

GFSA – Ask the Judges

The judges selected for this series of articles are Larry Christensen, John Parker, Peter Ponzio, and Scott Taylor. Each of these judges has had years of experience in the goldfish hobby, and have acted as judges and breeders of goldfish. A new breed with new fish will be presented each issue, and the judges will rank the fish and provide commentary for their selections.

For the first several articles, we will present pictures of fish from various magazines and books which represent high quality fish for the breed in question. Eventually, we hope that breeders and dealers will send in photographs, so that we can present new varieties to review.

Each judge will assign a rating of 1 – 5, with 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest rating. The results will be tallied and presented in a table at the end of the article.

The second variety we'd like to cover in this series is the Ryukin. The Ryukin is one of the older varieties developed, and probably developed as a mutation from the fantail goldfish. Various theories have arisen as to the country of origin of the Ryukin, with some folks maintaining that the fish originated in China, while others believe that the fish originated in Japan.

The Ryukin is a large fish, possessing an egg-shaped body with a double caudal (tail) fin. The dorsal fin is generally carried in an erect posture and can be from 1/3 to 1/2 the depth of the body. The distinguishing characteristic of this fish is the presence of a large hump, which begins immediately after the head of the fish, and rises until the start of the dorsal fin. In some well-developed specimens, there may be 2 humps present. The hump is a combination of fat and muscle that grows on the back of the fish.

Most Ryukins have long flowing fins, with a tail that is lobed and equal to the body in length. All fins should be paired, including the anal fin, but lack of an anal fin is usually not cause for dis-qualification at a show.

In recent years, a strain of Ryukins has been produced in China which possesses a short tail, similar to that seen on Pearlscales. Larry points out that in these shorter-bodied fish, body development and compartment seem to take on added meaning, as the fins tend to be less-developed in the more traditional type of Ryukin. Depending on whether or not we can get additional photos of the shorter-bodied Ryukins, we may have a separate competition for these types of fish in a later article.

Either tail type is acceptable for showing fish, but the longer tail type seems to be preferred at the present time among Western fanciers. The shorter tail type seems to be preferred in the East, especially in China. In either tail type, the tail fin should be 90% or more divided.

Acceptable scalation is metallic (most prevalent), nacreous (commonly called calico), and matte. Colors can be orange, red, red and white, white, black, metallic blue, black and white, black and red, natural, chocolate, and calico. Red and white Ryukins can be spectacular looking fish, due to a combination of their size and the intense colors which these fish possess. Many Ryukins have a deep red coloration, which tends toward scarlet, and are the most intensely colored of the goldfish varieties.

The Ryukin possesses a triangle-shaped head, which sometimes appears small if the fish has a well-developed hump. The triangle-shaped head (when viewed from above) is unique to the Ryukin, and is an additional characteristic of this variety.

Fish 1, Red & White Ryukin



Fish 2, Calico Ryukin



Fish 3, Chocolate Ryukin



Fish 4, Red & White Ryukin



Fish 5, Calico Ryukin



Judge's Rating and Comments

Larry Christensen

First Place Fish -- Fish 5 Calico Ryukin

First let me start out by saying that Calico Ryukins are a variety that is not known for the high arched backs that we've seen in the red and red and white Ryukins (note the curve on the back between the front of the dorsal and top of the head). That's why I was immediately drawn to this goldfish. On further examination this fish's body is almost a baseball shape (excellent). The finnage is always the second point I look at and the fins on this fish are very nice. I like to see a fringe tail type on this variety as we see on my second place fish but I'm becoming very attracted to this broadtail type on this Ryukin. The coloration is

pretty good with deep blue on the back, soft orange on the body and nice pattern. Though the black isn't strong the strips in the tail definitely add the needed touch to jump this goldfish into my first place spot.

Second Place Fish -- Fish 1 Red and White Ryukin

This is a typical Ryukin body of good stature for a small to medium size fish. It doesn't possess the high arching back that we see in our first place fish. The tail is the fringe tail type that I referred to earlier, note the length of the pectoral and ventral fins as they are longer with this Fringe tail type. Dorsal is high but not as pronounced as our first place Ryukin. The red color is intense and bleeds into the fins with a nice sharp finished edge. The pattern balances the goldfish to give a pleasant appearance.

Third Place Fish – Fish 2 Calico Ryukin

My third choice goes to this small to medium size Calico Ryukin. The body is good and the fins are not as developed as our second place. The pectoral fins due to their length are curled toward the tips and the dorsal has a curled tip. I like the body colors and would say it's even more intense than our first place goldfish, but does have that sharp finished edge like our second place Ryukin. The black strips and spots are very strong and show this goldfish off well.

