

# Judging : A Perspective for the Coach

Hosted by Skip Gridley, Kathy Levine, Jean Hoppert, Karen Burnett-Kurie, Jodi Kravitz  
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## JUDGING

### 1. FLL Judging: Overview

- Importance of FLL Core Values: very much reflected in the judging process
  - We are a team
  - We do the work to find solutions with guidance from our coaches and mentors
    - The kids must do the work—and the judging process is designed to ensure this level field
  - We honor the spirit of friendly competition
    - Type and number of awards offered
  - What we discover is more important than what we win
    - Celebration vs. competition...and the process
  - We share our experiences with others
  - We display gracious professionalism in everything we do
    - the underlying and overarching theme
  - We have fun!
- Understand and expect that not all events will operate in exactly the same way:
  - Qualifiers follow judging guidelines similar to Championships, but may have some flexibility in format and award structure
    - Not all Qualifiers offer the Champion's Award
  - Some Championships require that teams win at a Qualifier to advance, some do not
  - In addition to the types of awards, depth of award structure may vary by event
  - Some flexibility in judging formats ie Teamwork
  - Some tournaments allow spectators in judging rooms; others one person or no one
  - Judging schedules vary:
    - block vs integrated
    - multi-day (e.g judging on 1<sup>st</sup> day or evening)
  - However, there should be consistency across all FLL Championship events in key areas:
    - Adherence to FLL Judging Standards
    - Rubrics and feedback
    - Teams should only be eligible to win an award at the initial Championship event they attend
    - Teams may not win more than ONE award at Championship events, with the exception of Robot Performance.

### 2. FLL Awards Structure:

- Two awards focus on technical areas:
  - Robot Performance (objective)
    - Best score on competition table with two teams, may be one or more rounds

- Each Round is 2.5 minutes in length
    - Details discussed in a previous call....
  - Robot Design (Quality Design, Innovative Design, Robot Programming)
    - May be given as one Technical Award or 3 separate awards
    - Typically takes place in a separate judging area, which should include an FLL challenge table/mat with a field set up kit
    - In an interview/discussion/demonstration format teams will have time (typically 10 minutes) to interact with Judges to highlight:
      - design process, choices and final robot design
      - programming
      - competition (mission) strategies
    - Technical knowledge including robot design, programming and efficiency are all judged.
- Two awards focus more on team- related activities:
  - Teamwork Award:
    - May be judged differently in different regions:
      - Q &A interview
      - Pit visits and observation of teams during performance rounds
      - A hands-on team activity followed by Q & A
      - Teamwork specific questions asked by teamwork judges in technical and project judging sessions
    - Regardless of the process used, judges will look for demonstration of clearly defined and fairly distributed roles and responsibilities, gracious professionalism, strong problem solving and team dynamics, extraordinary confidence and enthusiasm, and other demonstration of FLL Core Values towards teammates and fellow teams.
    - Questions asked include a focus on both the tournament day and the entire season
  - Project Award (Research Quality, Innovative Solution, Creative Presentation)
    - May be given as one award or 3 separate Awards
    - Each presentation is limited to 5 minutes—including set up!
      - followed by Q & A
    - Details discussed in a previous call...encourage you to listen as the project is a critical component to FLL's program
- Champion's Award
  - Most prestigious;
  - Goes to well-rounded teams: all categories receive equal emphasis (must perform well in technical AND team presentation categories)
  - May or may not be given at Qualifying tournaments
  - FLL Core Values, including gracious professionalism as an overarching and underlying element
- Optional Awards: (may vary)

- Special Recognition Awards: Outstanding Volunteer, Adult Coach/Mentor Award, Young Adult/Mentor Award
  - Optional Judges' Awards: Against All Odds/Perseverance, Rising Star, Team Spirit, Judges' Award or other local awards
- Every child who participates in an FLL Championship tournament receives a medallion to signify the successful conclusion to the season and celebrate their accomplishments

