to forge connections (accountability partners or more casual relationships) with fellow judges who are new to you. Stretch outside of your comfort zone.
- Leverage fellow judges for development, mentoring, and continual learning.