

High Scores and Top Awards in Inter-Club Competitions

The author examines some of the aspects relevant when running an inter-club competition with individual awards. This article appeared in the PSA publication The Projector.

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We are often asked "Why did the top award go to an image which did not have the top score?" If you run an inter-club competition or you have entered one, then perhaps you recognize this question or perhaps you have asked this question.

Let us look at the process for an Inter-Club competition. In each round, there are, in effect, two different competitions being run concurrently. The first is to determine the scores for each image and therefore the standings of the clubs - the second is to determine individual awards and honourable mentions.

The selectors will look at each image in turn and assign a mark. Due to the number of images involved, this is a quick process, typically taking between 3 and 5 seconds per image. The images are not studied in detail - there is not enough time. That is one of the reasons why high impact is likely to score higher. But each image is treated in the same way - none are given any special examination.

At the end of this process, the scores have been assigned and the club standings can be determined.

We now come to the second part of the competition - assigning individual awards. Look upon it as the 'playoffs'. The individual

images will be looked at in greater detail and compared against each other.

Who is in this 'playoff'? If there are 12 awards to be given out, then there must be at least 12 images in the 'playoff'. But perhaps only 4 images scored the top mark of 15. So we need to expand the 'pool' of images by including those which scored 14 or even perhaps those which scored 13. As an organizer, there is no hard and fast rule - you start with the top mark and expand the 'pool' of images in the 'playoffs' by including those with a lower mark until the 'pool' of images is just large enough. At this point you might have 17 images in the 'playoff' of which only 12 will gain an award.

In this 'playoff' process, all images are treated as equals, irrespective of the marks they achieved in the first part of the competition. The images are examined in detail and compared - the selectors are free to choose the winners from the whole pool without restriction or direction - they are not told the scores.

In inter-club competitions, where the individual scores count towards a club standing, the scores must not be adjusted just because the image won an individual award in the 'playoff'. As a consequence, in this second stage, where images are examined in detail, an image which scored 13 may in fact gain the top award. Remember - wildcards can win the Super Bowl but that does not change their position in the league.