

WAHA Recommended BOS Round Format

Written by Mark Emiley
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The Washington Homebrewers Association recognized a gap in resources for competition organization revolving around how to run a Best of Show round. In response, several Washington homebrew competition organizers and judges collectively defined a recommendation for a possible way to run a Best of Show round in a thorough and organized fashion.

This is by no means the required or only way to successfully run a Best of Show round. It is simply guidance for a new or experienced competition organizer based on years of experience from running Washington competitions. Please feel free to use this to help shape your competition's Best of Show round.

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Mission

The Best of Show Round determines the First, Second, and Third place (and if required, Honorable Mention) awards for the home brew competition. Entries for consideration in the Best of Show should have been assayed to standard BJCP Style Guidelines, provided with written feedback relative to standard BJCP Style Guidelines, and assigned a score in previous rounds of judging. Elimination and placement of submissions through Best of Show judging is based on technical merit and adherence to standard BJCP Style Guidelines relative to the other entries in the BOS round.

1. The Judge Director should determine the appropriate number of BOS round judges as determined by the number of entries advancing to the BOS round. An odd number of BOS round judges is preferred as this avoids most ties and stalemates. The number of judges selected should adhere to BJCP standards for BOS judge panel sizes.

2. The Judge Director should assign BOS judges from the available pool taking into consideration experience, palate fatigue, and any other factors which they deem appropriate. The role of BOS Round Director should be appointed by the Judge Director (if desired, the Judge Director may serve as the BOS Round Director or it may be one of the BOS judges). It is acceptable to assign a professional brewer to the BOS round; however, professional brewers who have agreed to brew the BOS beer should not be permitted to judge in the BOS round due to a potential conflict of interest. Professional brewers may be reminded that BOS beers do not need to align with best-to-brew beers.

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3. The Competition Organizer should confirm that all selected BOS judges are eligible to participate due to not having entries in the round or other conflict of interest.
4. The Competition Organizer should inform the BOS Round Director and BOS judges how many beers they need placements for (e.g.: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Honorable Mention, etc.).
5. The Competition Organizer should assign a steward to assist in the BOS round.
6. The steward should prepare a table for the BOS round including glasses, BJCP guidelines, crackers, water, and pencils. A white paper tablecloth or cover is recommended.
7. The Competition Organizer should present the list of BOS round qualifying beers to the Cellar Master to bring to the BOS round table.
8. The BOS Round Director should begin leading the BOS round once the table is prepared, beers are available, and judges are in place.
9. The BOS Round Director should select an order for the beers to be tasted taking into account the beer profiles. It may be desired to break the BOS beers into mini-flights for a more manageable approach; however, when using this technique, it should be noted that there is a possibility that the top three beers may be assigned to the same flight, hence, it should not be the goal of the mini-flights to remove all but the top beer, but instead, eliminate beers which do not belong in the top three.
10. The steward should begin serving the first beer to all judges. After serving the beer, the steward should replace the cap on the bottle to preserve some carbonation if possible. A short period should be allowed for each judge to sample the beer but typically by the time the steward has finished serving the beer, they should be getting the next beer ready to pour. The steward should reserve all BOS round beers and prevent non-BOS judges from sampling "discards" as they may be required.
11. Special ingredients, base styles, and other relevant information about the entries should be provided to the BOS judges as they were for previous rounds. Score sheets and recipe forms are not provided to the BOS judges. Upon request from the judges, the Competition Organizer may review recipe forms and answer questions about special ingredients.
12. The judges should note the entry number and style of each beer as the beers are served. It is very important not to mix up the beers. It is encouraged to write the number and style in a cup-sized box drawn on a piece of paper and put the beer in that box. Notes may be taken on the paper or on a separate notes page. It is not the intent to provide feedback at this point, simply to find the best beers and eliminate the worst.
13. Each judge should be prepared to quickly go through and taste all of the beers. It is recommended to jot down a couple of key words about each beer to remind the judge of their impressions.
14. The steward continues to serve each subsequent beer, allowing time for notes before moving onto the next beer. The BOS Round Director should set the pace for the judges and inform the steward when they are ready for the next beer.
15. After serving all of the beers, the BOS Round Director will then begin the elimination process. He or she will ask each judge which beers they recommend removing. If there are no objections to the removal, the beer will be eliminated from consideration (the steward can take away the bottle and judges should mark their glass as eliminated or ask the steward to remove

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their glass). If there is contention, a small discussion may be allowed regarding the beer. Arguments should be kept to a minimum at this point, attempting to simply remove beers by consensus to narrow the list down to the contenders, hopefully fewer than 8 beers.

16. After an iteration through this process, more serious discussion can begin. It is up to the judges if they want to either make the case for why a beer should be eliminated or kept. It should be possible to get the list down to 3-5 beers by consensus, keeping in mind that if no one thinks a beer is in the top three (or four if there is to be an honorable mention) then it should be eliminated. Sometimes a clear position for a beer can be determined. If everyone agrees on the winning beer then that one can be set aside and the judges can focus on the remaining positions. If it is possible for the group to decide verbally on the ranking of the remaining beers, the ranking should be announced by the BOS Round Director to the Competition Organizer.

17. When a stalemate arises between judges, it is often helpful for the judges to rank the beers in the order they think they should be placed. The BOS Round Director can then tally the scores and the beers can be ranked. There is nothing saying that the judges need to accept this ranking as final, but it provides a way to talk about the group's final positions for the entries. Judges will often make the case for why Beer X is a better example of its style than Beer Y and should be placed higher, and this discussion should continue (within reason) until everyone agrees on the final order. If agreement can't be reached, then the judges should rank the beers one last time, tally the scores, and accept those rankings. Ties can be discussed between the judges and frequently resolved through another vote between the tied beers. In the event of a further tie, the BOS Round Director may cast a tie-breaking vote. Upon a final decision, the ranking should be announced by the BOS Round Director to the Competition Organizer.