



A Hunter Judges Perspective

Caroline Jones

[Back to Articles...](#)

I've been lucky enough these past years to judge some amazing horse shows in North America. Judging top horses in West Palm Beach, The Capital Challenge, and LA National Horse Show, are just a few of the places I've been asked to judge.

In judging hunters I like to keep as accurate a record as possible of everything each horse does during the round. I give it a score and throughout the class place it in relation to the rest of the class.

I believe we, as judges, have a responsibility to each exhibitor we are judging and in marking our cards we develop a bookkeeping system that we can confidently and honestly answer to the exhibitor. You develop shorthand that is the result of hours and hours of judging. It allows you total recall of each of the rounds.

The more you judge the more you find that the worse the rounds are, the more symbols you need! Good horses tend to pin themselves and their small differences are more likely to be reflected in their placing according to the personal preferences of the judge for one type of horse over another. Individual judges are going to have their own personal opinions on the importance of one jumping performance over another in regards to errors on course.

What I always stress in the judges clinics that I give in Canada, is be consistent with your opinion! It is so much easier to follow you as a judge if you are consistent with your opinion. The rotating of judges week to week at shows allows for exhibitors to get different opinions on your horse. That skip change your horse did last week that lead to a low or no prize may not bother the next judge as much the next week where you received a prize.

Hunters done well are an art for me. It truly is poetry in motion. We are looking for soft, well-mannered horses that fold tightly in front, are good behind and round in the air. The good hunter has an arc over the fences, movement and style.

In under saddle classes I'm looking for a horse in good balance, moves well from the shoulder with as little knee action as possible, hocks well under him, appears alert and on a light contact. Last month in judging a junior hunter under saddle class there were two of us judging together. Interestingly, one lovely moving chestnut in the class pinned his ears most of the class. He wasn't cranky with the other horses, wasn't swishing his tail, just pinned his ears. This bothered the other judge much more than myself and was a really interesting discussion of where we placed the horse in the class. It was yet another example of judge's opinions and different placings at shows. Consistency of your opinion allows for fair judging. Neither judge is necessarily wrong.



A Hunter Judges Perspective

Caroline Jones

[Back to Articles...](#)

I love judging the hunters. It's always an honour to be asked to judge a show, big or small. The exhibitors have no idea how much we judges are rooting for them on course! We so want you to find those eight jumps and have the round of your life! Separating the good rounds is our ideal class!

Combining my manager and judge's experience I am pleased to let you know that this coming year at Rocky Mountain we will be offering "What the Judge is Looking For" clinics again at our outdoor tournaments. I think they are so informative for our exhibitors with top judges coming into our area to judge.