

AMERICAN NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

ARISTOTLE'S VAULT

FORUM GUIDE



FORUM

Advanced U.S. Coin Grading and Problem Coins

EPISODE 5 Ready, Set, Grade...
Determining Grading Skills

INTRODUCTION

This episode explores how the grading instructors determine the grading skills of the students who walk into their advanced grading course. It also delves into the process that is used to support all graders in their growth.

DETERMINING SKILLS

Instructors begin by providing students with a series of coins to examine. Their answers during this session serve as a “pre-test” of sorts to create different grading groups, each with varying levels of skill.

INSTRUCTORS ARE SPECIFICALLY LOOKING FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- Level of experience
- Level of expertise
- Level of accuracy
- Level of comfortability

Based on the results of the “pre-test,” the instructors determine the 3 sharpest graders in the room. They make these 3 students the group leaders and finalizers.

Once in groups, the grading goes from individual focus to consensus grading, where the group comes up with a number, discusses it, and the finalizer finalizes it. The finalizer can override the group decision, but usually the numbers are fairly close. The purpose of this process is to mimic the grading room at the major grading services.

SOME BASIC & EXAMPLES

Jeff and Don examine some first or second day examples that provide good insight into the abilities of the class. The list below is a recap of their choices.

1. 1886 O Morgan Silver Dollar

- Hairlines, swipe friction, well struck
- Graded AU 58

2. 1880 S Morgan Silver Dollar

- Gem condition, a few defects, beautiful cheek on the coin
- Graded MS 66

3. 1909 S VDB 1 cent

- Circulated
- Graded AU 55 BN

4. 1912 1 cent

- Pink in color, which is not natural
- Should be more red
- Questionable color UNC details

5. 1898 Barber Half Dollar

- Toning with iridescent blue
- Graded Proof Details (Artificial Toning)
- **Pro Tip-Be careful about dipping a coin like this, because the toning might be covering major flaws*

6. 1921 Standing Liberty Quarter

- Full mint bloom, tad of friction, mint flaw on the leg
- Graded MS 64

COIN OF THE EPISODE

The coin Jeff examines in this episode focuses on the difference between a proof coin and a mint state coin. The specific coin examined is an 1886 Half Dollar with good luster, a strong strike, and mirror. It was graded MS 64.

PROOF

Made for collectors in a proof set with special planchets, special dies, a strong strike, and a mirror finish

MINT STATE

Initially made for circulation and designed to be spent

