

COMPETITORS' CORNER

by Joan Lindsay

This year both Idaho and Washington concentrated on a gentler approach to judging at our state shows.

We all know that no matter how detailed the definitions in the Blue Book, there are different interpretations. When the interpretations of entrants and judges differ, trays are often disqualified and entrants are discouraged—if not downright angry.

This year judges were asked not to disqualify trays except for the six reasons listed in the NBS Blue Book

- 1) exhibitor's name anywhere on the entry,
- 2) incorrect number of buttons,
- 3) incorrect number of specified sizes,
- 4) incorrect button(s) for award division,
- 5) omitted or incorrect labeling when required,
- 6) omitted or incorrect labeling and/or numerical mounting when required for summaries and assortments.

Although there were a fair number of disqualifications for the reasons above, liberal benefit of the doubt (BOD) was given for questionable choices. Judges had the freedom to deduct points for buttons they felt didn't match the intent of the award. They were asked to comment accordingly so entrants would know not to use "poor choice" buttons on similar awards in the future.

When measles were given, with a few exceptions, judges measles each incorrect button, even if the same mistake was repeated. There are differences of opinion on this policy because some feel that seeing a bunch of dots on a tray is discouraging. Others say the measles help the entrant (and observers) avoid using the same incorrect buttons on similar awards. We've adopted the latter view in Idaho, mainly to help educate members.

I hope the case for gentler judging will spread in widening competition circles. Putting together trays for competition is not only an investment of time, but also a monetary investment and trays deserve careful but liberal consideration when being judged by those who may or may not have superior knowledge of the buttons presented. Since giving an undeserved measles is almost as painful as receiving one, BOD (benefit of the doubt) combined with thoughtful and helpful comments will go a long way to make competition the educational and fun event it's meant to be.

Our local club has now started our study of the 2010 state awards. We look at three awards per meeting and those

participating bring trays to club for discussion. We test and improve judging sheets as we go along. By next June we'll have gone through the whole list and show cards will be ready to take to the show.

I'd encourage all of you to do this. One of our members who'd never entered before got second place in clear colorless glass this year. We all entered more trays than we would have done, without this incentive for pulling together buttons for meetings throughout the year.

We also put together trays to try out awards we've written before we submit them. It's an excellent "button test" to make sure the award is do-able and judge-able. Since awards may be written to accommodate buttons you have, it isn't necessary to have a large expensive collection to compete. With well written awards, well thought out entries, good judging sheets and gentle judging, competition will continue to flourish and, above all, be fun.



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The Western Regional Button Association is pleased to share our educational articles with the button collecting community. This article appeared in the May 2010 WRBA newsletter, *Territorial News*. Enjoy! And consider joining WRBA! Go to www.WRBA.us