

CAB Chief Judge report 2026

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As most of you may already know, I have recently resigned from my position as Chief Judge of the Color Guard Division for WGI. As I prepare to submit my final report, I wanted to take a moment to sincerely thank the instructor community and the Advisory Board specifically for the support, collaboration, professionalism, and passion you have shown throughout my years in this role. It has been a privilege to work alongside so many dedicated educators, designers, and advocates for the activity, and I remain deeply appreciative of the trust, respect and friendships built along the way. You are in very good hands as you prepare for the 50th celebratory season of WGI, and I want to encourage all of you to continue pushing the activity forward with confidence and vision. I know the judging community will continue to support you, your programs, and your students in the years ahead. Thank you again for the opportunity to serve alongside you. Best wishes for a remarkable season ahead.

Judging -

Assignment process:

As directed from last year's discussion, and with the Steering Committee input, a concerted effort was made to assign judges with a more deliberate approach to exposure. Whenever possible, a world class judge worked prelims and finals in the same caption at regional events. I also limited world class exposure to judges in a caption they would not be used in at Championships.

I made assignments to balance each region of the country with similar numbers of World Class judges used at Championships. Here is the breakdown for IW: East – 7, Mideast – 8, West - 8, South – 8, Texas – 5, Florida – 3. Obviously, the number of World Class judges you saw during the regional season depended on 1) the number of regionals you attended 2) the number of regionals in your region 3) your ability to travel. There were some tradeoffs – Some critiques did not have a full panel (occasionally travel related), there was not total equity (there never is) with the number of world class judges in specific regions - what went well, what needs improvement?

The most common judging concern in season 2025 was “scores are too low” – As a result there were some adjustments to the sheets. I'm sure Karl will address the philosophical shift of removing box thirds in box 5 and the elimination of box 6. Do you feel this shift moved scores in a place that was more representative of programming and performance? The elimination of box thirds and box 6 resulted in scores being somewhat higher than in previous years. Does there need to be discussion regarding this scoring issue, or scoring in general?

Holding two rounds: As approved by the Steering Committee, judges were permitted to hold the first two rounds at regional events and at Championships whenever there was

more than one round. During the regional season, it was necessary in most SA contests do to the “leap frogging” of judging panels. At Championships it occurred in all classes, to assure that judges were grounded in their numeric ranges. Dale can speak to the format, rationale, and outcomes of this minor adjustment to regional scheduling and judge assignments.

Qualifying scores was raised (5 points higher) in World Classes this regional season. As a result, there was a slight increase in the number of competing world teams that did not qualify for finals.

Weather related judge replacements and absences at regionals - this regional season was a challenge regarding weather and judge travel. We had many judges that could not make it home Sunday after regional events, in some cases they were not able to get home until Tuesday. Additionally, there were several times when judges could not make their regional on Friday. We managed to limit the number of “judge missing” events by shifting cities and / or assignments which was possible due to the number of judges that are trained on multiple captions.

My last word on standings / rankings:

This device is used to seed teams into Championship prelim rounds; teams are placed in loose neighborhoods and then scrambled. Judges do not refer to standings in any regard. Below are some of the highlights that support the idea that judges are trained to judge the contest and performance of the day, regardless of any standing going into Championships. Obviously, the smaller the classification, the smaller the places of differentiation. Additionally, there are many 400-mile rule teams that are placed within neighborhoods. Performances are different, panels are different, sampling is different, venues are different; therefore, the placements are different. Below is some the largest differentiation of places between the ranked placement and actual placement.

IA - 12 places of differentiation (ranked 10th - finished 3rd, ranked 14th - finished 4th, ranked 18th - finished 6th, ranked 1st - finished 8th)

IO - 11 places of differentiation (ranked 8th - finished 19th, ranked 12th - finished 20th, ranked 17th - finished 9th)

IW - 6 places of differentiation

SA - 41 places of differentiation (26th ranked team finished 1st, 52nd ranked team finished 11th)

SO - 20 places of differentiation (ranked 15th - finished 5th, ranked 9th - finished 17^h)

SW - 6 places of differentiation

We brought in 15% new judges to Championships. Two judges were on the World panel for the first time, and two judges were on World class on a second caption.

As mandated by this body, all Championship scores of 100 require explanation by the judge to me – in 2026 there were 7 submitted judge explanations for SW finals.

Regional Plus Events - leapfrogging of panels in SA –

Two lead judges at plus events where I was not present, this was done to manage two different panels of judges in SA. Scoring consistency was critical in this situation since 1/3 of finalists were from one panel of judges, 1/3 from the other panel of judges and 1/3 finalists were “wild cards” (next highest scores). I believe this procedure worked well; there was only one event where numbers varied from one panel to the other that created a difference from which teams advanced (for example: the 16th place team scored 85.5 and missed finals from round two, where teams in round one scored 85.2 and made finals. The wild card was able to catch all but one of these instances).

Affiliations - Affiliated judges were used at Championships and four were used during the regional season. As per discussions in 2025, it was my discretion to use affiliated judges where I thought it would be appropriate. Balancing the need of scheduling, exposure, judge quality and relevancy. There were no reported issues involving affiliated judges.

Education - There was a full judge summit prior to the beginning of the competitive season, all judges were required to attend. All session notes and slide decks were available on the hub. One topic that probably deserves special consideration and / or discussion is the use of AI. There was a session at the summit that addressed this topic, additionally there was a document sent to all WGI judges in all divisions, again available on the instructor hub (posted March 5). Are there implications of AI that impact the instructor / judge community – have you had discussions surrounding AI?

Weekly notes were sent to judges during the regional season. Karl and I would communicate at the end of each weekend, I would then convey any concerns we had to Sam and William. The three of us would have a weekly zoom on Monday evenings to establish the topics of each week’s note. Sam and William would compose the note to be sent out midweek. These notes are all posted in the instructor hub.

Finally, new this season was the reinvention of the judge accountability sheet. As the managers and I discussed a method for judges to hold themselves accountable and to remain current, we created a process that was tailored to individual judge’s needs. Judges were encouraged to have discussions with their peers and report back to their manager the outcome of the discussion (the document outlining the accountability is on the instructor hub).

Critiques - I had several incidents, through judge evaluation forms, that judges were not as friendly and open as they could have been in critique. We stress that the critique is the instructor time that should be used as they see fit. Judges should be open to change, good listeners, and communicate professionally (both verbal and body language). We train on proper critique behavior and will continue to make it a priority going forward.

Judge Input -

Your input is important – As per our discussion last year at this meeting, we linked the judge evaluation to your regional surveys. More positive judge evaluation forms were submitted

than critical ones this season. Is this process still working for you? It is imperative that this body communicates their wishes and concerns to the next Chief Judge.