



Contestant Handbook

International Person of Leather Contest

Owned and Produced by South Plains Leatherfest

Last updated: 4/14/2025



Philosophy for the International Person of Leather Contest and Title

The International Person of Leather Contest is a celebration of the diversity in the Leather community. The title of Person of Leather exists to promote that diversity.

The Owner and Producer of the International Person of Leather Contest (Tomo, South Plains, LLC) is committed to providing the Leather/BDSM/Kink communities with an International Person of Leather who will represent the Leather lifestyle with integrity and competence. The holder of the Person of Leather title will be spokespersons for the Leather community, and as such, one of the most important attributes of the titleholder should be the ability to clearly and effectively communicate what it means to them to live and identify as Leather.

It is expected that the holders of the title will take every opportunity to educate the Kink/Leather/BDSM community about the Leather lifestyle and will actively seek out venues that will allow them to speak on issues, whether that be through speeches, seminar presentations, participation on panel discussions, etc.

International Person of Leather will be selected not based on gender identity, sexual orientation, race, physical appearance, age, or disability, but rather on their ability to articulate their views, passions, and dedications and to make an impact in their communities. We will expect these People of Leather to act as mentors, educators, role models and spokespeople throughout their title year.

The International Person of Leather Contest is accessible, ethical and all contestants are treated with kindness and respect. International monitors the regional contests to be sure that they also have this level of integrity.

Requirements for Contestants

1. A contestant must self-identify as a Person of Leather and have been a member of the Leather Community for a minimum of 5 years.
2. If a contestant lives in the United States, they must have been selected by the Region in which they live as the current year's regional POL titleholder in order to compete at the International POL Contest
3. Contestants who live outside of the United States may petition directly to International to compete in the International Person of Leather Contest.

Contestants who live in Canada or Mexico may either petition International directly to compete or choose to compete at a United States Regional Feeder Contest. Further detail may be found in the document "IPOL Outside U.S. Specifications and Petition".

Expectations and Requirements for the International POL Titleholders

1. In order to serve as the International POL titleholder, a contestant must be willing to travel to a minimum of 4 events or Leather/SM group meetings or events. One of the 4 events must be the next year's South Plains Leatherfest.
2. Should the IPOL titleholder become unable to carry out the requirements of the title, the Owner/Producer will determine in what manner the title will be represented for the remainder of the year in question.
3. The International POL titleholder is strongly encouraged to attend more than the minimum number of groups/events and to seek out every opportunity to speak on Leather and Diversity.
4. The International POL titleholder must be willing to speak about Leather to all segments of the leather/BDSM community. The holder of the IPOL Title must be articulate, be an educator, and speak about current issues in the leather community.
5. Following the International POL titleholder's stepdown, they will be invited to join the International Person of Leather Advisory Board which meets several times a year with the Owner and Producer of the IPOL Title System to discuss issues related to IPOL. This is not a requirement however titleholders are encouraged to add their voice.
6. The International Titleholders may accept additional monetary support from groups, event sponsors or individuals to cover travel expenses, and may raise additional money to cover travel expenses through fundraising activities. The International titleholders may not receive payment above and beyond actual travel expenses for speaking engagements or other activities performed in their role as International Titleholders during the title year.
6. The International POL titleholder will be provided with a travel fund in an amount determined by the Owner/Producer.
 - a. The travel fund will be disbursed by the Owner/Producer to the International POL titleholder in 4 equal installments.
 - b. The International POL titleholder is required to submit to the Owner/Producer a quarterly financial report with supporting receipts on the use of the travel fund and any other funds raised or received during the title year to help defray travel expenses.
 - c. If the International POL titleholder are unable to carry out the requirements of the title, any unspent travel funds will be returned to South Plains, LLC, along with a financial accounting of funds that have been spent to date.
7. The International POL titleholder is are required to provide the Owner/Producer with at least a monthly report identifying the speaking engagements they have booked. At a minimum, the report should include the event or group name, location and date of engagement.

