



October 1, 2023

To the Membership of IPMS/USA and the hobby community,

The appearance of impropriety or questionable integrity is unacceptable in any sector of this organization. The IPMS Executive Board will work diligently to fix those issues when they arise.

We owe the membership more details on the matter than were included in our September 19 statement. More information has come to light in the interim, prompting us to revisit the Category 608 judging incident reported at the 2023 IPMS National Contest. As a result, three senior judges involved in this matter will be suspended from participation in the IPMS/USA National Contest judging corps. They may choose on their own to present themselves for consideration as supervised OJT judges for retraining in the application of the rules in place at the 2025 National Contest.

Additionally, the judging rules, procedures, and protocols for administration of the National Contest will be reviewed by a newly formed Judging Rules and Protocols Review Committee. The goal of this temporary committee is to identify and recommend rule updates to prevent this issue from happening again. We are currently identifying committee members. The committee will be established on November 1, and will serve for as long as necessary for the updated rules to be issued to the membership by January 15.

We will also consider drafting a charter for an Ethics and Standards Committee to recommend language and procedures to guide an inquiry into incidents such as this in the future.

For any interested in why, the following is our reasoning and actions in coming to these decisions:

#### Actions and Conclusions Prior to the First Statement

Absent any specific vehicle or language for guidance in the matter in the IPMS/USA Constitution and By-Laws, the Executive Board, and others in leadership positions acted to resolve this matter in a fair, appropriate, and just manner. That absence of language and guidance is the first problem identified here that needs to be addressed, and with your help, we will.

After reviewing the letter submitted by a member of the original judging team to the Executive Board and the NCC, a board member was directed to investigate the judging of Category 608 – Mecha at the contest in August. Members of the original judging team were interviewed by the representative from the E-Board. The letter was also submitted to the NCC for their response to the allegations cited. Three senior judges were directed to provide their statements in response, which were then forwarded by the Chief Judge to the President for our review. In hindsight, we would do this differently. After review by the Executive Board, the findings of that investigation and statements from the senior judges were inconclusive as to any clear violation of the published rules for the 2023 National Contest. The findings of the matter from those interviews and statements concluded the results of the initial judging team were overturned by senior judges under the premise that the original team had incorrectly applied the weight of the scope of work/effort of the judging evaluation of the eventual winner. The published rules are not clear on this action.

Two additional factors complicate the matter. First, there was an appearance of impropriety by the check judge, considering his close association with the entrant of the eventual 1<sup>st</sup> place winning model. Second, the entrant has been nominated by the NCC as the incoming Head Space/Sci-Fi Class Judge for Category 608. The entrant was observed hovering near the area during the judging process.

The proof of intent is exceedingly difficult in a court of law, let alone an organization of hobbyist volunteers. The check judge claimed there was no bias on his part in his reasoning for changing the results of the category and did so only on his interpretation of the rules regarding the weight of the scope and effort of the work vs the other criteria involved. The overturn of the original team's results was not communicated nor explained to them until after the revisions were recorded into the permanent judging records. The Head

Class Judge agreed to the change, altered the judging form, but did not initial or sign the document in the box provided to indicate his concurrence.

In the view of the President and the Chief Judge, they felt no specific published rules had been violated during this incident. The appearance of impropriety was strong, but we choose to err to a benefit of doubt to those involved, because the rules as they exist allowed them to be placed in their tenuous positions. Official actions in response to matters of integrity have consequences for individuals, and as such should not be rendered in haste, or without clear proof of wrongdoing. The Board felt that we lacked "sufficient proof" for any actionable sanctions to the individuals involved. However, a review and update of the Contest Rules and Procedures is clearly due.

In a follow-up executive session on the evening of September 24, the Executive Board revisited this issue in light of new information.

#### Results from our 9/24 Executive Session

Our discussions prior to this meeting were focused on clear violations of the published 2023 Contest Rules. Many have suggested that other documentation could be relevant. Upon review of the generally accepted judging protocols presented in the pre-contest judges' meeting, the actions of the check judge in independently making his decision to change the judging results are unacceptable. The documented rules are unclear on this; we will address that with the temporary committee.

We investigated language in the Modeler's Guide and Competition Handbook published on our website and slides presented by the Chief Judge during the pre-contest judges' meetings at our 9/24 executive session, the following statements are emphasized:

- We apply impartial consideration and integrity in our decision-making.
- Go to your Class Head Judge to resolve a stalled/undecided team.
- Please don't:
  - Hover around a team that is judging your entry!
  - Advocate a friend's work!

None of the log sheets for Class 600 were signed by the Head Class Judge to indicate his concurrence with the results. In fact, very few log sheets in the results book were signed by the Head Class Judges for other Classes. This indicates a lapse in due oversight by the Head Class Judge in this case, and a clear need for documented oversight procedures.

What is now evident from the investigations and reports presented and our review of the accepted judging guidelines, is that all the above apply to what happened in this case. Because of their actions, lack of attention to verifiable accountability, and a clear violation of some rules and certain accepted judging protocols, the three senior judges associated with this matter are suspended. We will codify a version of the above statements into effect as documented rules, rather than an annual reminder, quickly referenced in the pre-contest judges' meeting.

#### Moving Forward

The Executive Board is drafting a charter for the Judging Rules and Protocols Review Committee. This committee will be charged with updating the current judging rules to prevent future incidents such as this and any conflict of interest without obvious malicious intent. A viable contest will be held within the existing format and structure, albeit with appropriate rules and procedural revisions noted above. Those of you who have submitted other judging concerns to the Executive Board and the NCC, please know that they will be presented to this committee for action and follow-up.

We sincerely appreciate your patience in our handling of this matter. We hope we have reached an outcome that is fair to our members.

Thank you for your interest and membership in IPMS/USA.

The Executive Board of IPMS/USA