

Ethical considerations as professional gymnastics judges



NAWGJ CANONS

What are canons?

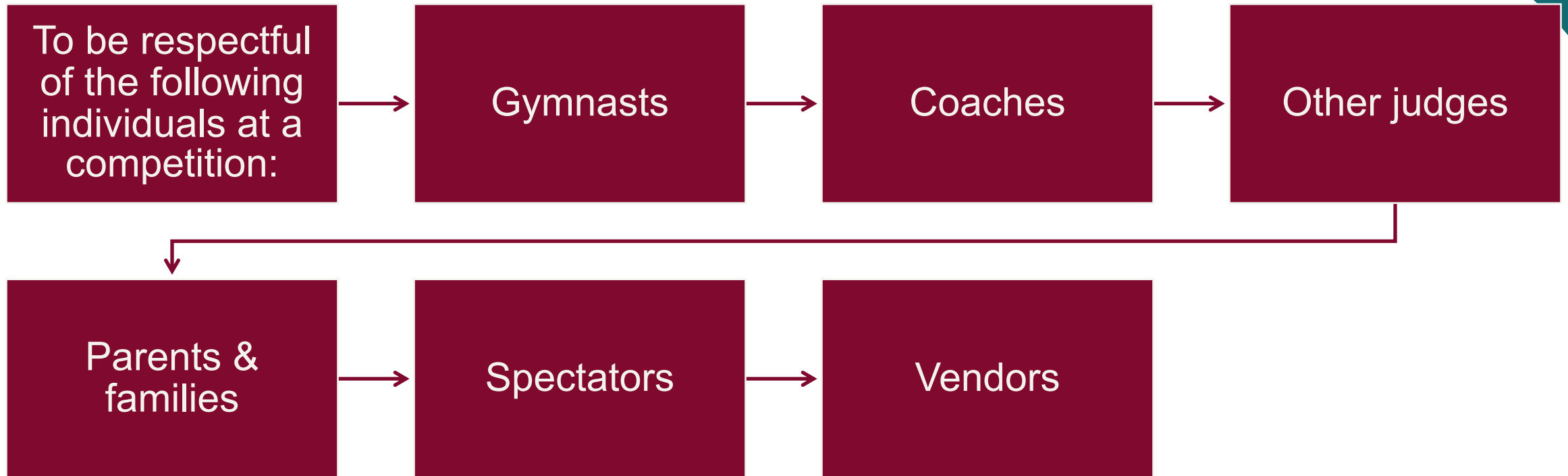
They are "acceptable criteria or rules of judgement that pertain to our behavior as professional gymnastics judges." (Carlson & Ragle, 2019)



Why are the canons necessary?

- They serve as guidelines for our professional behavior.
- These boundaries help us navigate what the expectations are for us as judges.
- Without clear and reasonable expectations our behavior would be left to self-determination—therefore, resulting in chaos.
- To help assist us with this process NAWGJ has created a series of canons for us to follow and use as standards of excellence within our organization.

What do the canons expect from us?



What are our duties as judges?



To show up to the event prepared and adequately studied on the events we are anticipated to judge



