

## Responsibilities of the Team Captain By Jim Clarkson

AOS judges receive training on judging orchids, new breeding trends and unusual genera, among other subjects, but rarely are the duties and responsibilities of being a team captain touched upon.

In the simplest terms, the team captain is responsible for everything that does and does not happen on the team. That definition may sound like a copout, but it does sum up the responsibility entrusted to team captain. What this entails might add up to more than is initially obvious.

The basic job is to make certain that the plants are judged fairly and considered for all possible awards — recognition, quality and culture. This is done by ensuring the following:

- Proper research is completed.
- Each member of the team has an opportunity to discuss the merits and shortcomings of the plant.
- The plant is evaluated under the proper light
- Consultation from outside sources is obtained when necessary
- There is some consensus among the judges
- The team maintains focus
- The team hold harmonious discussion of the plants
- There is discussion to determine which judging scale is most appropriate
- Each judge has scored the plant properly, which includes adding correctly
- The difference of scores is within limits, and calculate the final score
- The description is written accurately and properly
- Student and probationary judges have the opportunity to learn and are evaluated

**RESEARCH** Determining how much research is enough is a challenge. It depends on the plant being judged and the knowledge of the judges. For a white phalaenopsis, of which several of the same grex have already been awarded, research should be fairly straightforward: descriptions and photographs or slides of the previously awarded plants are sufficient in most cases. The team might also need information on any awarded parents. In cases of new or unusual breeding lines, research may extend back several generations and include species in the background or information on similar awards as well as botanical and historical information. Research may also include consultation with objective experts present at the judging.

**CONSENSUS** Divergent opinions of the qualities and faults should be discussed in sufficient detail so that each judge can benefit from the observations and insights of all the members of the team. This is important in minimizing scores with large differences. When a plant is scored and the difference between scores given by the judges exceeds six points, the AOS Handbook Judging and Exhibition (10<sup>th</sup> Edition) does not consider this valid, and allows the team members to adjust their scores “once.” Before the score sheets

are returned to the judges, the team captain should try to determine why there is such a large variance in the scores. Are all of the scores except one or two clustered? Is there any consensus among the majority of the judges or are the scores widely distributed? As a minimum, the judges whose scores are at the extremes should be told how their scores compare to the others and how much change is necessary to meet the six-point requirement. They may also be asked to discuss their score in places where they vary significantly from the other judges. Maybe they saw things, favorable or unfavorable, that the other judges did not see, or vice versa. The discussions should continue until there is a consensus or until not more progress can be made. There is no provision in the handbook that states that a judge's score should not be discussed with the rest of them. If one score is far outside the consensus of the rest of the team and that team member feels uncomfortable in changing his or her score, that member may consider asking to be excused from the panel for that plant. This should be done only with the concurrence of the judging chair, and ensuring that the accredited or probationary judge ratio is still satisfied. After all possibilities have been explored, the ballots may be returned to the judges for reconsideration and possible adjustment of their scores.

**FOCUS** There are many distractions when judging and it is sometimes difficult to maintain control of a group of judges who may have other things on their minds. The team captain should recognize these factors and take actions when necessary to maintain the focus of the group. Distracting noises or conversations should be addressed to the chair of judging for possible resolution. Unsolicited comments from personnel outside of the assigned judging team should not be tolerated, and may be justification for disqualifying the team from judging the plant. This or any other interference should be addressed immediately to the chair of judging. Within the team, some judges may discuss subjects other than the plant in question. This or any other interference should be addressed immediately to the chair of judging. Within the team, some judges may discuss subjects other than the plant in question. It is the duty of the team captain to bring the focus back. For the plant to be judged properly by the team, each judge should have the benefit of the expertise and opinion of every other judge on the team.

**HARMONY** By definition, each member of the judging team should be an opinionated individual who is right at least 100 percent of the time. In this kind of environment, there are times when team members will have strong diverse opinions, and it is the responsibility of the team captain to keep things in order and in perspective. Each member of the team is entitled to express his or her opinion about the plant being judged, as long as the discussion is professional, informative, harmonious and germane. As long as all comments conform to these principles, discussions should remain friendly.

**DESCRIPTION** The description of the plant is the official record of the award. The captain must ensure that it adequately describes the plant or flower and that all measurements are accurately recorded. The description should conform to the format and syntax in the *Awards Quarterly Style Book*. Remember, it is the team captain who signs the entry form, certifying that the award information is complete and correct.

**EDUCATION AND EVALUATION** Another important responsibility of the team captain is to enable student and probationary judges to learn from the judging experience, and provide the accredited judges at the table the opportunity to evaluate students' progress toward elevation. This is accomplished by ensuring that the student and probationary judges participate fully in all activities of the team. They should be allowed to verbally evaluate the plants prior to listening to the accredited judges' comments. Students and probationary judges may also be questioned on their general influence and potential. After scoring a plant, the student's score sheet should be reviewed and discussed with the student. Although the entire judging team should be involved with writing the description of awarded plants, students and probationary judges should at least prepare a first draft, so that their ability can be evaluated by all of the accredited judges. At the end of each judging session, the student and probationary judges usually discuss the team's evaluated plants for the benefit of everyone attending the judging. Prior to this discussion, the team captain should ensure that the presenter understands the salient points to be discussed.

**SUMMARY** When designated to serve as a team captain, the responsibility is to be taken seriously. The captain is in charge of the team and is responsible for ensuring that the plants assigned to the team are judged fairly and correctly. However, the captain is not alone. The chair of judging is there to assist and help resolve any problems that may arise.

*Jim Clarkson is an AOS accredited judge. 4713 Foxshire Circle, Tampa, Florida 33624 (e-mail [orchidaholic@worldnet.att.net](mailto:orchidaholic@worldnet.att.net))*

Published in September 2001 Awards Quarterly. Pages 195-196.