### 3. Before a Tournament: How can I help my team prepare for the Judging Process?

- Review the Coaches' Handbook, challenge specifics on the website, and all other available material to develop a solid understanding of challenge missions and rules, allowable parts lists.....
- Ensure your team seeks out the best and most current information during the season:
  - Judges Blog
  - Robot Performance Q & A
- Help your team become familiar with Judging Rubrics (Appendix A of the Coaches' Handbook)
  - Use these like roadmaps to figure out how your team can achieve higher goals
  - All rubric criteria will be evaluated and considered equally
- Obtain tournament specifics from your local organizer and be sure you understand them:
  - Is the Qualifier system mandatory or optional to attend Championship?
  - Registration requirements, deadlines and costs, if any
    - FLL Mandatory Consent and Release Forms for every team member, coach and mentor. Minors must have a parent signature!
    - Team questionnaires
  - Anticipated on-site equipment availability, power sources, etc
  - Award structure
  - Additional Tournament details:
    - Opening and closing ceremony procedures
    - Time and place of pre-competition coaches' meeting
    - Team schedule
    - Practice table availability and procedures
    - Site maps
    - Emergency procedures
- Have your team prepare and bring materials for the Judges:
  - Project Portfolio notebook to illustrate the team's completion of all three steps of the project and work process
  - Robot picture and programming printout; one page robot specification sheet to leave with the technical judges
  - Team profile sheet to help the judges identify and remember you (4 copies)
- Practice with your teams
  - Timing expectations
  - Importance of speaking slowly and loudly
  - Roleplay/Sample questions

- Help them learn to be comfortable speaking with Judges; practice with other adults
- Encourage your team to relax and have fun!
- Plan ahead and expect the unexpected:
  - Check with your tournament organizer for details of provided materials and equipment
  - Extension cords, duct tape....
  - Encourage your team to think ahead about a “plan B”:
    - if someone is sick
    - equipment fails or is unavailable

#### 4. What’s my role and what should I expect at the tournament?

- Schedules and layout vary: be sure your team knows where they need to be when!
  - Judging for technical awards, teamwork and the project generally but not always take place in rooms separate from the robot game competition area/pits
    - eg nearby classrooms in a school
    - ideally a quieter, more controlled environment
  - Always plan to arrive at least 5 minutes before each scheduled judging appointment
  - Stay alert and flexible throughout the day
- Some tournaments allow coach/spectator access to judging sessions; some only allow team access. Tournaments vary due to space constraints and other considerations.
- Understand that the judging process is multi-step and includes deliberations:
  - Usually teams meet initially with judges regarding specific awards for a designated period of time. The most common format is
    - individual team sessions of 10-15 minutes each for Robot Design and the Project
    - teamwork judging format varies
  - A group of judges typically sees 8-12 teams and determines the top teams of the ones they have seen
  - Judges assigned to each award will rank order all top teams
  - The top teams in each judging room may be called back as “finalists” in each judging category. Be alert for “call-back” announcements!
    - Judges have the option to call-back teams to present to all judges
    - Call-backs can also be done for clarification purposes
    - Not every team in contention for an award needs to be seen again
    - Teams may be video-taped at some events eliminating the need for call- backs
- The deliberations process is a critical component of the judging process to ensure fairness for all. It is a way for judges to “normalize” team evaluations and compare teams
  - Be patient during this time: pack up, attend demonstrations and other special tournament activities
  - Discussions may be lengthy as they reflect the subjective nature of the judging process

- In addition to evaluating teams during scheduled interviews, judges may:
  - Evaluate teams during casual conversation or observation in the pit areas
  - Request input from referees and other key volunteers during deliberations
- The importance of FLL Core Values and gracious professionalism extends beyond the team
  - The judges will note everyone's behavior at a competition (coaches, parents, mentors....)
- Remember, by tournament day, your job as a coach is simply to cheer your team on and help them navigate the day's schedule
- A team's inability to answer questions or make robot adjustments without the direct assistance of an adult will be evident to the judges and can impact scoring

#### 5. What's my role at the end and after the Tournament?

- For Championship tournaments, rubric-based feedback will be provided to each team, either at the end of the tournament or within a reasonable time period following the event
- Review the rubric feedback and the overall experience with your team; help them to understand and learn from it; capture and emphasize the teaching moments
- How to respond to a team member's disappointment?
  - Remember that the children come first and take their cues from the adults around them. When disappointments happen, model FLL values and shift the focus to what the children have achieved and learned
- How to respond to a parent who complains about the judging process or results?
  - judging is by its nature a subjective process but we are working hard to uniformly train our judges, build into the process ways to calibrate judging teams, ....
- As a coach, make it your goal to ensure that every child on every team walks away with a positive experience
- Remember: FLL is about an entire season, not just one day!

#### 6. In conclusion: Skip's "Vital Judging Notes"

- Demonstrate to the judges how your team meets judging criteria in the rubrics
- Complete all three elements of the project
- Follow the materials and software rules for Robot Design
- Give specific examples of problems you've encountered and how you've solved them in your Teamwork judging sessions
- Understand and demonstrate FLL Core Values and gracious professionalism
- Interact with Judges whenever you can
- Provide judges with any extra information that you can
- Practice a lot and ask questions
- Communicate with successful veteran teams and coaches
- Don't forget to have fun!