

## GP Shanghai Judge Conference Presenter Notes Judge Reviews

*Below are notes created to accompany the material presented at the Judge conference. These notes are more detailed so the presenter isn't just reading verbatim off the slides, and can be picked and chosen from to tailor the presentation to the audience.*

*How much dialogue and interaction you want in the presentation is up to you. Judges should be able to provide examples of qualities that judges should strive for, as well as attitudes or weaknesses to fix.*

### Reviews? Why Bother?

- Briefly introduce yourself and give an overview of the session.
- Ask: **why do we judge?** It's not about the money, fame, glory. If you do a quick roundtable, most responses can be summarised as a love of the game, the community, the experience.
- Judges want to have the best experience, for themselves and for others. Nobody wants to do less than the next job possible. **We achieve excellence by developing ourselves and others.**
- Reviews help judges see their strengths. It's easier to see from the outside!
- We should all want to improve, not only ourselves, but our communities. Athletes, doctors, professionals, judges... Nobody 'peaks'. We all keep training.
- Feedback from different viewpoints is useful. Higher level judges might have their 'floor skills' down pat, but may still be learning how to lead, or what images to project. Newer judges may need a boost to confidence or technical skill. You can share ideas with your peers.
- Judges love to discuss corner cases, we should also enjoy discussing rulings and different ways of handling judge procedures.

### How To Review

- Ask: Who carries a notebook with them? Some people use PDA's, but sometimes pen and paper are better.
- We all shadow and talk to other judges about judge calls. If you're listening to a ruling, think about how the players and spectators are seeing it.
- Look through the player's eyes as a ruling is given. A judge can give a technically correct ruling, but if they're abrupt, confusing, or unsure of themselves, the player won't have a great time!
- Boyfriend / Girlfriend: imagine your / the player's good friend is watching the ruling, but doesn't know anything about Magic. Would they be impressed at the way the interaction was handled?
- Take notes of positive instances and things you think could be improved on.
- If you would have handled something differently, note what and why. This is great material for verbal feedback!
- Reviews aren't only about rulings. Keep thinking about how you and other judges do mundane tasks. Putting up pairings. Organising floor coverage. Coordinating breaks.

### Informal and Written Reviews

- Have a quick chat with each judge you've worked with at the end of a day or event. If you're going to write a review of their work, it's good form to talk things over with them in person.
- It doesn't have to be as formal as a sit down talk, one or two minutes while wandering the floor or tidying up can be fine.
- Talk about how you think the weekend went and what you'd noticed, both positive and areas for improvement.

- Feedback when things are fresh means the judge will remember more of what you're referring to.
- Good opportunity to give your staff thanks personally for their work if you're a HJ or TL.
- Face to face feedback means there will be **no surprises** when the written review comes up. Surprise praise is OK. Surprising suggestions for improvement are not. Address them sooner.
- Make sure you write the reviews and enter them online. The sooner you do this, the fresher your notes will be and the more detail you'll remember.
- Think about feedback 'sandwiches' – I like 'hugs', myself. The basic idea is to surround suggestions for improvement or *constructive* criticism with positive feedback.
- Summarise on a positive note.

### Reviews, Lots Of Reviews

- One of the biggest indications of a judge's capacity to advance in the judge program is their approach to reviewing.
- Because giving and receiving feedback doesn't always tickle, some judges let reviewing slide. If you're giving feedback in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, think about your phrasing. **Remember that the aim is to grow and foster growth.**
- “Who do I review?” is a common questions.
- You should be able to review everyone in your team and your TL if you're a floor judge.
- If you're a TL, aim review everyone in your team, and consider your interactions with other Team Leaders and the Head judge.
- Head Judges get the most to do – all their TL's, officials, and as many judges as they've worked with over the weekend.
- **Be Bold** – encourage all judges, especially volunteers and new level 1's, to review a higher level judge. Many level 3's, 4's and 5's enjoy teaching through Socratic dialogue – teaching by asking questions. One of the best things experienced judges can ask learning judges is 'what feedback do you have for me?'

### Writing a Review

- The language you use is as important as the content of your feedback.
- Be as specific as possible. Precise instances will let the judge remember what they were doing. “I liked it when you made that ruling at the start of the day with the players who were confused about upkeep effects. When you....”
- With both praise and constructive criticism, be clear about what worked well or needs improvement, and why. “You seemed unsure when giving the ruling, and the players seemed to pick up on that.”
- Reinforce praise and highlight the qualities it shows. “Taking the initiative there showed great leadership.”
- With suggestions for improvement, try phrasing your feedback as a suggestion rather than a direction.
- When people receive feedback, they often naturally feel defensive and dismiss feedback if it's presented aggressively. Everyone does this; it takes a lot of practice to look forward to a feedback session!
- Consider the difference between

“You did that ruling completely wrong. You screwed up the ruling when there were other judges around, and made a mess of it. Next time, talk to other judges.”

and

“The ruling about layers could have run a little smoother. Remember that it's OK to confer with other judges, especially if it's about something you're not sure on. It never hurts to get a second opinion of there's another judge around.”

- If a judge seems like they're upset or unhappy about some of their work, they're probably going to be harsher on themselves than you are. Focus not on what went wrong, but how to improve for next time. If you've had a similar problem before yourself, consider sharing it. Remind judges that we've all made mistakes, and we're all only human.
- **Don't have a review be entirely praiseful or entirely critical.**

### **Review Writing Errors**

- If you're not sure whether to write a review, write one anyway. It's good practice.
- Being critical without suggestions on how to fix the issue is less helpful. Try and focus on positives, and look for ways to fix problems.
- If you felt an element of a judge's behaviour wasn't up to scratch, you *can* say so, and you don't need to wait until the end of an event.
- Don't use reviews as personal attacks. Sometimes, we don't get on with other judges, for any number of reasons. You can still be professional and work with them.
- If you can't find something nice to say, you weren't looking hard enough.
- If you can't find any constructive suggestions to give, you weren't looking hard enough.
- **The worst problem with feedback is it not happening.**

### **On receiving feedback:**

- Assume the best intentions from the other judge.
- Accept the feedback as it comes, and digest it. Don't argue with feedback.

### **Odds and Ends:**

- Reviewing doesn't come naturally to many people. It takes time and practice.
- When you finish an event, you're probably pretty tired. Make sure you keep your notes. If you celebrate on Sunday evening, reviews have been proven to be a hangover cure. They also make for something to do on the trip home.
- Don't forget to self review. Honest, regular self reviews let you see how you progress as a judge. Watching your focusses change and mature over time is rewarding, and you can't see how far you've come as a judge unless you self review.
- Reviews don't fade or disappear from view. They're all there. Make sure you read and reflect on them.