Fourth Place Fish – Fish 3 Chocolate Ryukin

This is a very new variety in the last few years. I saw one at the Chicago Goldfish Show this year. The body looks like a medium size fish with finnage that needs more time to develop. The dorsal has a slight curl and I can't see if the tail is separated or not. What catches my eye is there is a hump to the back, good depth and a nice shape to the body. The color is very nice and I'd like to watch this goldfish's development in the future.

Fifth Place Fish – Fish 4 Red and White Ryukin

This fish drops to fifth place due to the body depth and short finnage. Western judging would suggest a body depth should be between 80 to 100% of the body length (this one is about 110% +), this Ryukin is Chinese breed and they are very proud of the confirmation they have achieved. But this Ryukin is in a separate class of it's own with my judging of this group today. The white color that is showing is bright, the red is OK; hopefully this will intensify as the growth slows. Fins though separated, are short giving it a disadvantage over other tail style varieties. Why? Short fins can have the same deformities as the any other style of tail but the deformities are magnified and show up easier on the wider and longer tail styles. Short tails rarely curl, they are harder to see size differences or miss matched lobes in comparison to fringe tail, broadtail or veil tails. They are usually always separated nicely in comparison to the other styles. Look for this short tail variation to be another GFSA Judging column in the future.

John Parker

It is generally accepted that the Ryukin originated in Japan but having said that it is probably the only Japanese variety which is designed to be appreciated from the side rather than from the top like the more traditional Japanese varieties, the Ranchu, Tosakin, Jikin, Nankin and Azuminishiki. From personal observation and numerically speaking, the Ryukin is the most commonly available variety in Japan but surprisingly it has little standing among the Japanese Goldfish hobbyist community. Indeed my Japanese Ranchu friends dismiss it as being merely a commercially produced "pretty pet" and not to be taken seriously.

The Special Characteristics of this variety are its hump and intensity of colour with the hump being by far the more important; that is what makes the fish a Ryukin.

The hump should be shaped like a quarter of a circle and rise sharply from where the head joins the body and finishing where the lead ray of the dorsal fin begins. In the best specimens the development of the hump makes the head appear as an appendage, added on to the body almost as an afterthought. The hump on calico specimens is seldom as pronounced as that on metallics, neither is the colour as intense. However, when judging a mixed class of calico and metallic Ryukin such as we have here no allowance should be made for this as the variety's "ideal" must be the same regardless of scale group.

I have assumed that all five entries have twin anal fins and divided tails for if any did not they would be disqualified.

MY JUDGING SHEET

	1	2	3	4	5
	Red /White*Calico*Chocolate	Red/White*Calico			
Body (20)	10	7	10	8	14
Finnage (20)	13	13	14	11	15
Colour (20)	14	15	14	13	13
Condition/ Department (20)	17	17	17	17	17
Special Characteristics	8	8	8	8	13

(20)

	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
TOTAL	62	60	63	57	72
(100)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	3 rd	4 th	2 nd	5 th	1 st

First, Fish 5 – Calico

As this fish is the only one in the class with a Ryukin hump it is an easy winner. The hump features twice in the judge's assessment, once under "Body" and again under "Special Characteristics". The body is quite good with smooth rounded dorsal and ventral contours but whilst the hump is correctly shaped in that it bulges out from the body line, it is still under developed. The dorsal and caudal fins are strong, nicely balanced and complement the body making for a nicely balanced fish overall. I like the amount and distribution of the black speckling but the calico colouring overall would benefit from having more blue and less red.

Second, Fish 3 – Chocolate

This fish gains second place mainly because, other than the lack of a properly developed hump, it has no other major faults. Whilst the body and finnage can best be described as average, together they make up a well balanced package. The colour lacks the purity and intensity of a top quality chocolate but the colour extends to the extremities of the finnage, a major plus as far as any self coloured specimen is concerned.

Third, Fish 1 – Red/White

My initial impression was that this fish would be my winner; it has immediate eye appeal. Closer examination unfortunately reveals too many faults. The body has a high top line but this is achieved by way of a steep "ski-slope" rising from the head to the dorsal fin and not because of a Ryukin "hump". I cannot see evidence of any bulge whatsoever and so, to my eye, it lacks the very characteristic which is essential to the variety – the hump. The caudal peduncle is weak and I am amazed that it appears to be able to support its overly long tail. The size, form and strength of the dorsal are excellent and if the tail could be an inch shorter and an inch wider it would complement the dorsal and make for a better balanced fish overall. Colour is good. The quality of red is outstanding and very intense albeit more silver could make the variegated pattern more interesting.