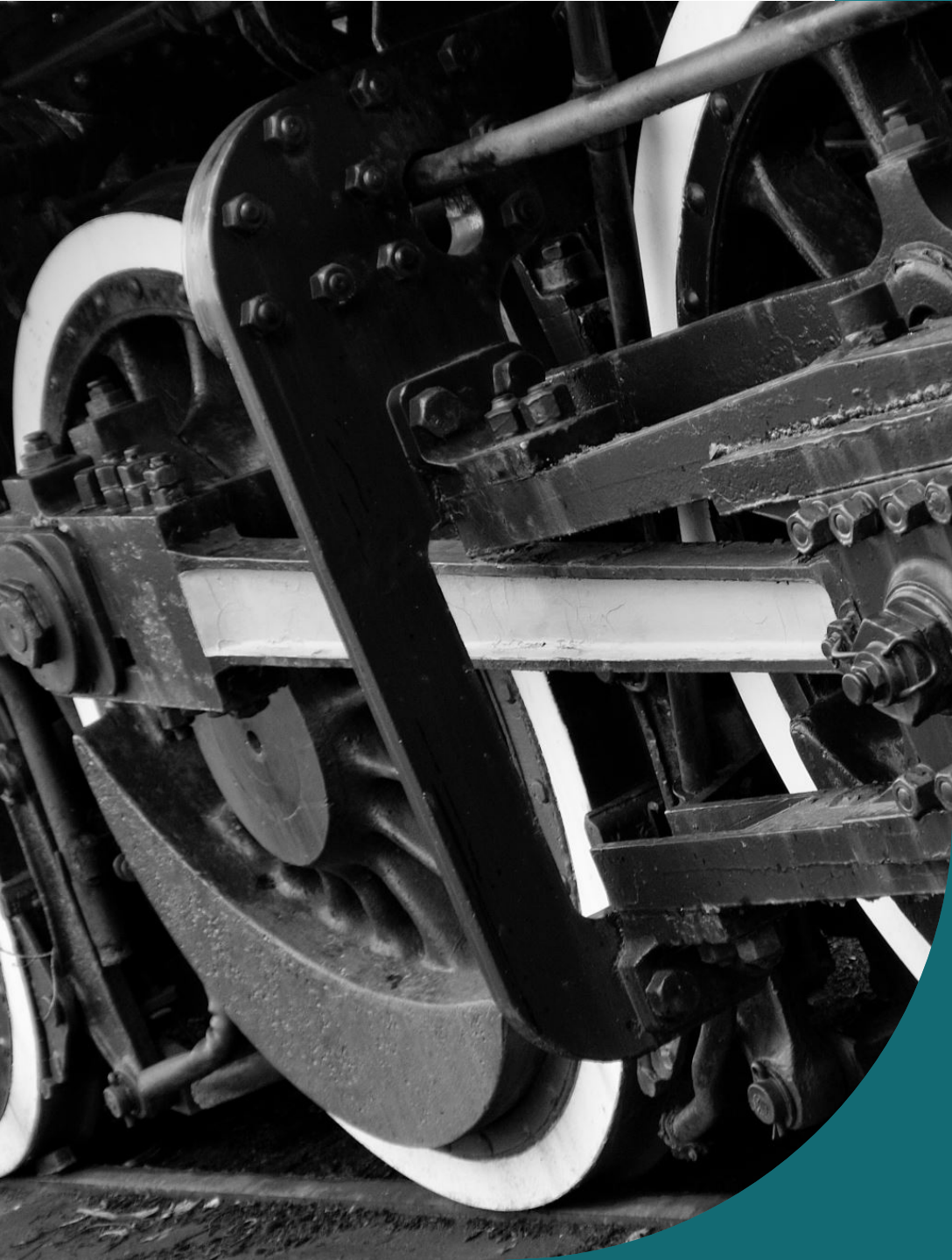
To judge to the best of our ability in an unbiased manner



To keep our personal opinions to ourselves; especially related to the performance of a gymnast, coach, or another person associated with the meet



Remember our words and our social media posts will be forever. Think before you speak or post. Do your best to keep the emotion out of your responses. If you wouldn't say it to your grandmother don't say it at all!



How many canons are there?

Take your best guess as to how many canons there really are...

☐ 5

☐ 10

☐ 12

☐ 15

☐ 17

Canon #1:
A judge should assist in maintaining the integrity and competence of the profession of judging women's gymnastics.

- It is our duty to appear as FAIR as possible. The longer you have been judging the harder this is to do.
- Refrain from hugging or chatting with coaches or gymnasts as it appears to others we are inherently biased towards those individuals.
- Be aware of your role in terms of what you say, to whom you say it, and how it could be interpreted.
- Perception is reality!

Canon #2:

A judge should assist the Association in fulfilling its duty of making judges available for women's gymnastics events.