8. Contestants who compete for the International Person of Leather title must agree not to compete for or hold another title within the leather and/or BDSM community during their Regional title year, or if they are chosen as International Person of Leather, during their Regional and International years. IPOL Contestants from outside of the U.S. must agree not to compete for or hold another title within the leather and/or BDSM community from the date of the International Person of Leather Contest where they compete to the date of the next year's International Person of Leather Contest.
9. No commercial use may be made of your international title. The International Titleholders during and following their title year may not financially profit by the direct use of the logo, name of the contest system or name of their title nor may they associate the logo, name of the contest system or name of their title with any monetary based work.
10. The International POL titleholder may not make any representations on behalf of, or purport to bind, the Owner/Producer of the International Person of Leather Contest and Title, South Plains, LLC, and/or South Plains Leatherfest without the prior consent of the Owner/Producer.
11. The Owner/Producer reserves the right to recall the title from current or previous International POL titleholders if, in her sole judgment, the titleholders have failed to substantially comply with or fulfill the obligations of the title, or have in any way damaged the name or reputation of the International Person of Leather title and/or South Plains Leatherfest.
12. The International POL titleholders are representatives of the entire Leather community. As such, the titleholders must protect the title and community from unfavorable publicity or focus. This means titleholders may not be able to participate in activities or take positions that they otherwise were free to do before winning the titles. Examples include: appearing as an expert witness in a trial on the issue of what constitutes abuse in the SM community; agreeing to be interviewed by the vanilla media regarding the title and the Leather community; taking a lead position on issues of significant controversy in the Leather community. Any questions regarding whether or not an activity could unfavorably impact the title should be immediately directed to the Owner/Producer. The decision of the Owner/Producer will be final on these matters.
13. During their title year, the International POL titleholder may not engage in interviews with or appear in "vanilla" mainstream media in any way without the specific written consent of the Owner/Producer. After their title year, the former International POL titleholder may not identify themselves as former titleholders or display the IPOL logo or patch or the South Plains Leatherfest logo in interviews with or appearances in "vanilla" mainstream media (whether print, television, film, radio or internet based) without the specific written consent of the Owner/Producer.

14. The International POL titleholders are permitted to use the title “International Person of Leather [title year]” in perpetuity, with the exception of interaction with “vanilla” mainstream media and provided the Owner/Producer have not exercised their right to recall the title as described above. The current International POL titleholder is permitted to use the International Person of Leather logo on business cards and stationery for the term of their title year. Any other use of the title name or the International POL logo must be approved by the Owner/Producer in advance. The Owner/Producer retains the right to review any use of the International POL logo and to rescind permission to use the logo for any reason and at their sole discretion.

About the Contest and Weekend

Competing in an international leather contest is an exhilarating – and exhausting – experience. It often is helpful for a contestant to bring someone with them as a support system/assistant for the weekend. Anyone assisting a contestant at IPOL may do the following:

- Accompany the contestant to the contestants’ meeting;
- Stay with the contestant outside of the interview room during the interviews;
- Stay with the contestant outside of the presentation room;
- Assist the contestant before the contest in the dressing room. (Due to space constraints and safety issues, assistants are not allowed backstage with the contestants during the contest.)

What You Can Expect of the Judges at the International Person of Leather Contest

- Judges are expected to treat the contestants with kindness and respect.
- We do not tolerate discrimination of any kind at South Plains Leatherfest.
- Judges will arrive on-time and participate fully in each judging component.
- Judges will observe the contestants before SPLF out and about at other events as well as social media.
- Judges will research contestants and learn about them prior to arrival at SPLF.
- Confidentiality is of primary importance. We require that Judges hold in confidence all information they receive about the contestants and do not discuss this information outside of Judge deliberations. Toward this commitment, all Judges are required to sign a non-disclosure agreement during the Judges’ Meeting at SPLF.

Grievance Process

- We realize that contestants are under a lot of pressure during the contest process and may be hesitant to approach the contest staff to report inappropriate behavior by a judge. We strongly encourage contestants to speak to the Contest Director immediately should they feel they have been treated inappropriately. We commit to keep your reporting in confidence and protect you in a manner that you consent to. South Plains Leatherfest is unable to take action if nothing is reported. We encourage contestants to trust the process and speak with the Contest Director.