Fourth, Fish 2 - Calico

Colour is this fish's best asset, indeed its colour is the best in the class. The finnage is nicely balanced but the dorsal begins too close to the head, drawing

attention to the fact that this example is not only hump-less but also lacking in body height. The top line falls away, highlighting the lack of substance in the caudal peduncle area. Generally the body is poor, the worst in the group.

Fifth, Fish 4 – Red/White

The body is far too high and deep for its length creating a body shape which will attract few admirers. Surprisingly for such a high bodied fish there is no hump. The dorsal lacks size and strength and is out of all proportion to both the body and the tail. Colour is this fish's only asset; the red is intense but this time more red and less silver would improve the variegation.

Peter Ponzio

First Place Fish – 5 points; Red & White Ryukin 1.

This fish possess all the qualities that you look for when selecting a Ryukin. Short, egg-shaped body, long flowing fins, and good hump development. In addition, the fish possesses the brilliant red & white coloring often seen in the Ryukin. The fin development is truly spectacular in this fish, and emphasizes the beauty of the long-finned variety of the Ryukin.

Second Place fish – 4 points; Fish 5, Calico Ryukin.

This fish is an excellent example of a Ryukin, and has the bonus of being a calico fish. The finnage is long and flowing, and the caudal (tail) fin is more of a broad-tail type, which makes this fish attractive. The calico coloring is excellent on the fish, and the hump is well-developed, which can be a problem for calico specimens of the Ryukin variety.

Third Place fish – 3 points; fish 2, Calico Ryukin.

This fish does not do as well as the other calico fish presented here, due to the less-developed hump, and slightly smaller (less developed) finnage. The calico coloration is excellent on this fish, and may be slightly better than on the number 5 fish. It is not as well-developed for the Ryukin characteristic (hump) as the number 5 fish, which causes this fish to be rated at number 3. Having rated this fish at # 3, I'd certainly take him for my pond or aquarium.

Fourth Place – 2 points; fish 4, Red & White Ryukin.

Here is a second look at a red & white Ryukin. This is a large fish, with a well-developed hump, and slightly smaller fins than the other fish listed on the page. This fish has the best hump development of all the fish listed on the page, and has good red & white coloring. So why is the first at 4th place? I'd have to say that the balance of the fish places it lower than the others. By that I mean, the overall appearance of the fish places it at a disadvantage over the top 3 fish. It has less developed fins, and less impressive pattern for a red & white fish

(compare the pattern and color of this fish with fish number one). Still a good fish, but it is competing against very good fish.

Fifth Place – 1 point; fish 3 Chocolate Ryukin.

Our final fish is a chocolate colored Ryukin. This fish is eye-catching, due to its unusual color. Upon closer examination, we notice that the hump is not as well developed as the other fish, and that the fins are shorter and less well-developed. This is a striking fish, and it can be argued that it should be placed 4th over the red & white Ryukin. I placed this fish in 5th due to the small hump and less developed finnage.

Scott Taylor

Peter and I agreed on our choices for placement of the Ryukins. In addition to Peter’s comments, which are listed above, I actually awarded this fish the Grand Champion designation at a show which I judged.

This fish is an extremely beautiful Ryukin, with intense coloration, superb finnage and it possessed a beautiful swimming motion, which enhanced the overall presentation of the fish. One of the aspects of fish judging which we do not consider as much as we should is the motion of the fish at rest and swimming. When at rest, the fish should appear calm, and not nervous or stressed-out. When swimming, the fish should have a graceful, fluid appearance and should not appear to swim in a “jerky” or distressed manner.

Judge’s Consensus

- Fish 1 – Red & white Ryukin
- Fish 2 – Calico Ryukin
- Fish 3 – Chocolate Ryukin
- Fish 4 – Red & White Ryukin
- Fish 5 – Calico Ryukin

Fish number 5 finished in 1st place, with fish number 1 finishing in close behind in second place. Fish number two finished in third, with fish number 4 in fourth place. The chocolate Ryukin, a relatively new color variant, finished in fifth place. The judging changed slightly with the addition of John Parker’s point schedule, with the first and second place fish flip-flopping (no pun intended). We hope that you enjoyed this judging exercise which highlighted Ryukins. Our next column will cover Ranchus.

Fish #	Larry		John		Peter		Scott		Total
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	Place	Points	Place	Points	Place	Points	Place	Points	Points
# 1	2 nd	4	3 rd	3	1 st	5	1 st	5	17
# 2	3 rd	3	4 th	2	3 rd	3	3 rd	3	11
# 3	4 th	2	2 nd	4	5 th	1	5 th	1	8
#4	5 th	1	5 th	1	4 th	2	4 th	2	6
# 5	1 st	5	1 st	5	2 nd	4	2 nd	4	18