- Please keep your availability up-to-date (New judges please get the contact information for a more experienced/mentor judge to assist you in using the GymJas platform and in learning how to reply to contracts, etc.)
- It is your responsibility to ensure your membership information is up-to-date as well as your continuing education
- If you accept a meet it is legally binding. Therefore, DO NOT withdraw yourself from a meet unless you are very ill. Do not accept meets you cannot be certain you can attend.

Canon #3:

A judge should assist in improving the system of judging women's gymnastics events.

Please follow the chain of command when you have an idea you feel may positively impact the world of women's gymnastics. Remember, it will not be implemented unless it is properly approved by the appropriate board members, etc.

Chain of Command (some of the individuals include:)

- **Meet referee**
- **Assignor**
- **SJD**
- **State Chairman**
- **RJD**
- **Regional Chairman**

Canon #4: A judge should avoid even the appearance of professional impropriety.

- Don't advertise other gyms, schools, or universities.
- Don't talk about others, especially gymnasts.
- Don't say or do anything that could be viewed as improper or unprofessional.
- Simple said, if you have to say something; in all scenarios--BE KIND. Your words carry extreme power, and you can make or break someone by saying the wrong thing while wearing your judging hat.
- If you can't say anything kind, don't say anything!

Canon #5: A judge should be well qualified in gymnastics, know the rules and be thoroughly prepared for each assignment. Each team, meet contestant, and participant, as well as the spectators, are entitled to the official's best efforts to administer the rules of the sport.

- Make sure you can judge all four events to the best of your ability. There is no such thing as a judge who specializes in one or two events.
- Challenge yourself to make your weakest event one of your strongest by the end of the season.

Canon #6: A judge should prepare for each judging assignment and should thoroughly study, attend clinics, and keep his/her judging knowledge current.

- Rules change every year. Please make sure you are prepared for each meet by checking if any new changes have been implemented to the code irrespective if it is the Developmental Program, Xcel, NGA, AAU, etc.
- Keep your knowledge current by attending Regional and National Congress events, NAWGJ symposiums, state judging clinics, training camps, and online clinics.

Canon #7: A judge should fulfill all assignments accepted and be punctual. A judge should also attend all judging and other meetings which are intended to promote a well ordered and conducted meet or event.

- In the event you are running late, always call the meet referee to inform them. Their contact information can be found in GymJas.
- You are expected to arrive 30 minutes before the meet to attend a judges' meeting.

Canon #8: A judge should be alert at all times, quickly yet accurately produce his/her scores and have a basis for the scores derived and prepared. If a legitimate need should arise, the judge should explain and support such scores by working through conferences and dealing with inquiries in a dignified, professional manner.

- Make corrections when asked to do so.
- Provide quick and accurate scores in a timely manner.
- Put space between you and your colleague(s) when judging.

Canon #9: A judge should not solicit meets for her/himself or for others.

- You CANNOT be asked to be put on a meet.
- Additionally, you cannot greet the meet director at the end of the meet with a "see you next year" goodbye.
- You cannot offer to ride with others to save the meet director money, offer to not charge mileage, etc. in an effort to secure a future meet.
- Do not assume that because you judged a meet last year you will receive the same offer the following year. Things change such as availability and sometimes our younger judges need a chance to judge.

Canon # 10: A judge shall be completely unbiased. A judge should not give an appearance, especially at a meet, of any particular friendship with any coach or competitor. Also, a judge should decline any assignment in which affiliation with a team or individuals would tend to influence the judge's ability to be fair or honest.

- Don't be overly friendly with coaches or gymnasts while in uniform.
- Be unbiased in your scoring
- Remember all eyes are on you at each competition
- Parents and spectators make assumptions whether you are aware or not; therefore, be kind and don't accept contract to meets you cannot be fair and objective.

Canon #11: A judge should treat gymnasts, coaches, judges, promoters, and spectators with respect. A judge should respect their privacy, property, and feelings, and should not do anything that would embarrass or offend such persons. There will be no tolerance for any discrimination related to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identification, religion, or age.

