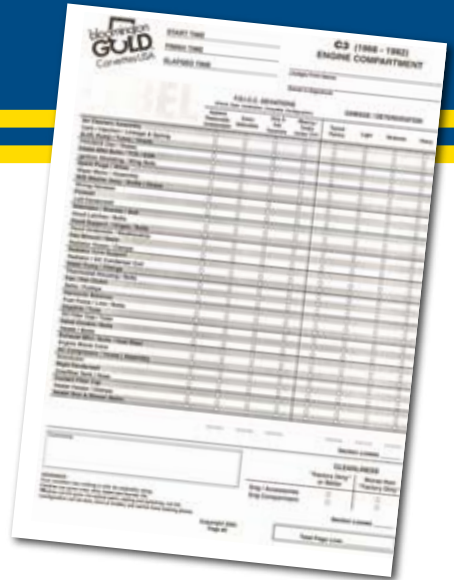




GOLD[®], SURVIVOR[®], & BENCHMARK[®]

What's it take to get one of these world-famous certificates?



Unless you are brand new to the Corvette world, you have probably heard of these terms. But many Corvette owners are unclear about what they mean, how to get them, or why anyone would want one. Corvettes with any or all of these three types of Certificates have been inspected by a carefully selected team of experts and certified in terms of factory authenticity. Unlike other car shows that typically award trophies or ribbons for cosmetically perfect or custom restorations, Bloomington Gold recognizes and rates restored or preserved Corvettes in terms of historic perfection. Usually, the Corvettes that have been modified or restored to cosmetic perfection have lost much if not all of their original finishes and earmarks of authenticity – not good, if you're expecting to do well at Bloomington Gold.

Background:

In the early 1970's, I often showed my unrestored 1967 Corvette and was surprised when others with pin-stripes, chromed blowers, and flared fenders won trophies while the five-year-old original '67 never got a second glance. So I restored it so that the door jambs shined as much as the fenders. I was surprised again when it began winning first place trophies, but more authentically preserved Corvettes finished well behind my beautiful (but not completely accurate) '67. After participating in numerous shows that rewarded "flashy" Corvettes with one big "flashy" trophy, I decided to turn car shows upside down. Why not create a show and judging system rewarding Corvette owners for preserving or restoring Corvettes accurately? And why not give the award to everyone who meets a quantified standard rather than just to one winner? But that can't be done credibly without first finding the most knowledgeable judges in the country. Although the first Bloomington Corvette show began in 1973, certification didn't begin until 1978. It was then that 34 highly screened and qualified judges were selected from across the nation and launched the very first National Corvette Certification Meet. In 1984, the entire show was re-named and branded Bloomington Gold.

After 30 years, the National Certification Board has grown to include over 80 judges, and Bloomington Gold has judged over 6,000 Corvettes. Somewhere

in the range of 75% have been Gold Certified. These Gold Certified Corvettes have become the standard by which collectors, auctions, magazines, and parts manufacturers compare all other Corvettes.

Basics of Gold Certification

The Standards:

(What's it take to be Certified?)

In order to be Certified, Corvettes must meet one of three levels of factory authenticity. Those judged to appear within 95-100% of their typical factory originality and still be in nearly new condition receive the Gold Certificate. Those scoring between 90-94% are Silver Certified. Bronze Certified means their authenticity is between 85-89%.

If everyone in a particular class scores over





95%, everyone is Gold Certified. If no one scores over 95%, then no one in the class is Gold Certified. A team of four judges inspect approximately 250 different components and evaluate the originality in terms of accurate finishes, date codes, installation procedures, completeness, and configuration compared to the way the car would have left the factory. The second major element evaluated for each component is its degree of damage/deterioration. For example, if a seat cover was completely original but had stretch marks, it would score 100% in terms of originality, but be penalized somewhat for its deterioration. In addition, the cars need to pass a technical inspection to assure that the electrical and mechanical components function as designed and finally that the cleanliness is typical of a new factory production vehicle; not to be confused with passing a white glove test, however. For example, some grease on the suspension, finger prints on the paint, or a few pebbles on the carpet are typical of a new car and will be overlooked.

What about modified C5s?

A common question from C5 owners regards their concerns about replaced exhaust, wheels, or an added gadget or two inside the cabin. Many assume they would not be able to qualify for a Gold Certificate. As long as that's all they did, it would still score highly enough to be able to receive a Gold. However, this assumes that everything else is authentic, has not been spray painted or refinished in some way, and that the condition still remains within 95% of the way it appeared leaving the factory.

The Judges:

In order to qualify and remain on the National Corvette Certification Board (Bloomington Gold judges) four standards must be met. Judges must demonstrate the following four qualities:

1. People skills with good personalities and friendly attitudes.
2. Product knowledge at a level capable of being able to describe factory components while blindfolded.
3. Procedures and protocols followed in accordance with

Bloomington Gold Certification Guidelines.

4. Proficiency of judging within a limited amount of time.

Backgrounds include owners of restoration shops, collectors, authors, and a myriad of other professions, but with in-depth experience doing research on original Corvettes.

Anyone interested in applying for consideration as a judge is encouraged to contact Bloomington Gold and describe their degree of experience and areas of expertise. Although judges do not turn over frequently, positions do become available

and qualified people are welcome and encouraged to apply.

How to Register:

Anyone with a 1953 up through a brand new off-the-showroom floor ZR-1 may register. Everyone has an equal chance of getting in. Registration opens in mid-February for the June event. Owners interested in becoming certified are urged to contact Bloomington Gold and asked to be put on the mailing list so they can receive a registration brochure, or they may register via the Bloomington Gold website. There is a limit, and if more than 10 cars are registered in a particular class before March 19, those classes go into lottery and owners are drawn to determine who will be placed on the wait list. The fees for the 2008 event were \$450; high for a typical car show, but Bloomington Gold is not a place

to bring cars just to show off. Owners pay the hefty entry fee because of the credibility it adds to the authenticity of the car. Who cares? Collectors. Buyers. Auctions. Magazines. And restorers who want the pride of accomplishing one of the collector car field's most difficult challenges.

That covers the basics of Gold Certification. The next article will cover SURVIVOR and BENCHMARK and explain the differences between all three judging events.

C&C



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Certification Guidelines, Judging Sheets, and Owners Advisories are available.