

Ask the Worlds Head Judge



Welcome to Ask the Worlds Head Judge! This will be a regular feature on the USASF Parent Action Committee (PAC) page. The mission of the PAC is to improve communication and transparency between parents and the gym owners/coaches/event producers and USASF. With this column, our goal is to bring insight into the seemingly murky world of judging the USASF/IASF World Championships.

We have the pleasure of working with **Jennifer Braud-Settoon**, the Head Judge for Worlds. Jennifer is a practicing attorney in Louisiana. A graduate of LSU, Jennifer has served on various judging panels for numerous All Star and Collegiate National Championships for the past sixteen years. She is a Head Judge for several cheer organizations and specializes in legalities. In 2004 she was a judge for the inaugural USASF World Championships and the Head Judge for Worlds the past four years. Jennifer is a featured speaker at various industry coaches and judges conferences. She has been featured in nationwide publications and television spots for her expertise in judging. Most recently she has spoken at the National Coaches Conference, USASF Worlds Coaches Conference and the OSIP Annual Conference.

Our first question:

Jennifer, how are the judges for Worlds chosen?

Here is her answer:

In early spring, a call for potential judges is sent to all USASF/IASF Cheer event producers who will send teams to Worlds. They are each given the opportunity to recommend judges. The nominated judges are then notified and requested to complete an application and a resume for review of the Selection Committee (listed on USASF.net).

Here are some considerations that the Panel will look for in evaluating all nominated potential judges: Selecting a well-rounded judging panel that includes a mix of sexes, race, geographic locations and judging background; strength of resume and previous Worlds judging experience.

Judging panels should have a variety of representatives from the various event producers who will send teams to Worlds. Preference is given to any nominated judge who resides outside the U.S., who also meets the qualifications, as having an internationally diverse panel is a goal of the USASF/IASF. Unfortunately, there are too few candidates nominated each year.

In addition, whether a nominated judge has judged for at least two bid awarding events from participating Event Producers is considered. Finally, whether the nominated individual meets minimum qualifications and does not have a conflict of interest with any teams attending Worlds or is not in a position with an Event Producer which might cause conflict with the judging process.

In the application and resume review process, nominated judges are required to disclose any potential conflicts. These conflicts are reviewed and considered with their application and for the position for which the candidate was nominated to serve. It is actually hard to find enough judges because we go to absurd lengths to weed out even the appearance of conflicts on the panels.

The Committee then reviews each resume and application individually, and is asked to rank the nominated judges. The Committee must carefully consider the areas of expertise that a judge must have to sit on the panel. Nine judges total must be seated on each panel, three in Building Skills, three in Motions/Choreography and three in Jumps/Tumbling.

A conference is held to discuss the rankings and to make the final selections, choosing judges and alternates to serve. This is a confidential process. Head Judges are selected (by competition officials who serve a non-scoring, ministerial role) who assist the committee in placing the selected judges on panels for Worlds, assigning their panel and the particular Category they are assigned to Judge. Legality/ Safety Judges are also selected by competition officials, as well as Quality Control Judges (who are non-scoring judges checking each scoresheet at the event for inconsistencies, completeness and accuracy).

This entire process takes about two months.