

Achievement Program - Finish and Lettering

by Bill Jacobs



In preparing for these articles I always check the NMRA website to see if there is anything new regarding the Achievement Program or Contests. Well, this time there is—they have been totally updated with a new look, and the National contest score sheet now actually is correctly numbered! This brings me to another point, if you look around enough under the Education program you will find that there are two sets of contest entry and judges score sheet forms. This, actually, has always been the case and we have accepted either one at our divisional and regional contests. However, for our divisional and regional contests we should really be using the non-National forms for a couple of reasons; (1) they are more user friendly—you can actually type them, and (2) they don't contain all the extra stuff that the national contests have. Now—this is how you find those forms: on the NMRA website click on Education at the top of the page; then, on the right-hand side click Forms; then scroll all the way to the bottom and the last two forms are what you want.

Okay, after that brief editorial, on to this edition's topic—Finish and Lettering. This category is worth 25 points maximum or 20% of the total possible points. As a starter, be sure to check all the applicable boxes on the judges score sheet, you will almost always have three. The judging guidelines for this category gives a great deal of discussion to the complexity of the finish (several colors, separation lines between colors, accurate lettering placement, and weathering realism). Note that this is not the complexity covered in construction and also why a picture or drawing which you supplied for conformity is also important to this category. I mentioned weathering above which brings up the fact that weathering is not required—maybe the model just came out of the paint shop. But if you do weather, make sure that it conforms to prototypical effects.

If you use decals (most likely) be sure there are no air bubbles, excess film, and that the decals are straight. Close trimmed decals are mentioned as the norm in the judging guidelines. You will probably need to apply a clear coat of some type to achieve best results. Which brings up another point—glossiness or flatness of paint. Consider this—a car or locomotive in a crack passenger train would probably be glossy because they get washed down a lot (and probably not weathered much or at all), while a freight car would probably be flatter depending on its age and usage.

There is a quote in the judging guidelines, if you are reading them along with these columns that takes a little time to get your head around: “The accuracy of the paint scheme and lettering is considered under Conformity, the Finish and Lettering category on quality.” What this means (and this is my take on it) is that the Finish and Lettering category looks at things like thickness of paint, runs, number of colors and their separation, if a stencil was made, accuracy of lettering and its application—all things that denote finish quality.

In the next issue we will discuss scratch building, which I hope you will all try at least once—it's good for the soul. Also, as most of you know, I'm the PSR Contest Chairman. One of my duties is the maintenance and revision of the Contest Rules for the PSR and I am now well engaged in the next revision. I'm telling you this because we follow these same rules in the Cajon Division. There will be some minor changes and one or more major change. This will be presented to the PSR Board of Directors for acceptance in March. I expect it to be approved and it will be on the PSR website shortly thereafter. You should probably have a look at it to see what is expected.

Until next time...