The American Saddlebred in Competition

The American Saddlebred remains the ultimate show horse, high-stepping and elegant. A show horse is a spectacle of beauty and grace but is also an intense athletic competitor. American Saddlebreds compete in four primary divisions in the show ring: Five-Gaited, Three-Gaited, Fine Harness and Pleasure. Each division has its own “look,” and competitors should be groomed to perfection. Five-gaited, fine harness and show pleasure horses are exhibited with full manes and tails. Five-gaited and fine harness horses also wear protective boots on their front feet. Three-gaited horses are shown with roached, or trimmed, manes to accentuate their long, fine necks.

The common denominator for Saddlebreds in the show ring is that they should be alert, showing with neck arched, head up and ears forward, projecting an attitude of “Look at me!” They are judged on performance, manners, presence, quality and conformation.
GENERAL APPEARANCE

**TYPE**
Symmetry, overall ease of identification as an American Saddlebred

**QUALITY**
Bone clean, dense, fine, yet indicating substance. Tendons and joints sharply defined, hide and hair fine, general refinement

**TEMPERAMENT**
Gentle disposition, active, intelligent

1. **HEAD** (carried relatively high; size and dimensions in proportion, clear-cut features, well-chiseled, smooth jaw line)
2. **MUZZLE** (fine; nostrils large; lips thin, trim, even)
3. **EYES** (wide-set, large, full, bright, clear, expressive, lid thin)
4. **EARS** (small, fine, alert, out of top of head, pointed, set close)
5. **NECK** (long, supple, well-crested; throatlatch clean; head well set on)
6. **SHOULDERS** (long, sloping, deep, muscular)
7. **FOREARMS** (long, broad, muscular)
8. **KNEES** (straight, wide, deep, strongly supported)
9. **CANNONS** (short, broad, flat, tendons sharply defined, set well back)
10. **PASTERNS** (long, sloping, 45-degree angle with vertical, smooth, strong)
11. **HOOVES** (round, uniform, straight; frog large and elastic; heels wide)
12. **LEGS** (sinewy — when viewed from front, a vertical line from the point of the shoulder should divide the leg and foot into two lateral halves; viewed from the side, the same line should pass through the center of the elbow joint and the center of the foot)
13. **WITHERS** (well-defined, well-finished at top, extending well into the back)
14. **CHEST** (medium-wide, deep)
15. **RIBS** (well-sprung, long, close)
16. **BACK** (short, level, strong, broad)
17. **FLANKS** (deep, long, full flank, not tucked, low underline)
18. **HIPS** (broad, round, smooth)
19. **CROUP** (long, level, smooth; no goose rump)
20. **TAIL** (comes out high from back; well-carried)
21. **THIGHS** (full, muscular)
22. **GASKINS** (broad, muscular)
23. **HOCKS** (straight, wide, point prominent, deep, clean-cut, smooth, well-supported)
24. **CANNONS** (short, broad, flat, tendons sharply defined)
25. **PASTERNS** (long, sloping, smooth, strong)
26. **HOOVES** (slightly less round than in front, uniform, straight, sole concave; frog large and elastic; heels wide and full)
27. **LEGS** (viewed from the rear, a vertical line dropped from the point of the buttock should divide the leg and foot into lateral halves; viewed from the side, the same vertical line from the point of the buttock should touch the hind edge of the cannon from the hock to the fetlock)