The Structure of the International Person of Leather Contest

1. There are seven judges for the International Person of Leather Contest. The high score and low score for the contestants in each judging category will be thrown out and the remaining five scores will be averaged, giving a single score per contestant for each category. The contestants' scores for the five categories then will be added to give a final overall score. A perfect score would be 500. The contestant with the highest overall score is the winner.
2. In addition to their performance in the judging categories, two other aspects of the International POL Contest will impact a contestant's score:
 - Meeting Contest deadlines/complying with Contest rules: Contestants are required to meet all Contest deadlines, including but not limited to timely submittal of the Contest Application, complete information on Contest Application, submission of references, information on the item the contestants are required to submit for the Silent Auction, and attendance at all required Contest rehearsals and meetings. Failure to comply with any Contest rule or deadline will be reported to the judging panel by the Owner/Producer. The judges may use this information as a part of the interview of the contestant and may factor this information into their scoring of the contestant at their discretion
 - During the Thursday night South Plains Opening Ceremonies after drawing their contestant numbers, the contestant will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves on stage. They will have a maximum of 1 minute total to make their introduction. The form and content of the introduction is up to the contestant; however, props or sets of any kind are not permitted. While there is no deduction for too short or too long of an introduction, the contestant's representation goes to the Leather Lifestyle with regard to how the contestant presented themselves on stage.
3. If a judge becomes incapacitated during the International Person of Leather Contest, or if for any reason the Owner/Producer in their sole discretion determines a judge is unable or unwilling to carry out their duties as a judge, that judge will be withdrawn from the Contest and their scores will be discarded. The remaining 6 judges will continue to score the Contest under the Olympic scoring system, with the high and low scores of the remaining 6 judges dropped from the calculations. The Owner/Producer reserves the right to define the duties of a judge of the International Person of Leather Contest and to determine if a judge is able and/or willing to carry out those duties. The Owner/Producer further retains the right to remove from the judging panel any judge who in their judgment is unable carry out those duties.
4. In the event of a tie score between two or more contestants, the winner will be the one with the highest overall score, without using Olympic scoring. Thus, in the event of a tie, the scores of the tied contestants in each of the 5 contest categories will be recalculated, without dropping the high and low scores. The resulting composite scores for the tied contestants then will be averaged, again without dropping the high and low scores. The contestant with the highest overall non-Olympic score will be the winner.
5. If there is only one contestant running for the International POL title, they must receive a final overall score equal to at least 70% of the total possible. A perfect overall score would be 500; thus, the contestant must receive a final overall score of 350 in order to be awarded the title.

Judging Categories

1. Speech (100 points)

- Each contestant is required to give a short speech (2 minutes or less) on the topic of their choice from the stage during the evening portion of the contest.
- If a contestant's speech exceeds 2 minutes, the contestant will be allowed to continue with a live mic and the tallymasters will be notified that the contestant went over time. The judges will not penalize the contestants for going over and will judge them on the quality and content of the speech only. The deduction will be made by the Tallymaster to the final composite speech score as follows:

Overtime by 1 seconds to 15 seconds	No penalty
Overtime by 16 seconds to 60 seconds	5 points deducted
Overtime by 61 seconds or more	10 points deducted

- The contestants are permitted to have helpers in the audience indicating time markers during the speeches. The judges will not penalize the contestants in any way for making use of timekeepers
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Does the contestant speak clearly?
 - Does the contestant use appropriate gestures and body language that help communicate the message of their speech?
 - Is the speech well organized and understandable?
 - Does the contestant demonstrate through the speech passion and enthusiasm about the possibility of representing the community as International Person of Leather?

2. Interview with Judges (150 points) (limited to 30 minutes, max callback 5 minutes)
- Questions are likely to focus on community contribution, leather history and personal history. However, questions addressing broader leather/BDSM topics are also appropriate.
 - Questions about sex or play with any of the judges are inappropriate; do not ask them. Also avoid asking contestants to name something about each judge.

Suggested criteria for judging include:

- Is the contestant able to think quickly and give a responsive answer to the question asked?
 - Is the answer clear and understandable?
 - Is the answer factually correct? (If applicable)
 - Does the body language of the contestant reinforce the answer or does it detract from the message?
 - Does the contestant seem reasonably relaxed and engaged in responding to the questions?
 - Do the contestant's answers demonstrate that they self-identify as a person of leather?
 - Do the contestant's answers evidence passion and enthusiasm about the possibility of representing the community as International Person of Leather?
- The Contestant Interviews are open to all persons registered for South Plains Leatherfest. However, handlers, support persons, etc. for contestants may only attend their own contestant's interview.

