

REFLECTIONS ON THE JUDGES PANEL

Boone and Crockett Judges Panels began at a time when the event was called Big Game Competitions, first held in 1947. The purpose was to judge all trophies in attendance and select place awards, with the best in show receiving the Sagamore Hill Award. After the first competition, it became clear that an equitable method of scoring needed to be adopted to address the arbitrary nature of the awards.

In conjunction, scientific management of wildlife was being developed and adopted throughout North America. The original purpose of the records program shifted from a way to collect the top trophies for display in a museum (National Collection of Heads and Horns) to a system of monitoring conservation successes and failures. What was originally thought to be a last-ditch effort to preserve museum specimens of

species that would soon be extinct, shifted to a collection of biologic data. With this change in focus, much of the system needed to be refined. In 1971 the name of the event was changed from Competitions to Awards to better reflect the purpose of the gathering. In 1976, a standardized training of all Official Measurers was adopted.

With standardized scoring methods being utilized, errors detected by panel measurers began to drop. One problematic observation the committee had to deal with was that scores were dropping at panel due to natural shrinkage. In some cases, the original measurer of the trophy was on the panel, though not on the team to verify, so it was confirmed that the original scoring was done correctly.

In 1998, the records committee reviewed the cases of confirmed shrinkage and adopted a shrinkage allowance to be considered

when verifying a score. This allowance is unique to each species. For instance, a bighorn ram will not express the same amount of shrinkage as a caribou taken earlier in the season in full velvet that was stripped for entry. In 2007 the committee reviewed and updated 16 of the categories where it was deemed the original approved shrinkage was insufficient.

Today the judges panels are still an integral part of the records program and an invitation to participate either as an invited trophy, judge, or a consultant is not only an honor but also a necessity for the success of the program.

The current format for judging takes place in the spring following the completion of the awards program. The 31st Big Game Awards Judges Panel was held April 19-24, 2022. The awards program's final day for entry was December 31, 2021.

The Official Measurers selected to serve as the judges get an invite first by notifying the records office of their interest to participate. Those Official Measurers' names are then forwarded to the records committee chairman and the vice-president of big game records. These two work with staff to select an appropriate number of judges for the trophies being sent. Invitation is based on service to the Club and representation of experts in all categories and regions. We always have at least two Canadian representatives and

TROPHY TALK



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B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER
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are currently in the process of getting more representation from Mexico that will hopefully be able to participate in future panels. Club policies limit the number of times an Official Measurer can participate as a judge to three. They can also serve one additional time as a panel chairman.

Once those limits are met, they can return as a consultant at the discretion of the records committee leadership. The panel chairman can elect to have these consultants actively score if the number of judges is not sufficient to get through all trophies in a reasonable time. The panel chair can also elect to have them serve purely in an advisory role. For at least the last four panels, consultants have been asked to participate in scoring.

The panel chairman is tasked with assigning teams each day of the panel. Newer judges are teamed with more experienced judges, and in many cases teams are specifically created to verify complex trophies where extensive expertise within the category is required. A team consists of two judges or a judge and a consultant. Every trophy sent in will be scored independently by two teams. In the case of an especially



For the first time, former Director of Big Game Records, Jack Reneau will hold the title of Chairman of the 31st Big Game Awards Judges Panel. He has been involved with every Judges Panel since he started working for the Club in 1983. He is pictured here at the 30th Judges Panel with the highest scoring non-typical whitetail deer and sheep that were on display, including the World's Record bighorn.

difficult trophy, the two teams may meet beforehand to discuss a particular point designation or ruling, but each scoring is completed independently including baseline assignment.

All measurements are completed by both teams including supplementary data such as tip-to-tip spread. While these are not factored into the final score, they can become especially important when trying to determine the original measurer's designation of beams. The re-creation of the original designation is necessary during the next phase of the panel verification.

Once the two scorings are completed, records staff verifies the math completed by the measurers, then the director of records reviews the two panel charts compared to the original with the panel chairman. Each original measurement is reviewed and compared to the verifying sheets. If any of these numbers are significantly off from the original, the panel chairman and records director will try to re-create the error made by the original measurer on the trophy to ensure the verifying panels did not overlook something. In nearly all cases, as much of the original score chart that can be confirmed is. A

trophy may have a score change on an error of a single measurement but all the rest of the original measurements that can be verified will. If the correction of the single mistake and necessary change to the original entry score leaves the final score within the allowance, the rest of the score is verified. In the case of a trophy that falls well outside the allowance and no individual definitive error can be identified, the entire original score may have to be replaced with a panel score if none or very few measurements can be verified. This is rarely the case. Even if the baseline assignment was off for all tines, either too high or too low, circumferences and spreads can generally be confirmed where applicable.