- Do not second guess a judge at another event. If you think they missed something while judging, it is NOT up to you to talk with others about it. If you feel strongly about it, then talk with the judge privately about it and then drop it.
- None of us are perfect, we are paid to judge the event we are assigned, not for our opinion of how others are judging.
- Be polite, respectful, and classy when at an event. Don't comment on other judges' performance unless you are willing to say it directly to their face.
- You are not viewing the event from their perspective and have no right to make assessments on how someone else judges. We are all paid for our own unique opinion.

Canon # 12: A judge should at all times both look and act professionally. A judge should maintain a neat and well-groomed appearance when judging. He/she should wear the uniform of the Association (except where other dress is permitted).

- Look professional; this is more than dressing the part. It includes looking as though you are interested in the performances—even if it's bronze sessions all day!
- Practice common sense hygiene—shower, put on your face, and be presentable.
- Conversely, remember the event is not all about you. Don't make it a fashion show that screams to the audience "look at me".

Canon #13: A judge should not be overly officious. She/he should not criticize other officials or attempt to explain other officials' judgement.

- If a coach or another person approaches you regarding a score of another judge—DO NOT comment. Refer them back to speak directly to that/those judge(s).
- Don't be a know-it-all. The way the rules change in our sport we all have constant adjustments to learn and re-learn.
- We are to judge each routine to the best of our ability and explain our score when asked.
- Remember to ALWAYS give the gymnast the benefit is there is something in question.
- Your focus should be on your score and your professionalism. You represent Louisiana and the National Organization.

Canon #14: A judge should confine his/her duties to the purposes of judging; i.e., coaching and/or meet directing are not included in a judge's responsibilities.

- Be kind to your timers and flashers!
- They are volunteers and terrified to make a mistake. Inform them what their duties are prior to start of the session and put them at ease.

Canon #15: A judge should never consume alcoholic beverages or drugs prior to a judging assignment where such consumption is evident by odor, conduct or appearance.

- This is just common sense. In addition to above, it goes without saying to not arrive to a meet hung over, which impairs judgement is impaired when judging.
- In meets where you are staying in a hotel, be mindful that you should NEVER be at a bar while in uniform.
- Consider, that even with a change of clothes you are still recognizable to parents, etc.

Canon #16: A judge should exercise good judgement when using social media and should avoid communicating with coaches or gymnasts during, before, or after a competition; and refrain from making inappropriate statements about fellow judges, coaches, gymnasts, clubs, or parents.

- A judge should NEVER post something that shows disrespect or can be perceived as bias.
- Be aware, everything put in writing can be forwarded, copied, and used against you.
- All posts are FOREVER! They can never be fully erased--even if you delete them, there is a record somewhere.
- Do NOT post ANYTHING regarding a meet you judged regardless if it's a positive or negative comment. You will be portrayed as rude or biased.

Canon #17: Judges may not participate in any wagering activities involving amateur, collegiate, or professional gymnastics, nor can they provide any information to individuals involved in any type of gymnastics wagering activities.

- Just don't—period.
- If approached, report it directly to the president.

My thoughts...

- In a nutshell—be classy, not trashy.
- Always do the right thing.
- If in doubt, just don't say it or do it.
- Discuss concerns or questions with an experienced mentor judge.
- Think of why you decided to get into judging and don't stray from your purpose.
- Dress the part, act the part, and own your mistakes. Do not blame others.
- If you hurt someone's feelings (whether intentional or not) apologize. We are family and need to move past petty offenses. Forgive and move forward.
- We are all tired at the end of a long weekend. Try not to let your emotions get the best of you. Forgive yourself if you screwed up. Don't be a toxic perfectionist.
- Most importantly, be grateful you have this opportunity. Only intelligent, quick thinkers can survive under the pressure of this sport. If you made it this far, YOU ARE AMAZING, now act like it!