3. Presentation (100 points)

- The presentation category is designed to judge the contestant's ability to speak in a seminar type format on Leather and BDSM. The contestant is required to make a brief (no more than 10 minute) presentation on any topic relating to Leather or BDSM.
- The contestant is permitted to use a device to aid them in keeping time during their presentation and will not be penalized in any way for doing so.
- The Contestant is permitted to use props or visual aids in their presentation but are not required to do so. The International M/s Contest will provide a flip chart and markers. The Contestant must provide any and all other handouts, props or visual aids, at their expense.
- The Contestant is permitted to use handouts but are not required to do so. If a contestant chooses to use handouts, it is the responsibility of the contestant to bring enough copies for at least the judges of the Contest. If a contestant chooses to use props or other visual aids, the contestant is responsible for obtaining and bringing those items, including any equipment necessary to present the visual aid such as a projector, screen, etc. The cost of all handouts, props and other visual aids will be the responsibility of the contestant.
- Before beginning the presentation session, the Contest Director will remind the audience that questions should relate to the topic of a contestant's presentation. At the end of a contestant's presentation, the contestant will call for questions from the audience and manage the room recognizing audience members to ask their questions.
- Questions must relate to the presentation topic.
- Judges will not ask questions of the contestant in this judging category unless there are no questions from the audience.
- The Contest Director will monitor the question-and-answer time, and their decision on the propriety of a question from the audience or judges is final. The time for questions and answers will not exceed 5 minutes for any contestant.
- The purpose of allowing audience questions during the Presentation Category is to allow the judges to evaluate the contestant's ability to think on their feet and respond to the kind of questions likely to be asked of the titleholders when they speak on Leather and BDSM to the community in an educational setting. It is not intended as an opportunity for the audience to "sandbag" any contestant or to attempt to help out one contestant at the expense of another.
- If the presentation exceeds 10 minutes, the contestant will be allowed to continue and the tallymasters will be notified that the contestants went over time. The presentation will not be interrupted.

The judges will not penalize the contestant for going over and will judge them on the quality and content of the presentation only. The deduction will be made by the Tallymaster to the final composite presentation score as follows:

Overtime by 1 seconds to 15 seconds	No penalty
Overtime by 16 seconds to 60 seconds	5 points deducted per contestant going over
Overtime by 61 seconds or more	10 points deducted per contestant going over

- The Contestant Presentations are open to all persons registered for South Plains Leatherfest. However, handlers, support persons, etc. for contestants may only attend their own contestant's presentation.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Is the presentation organized and understandable?
 - Do the contestants speak clearly and use appropriate gestures and body language to communicate their message?
 - Does the content of the presentation demonstrate that the contestants have given some thought to the message they are trying to communicate?
 - Are the contestants comfortable with answering audience questions and do they give organized and understandable responses?

4. On-stage ("Pop") Questions (75 points)

- Each contestant will draw a pop question, which they must answer during the Saturday night contest.
- The questions will be written and provided by the producer of the International Person of Leather Contest, with input from the judging panel.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Does the contestant speak clearly?
 - Does the contestant look comfortable being asked to respond to a question without time to prepare?
 - Do the answers given demonstrate a quality or characteristic that would be an asset to the titleholder, such as humor, logical thinking, knowledge in a particular subject area, etc.?

5. Leather Lifestyle (75 points)

- Contestants will be observed by the judges throughout the weekend, both in and out of formal contest events, and will be judged on how they present themselves and interact with the public, how they interact with their fellow contestants, and how they represent themselves as a Person of Leather.

- Judging in this category begins Thursday evening when the contestants introduce themselves and draw their numbers at the SPLF Opening Ceremonies. The judging sheet for this category will be turned in at the end of the contest on Saturday night, to be tallied with the scores for the other categories.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Does the contestant appear to be comfortable speaking about themselves?
 - Does the contestant interact well with the public? With the other contestants?
 - Does their representation of leather appear to be natural or does it appear to be something created for the contest?

The IPOL Travel Fund

- The primary means of fundraising for the International POL Travel Fund is through the Silent Auction, held over the South Plains weekend. In support of the Travel Fund, the IPOL Contestants are required to bring an item to be auctioned off. There is no live on-stage auction of IPOL Contestant Baskets at SPLF.
- The item may be a single item or a basket made up of several small items on the order of a standard small “gift basket.” The item/basket need not be large or expensive, but instead, should be something that represents the contestant, their region or the spirit of their regional contest.
- The owners of the IPOL Contest will have sole discretion on whether something constitutes a “single item” or appropriate basket under these rules and their decision is final.

Producer's Guarantee for the Titleholders

The Owner/Producer of South Plains Leatherfest and the International Person of Leather Contest guarantees the titleholders the following:

- Winners' back patch
- Winner's sash
- Winners' medallion
- A travel fund consisting of money raised from the Silent Auction, Hot Seat Café Table Sponsorships, and any other funds donated by groups or individuals.
- Airfare (up to \$500 per ticket) for next year's South Plains Leatherfest.
- Weekend Event Package including all meals and Play Parties to next year's South Plains Leatherfest.
- Three hotel nights at the host hotel at next year's South Plains Leatherfest.