

# Welcome to Club Class!

---

## *How did we get here?*

In the past, and with a smaller membership, all photographers competed together in a single 'group'; there were no 'divisions' set up to differentiate photographers according to their skill level. As the club evolved, it became clear that we didn't have the balance quite right, as almost all the awards went to those with the highest cumulative scores and there was nothing in place to encourage and reward developing photographers. We looked around at other clubs, talked to members and decided that we wanted to avoid the formality of pre-determined 'divisions' as this also brings challenges: Where are new members assigned; are pre-season divisions based on past performance, self-selection or something else?

## *Trying something new*

We wanted to come up with a method of balance, fairness and recognition that didn't force us down the route of formal league tables and divisions. This, we learnt from other clubs, can cause dissent and was always something that we wanted to avoid. We looked around, nothing seemed perfect for us at MCC so decided to have a crack at something new.

## *How does it work?*

In line with our friendly ethos, everybody will start each season together in the Club Class with skills measured against a contemporary peer group and not based on historic performance. When a photographer is awarded two or more scores of 19 or 20 they will move, nominally, into the Merit Class – this recognises consistency at a higher skill level.

Print and PDI media are treated separately, acknowledging the different techniques and skills required for each format. For example: A member may be in the Merit Class for Print and Club Class for PDI.

Over the season, the Merit Class will naturally grow and the Club Class will shrink. Based upon the scores from the 2018-2019 season, this latest tweak should give us a pretty even split between members in both classes.

## *How will the awards be calculated?*

During the season, up to **12 prints** and **12 PDIs** might be entered into each competition series: remember, this may drop lower if there are a high number of entries. When it comes to awards, the top **eight** scores for each member will be averaged and the member with the highest average score from each group will be duly recognised for their contribution. In the event of a tie, the most 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places will be used to determine the overall winner as before.

By only counting the top 8 of a possible 12 scores, members who, for personal reasons, miss a competition, will not be unduly penalised. It also encourages experimentation, allowing members to attempt new techniques or explore new genres, without dragging down their average scores.

## *Contingency plan!*

We are in our third year of 'within-season' class assignment and it hasn't been an easy ride! We are hoping that our final tweak (assignment to Merit Class requiring two rather than one score of  $\geq 19$ ) will give us a fair and equitable solution. If not, we have a cunning plan but let's hope we don't need it!

## *The last word...*

Let's face it, most clubs have tried different methods and NONE are absolutely perfect. Some clubs have stuck with divisions and league tables, others rate images by Gold, Silver, Bronze and, increasingly, clubs are dropping scoring altogether in favour of critical appraisal. Unfortunately, by having some form of scoring we are trying to use a quantifiable metric (scores out of 20) to judge a creative, and (very) subjective, art form!

Nothing is ever perfect and if this doesn't work for you, then we will look again next year and welcome your ideas and feedback.

The best bit - nothing has to change with regard to the actual competitions. Each image will be judged on the night against its peers and each will receive a constructive critique – **the most important reason to enter competitions!**