Many hunters are hesitant to participate in the process as they are concerned that a score

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The 14th Competition Judges Panel shown sporting their scoring aprons. Left to right: Unknown, Peter Haupt, B.A. Fashingbauer, George T. Church Jr., Philip L. Wright, Ova Uggen, Frank Cook (Chairman), Arnold O. Hauen, and Donald S. Hopkins. The 14th Competition was held at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1971. It was the last time this event would be called a competition. The following entry period would be renamed an Awards Program.

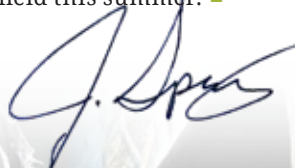
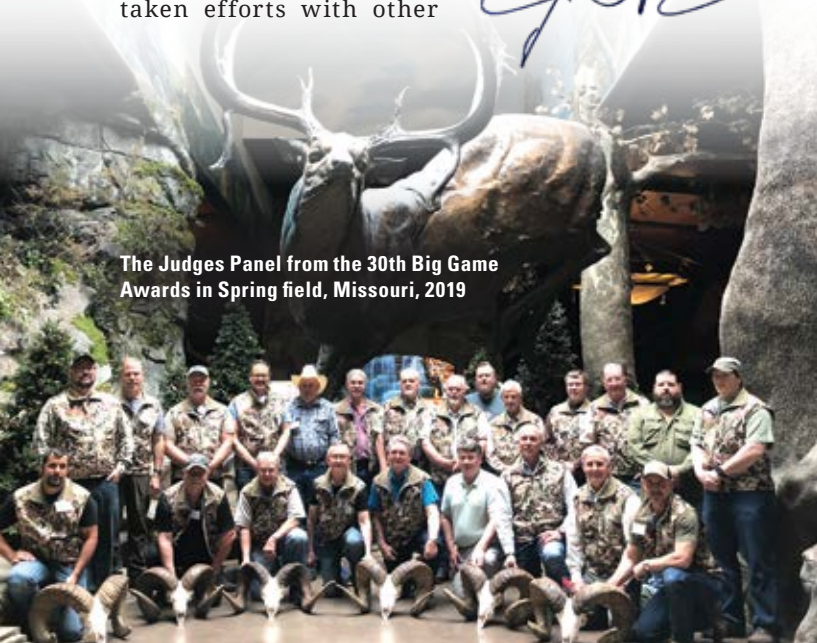
may drop. Statistically speaking, over the last few panels completed by both Boone and Crockett and Pope and Young, over 50 percent of those trophies submitted have had the entry score confirmed. Of those that don't, an equal percentage of the final scores go up as go down. Unless the trophy was mis-scored to begin with, a trophy owner has no reason to be concerned. If there was a mistake, they are just as likely to get back a higher score than a lower score.

As I mentioned earlier, this process is important to the overall success of the program as it allows us to analyze where mistakes are being made. Any trophy that has a mistake detected will have a follow up with the original measurer explaining where the error was found. This prevents the mistake from happening again in the future.

In addition, it allows us to confirm all the trophies at the top of the category are correctly scored. Ideally, we would like to have as many of the trophies panel verified as possible though this isn't feasible. We have undertaken efforts with other

organizations such as Pope and Young and Wisconsin Buck and Bear Club to honor their panel scores under an MOU. As long as the same process and rules are followed as a Boone and Crockett panel, and we have the opportunity to participate, we will honor these scores. The key requirement is that the panel serves to verify a score and appropriate scoring procedures. This means only assigning a new score to a trophy if originally measured incorrectly.

Any Official Measurers interested in participating as a panel judge should notify the records office in Missoula ahead of the 32nd Judges Panel that will be held in the spring of 2025. Also, if you are involved with any trophies invited to this special event, please do all you can to ensure participation. The event is built around recognizing conservation successes. The more participation we have the stronger this message is. We hope to see all of you reading this in Springfield this summer. ■

The Judges Panel from the 30th Big Game Awards in Springfield, Missouri, 2019

Associate Sign-Up Incentive Program Leader Board

*As of April 11, 2022

CONGRATS TO OUR TOP 10 PRIZE WINNERS!

1. Philip A. Herrnberger – 181
2. Stanley Zirbel – 144
3. Bucky Ihlenfeldt – 139
4. Ken Witt – 113
5. Dale Weddle – 60
6. John Bogucki – 46
7. Jerry E. Lunde – 41
8. Robert Wood – 32
9. Eric Stanosheck – 25
10. Charlie Adams – 23

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- 25 Associates – OM Wool Vest
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