

RESULTS - APRIL 2026 TECHNICAL CHALLENGE - Macro or Close-Up						All judges to Score ALL Images					Please Comment where assigned	
Cat	Seq	Firstname	Lastname	Star	Title	Dave	Ben	Wynand	Total		Assigned to	Comment
						Score	Score	Score	Score	Award		
						11.32	10.47	10.29				
						15	15	13				
						8	6	8				
TC	1	Liezel	de Kock	1S	Dew Kissed Torch	9	9	12	30	GOLD	Dave	A good attempt at the subject, the exposure highlights the contrasts between light and shadow well. The dominant left subject image stands out from the background, although it is a little soft in sharpness. The crop could be improved by removing 25% from the right, as this element is visually competing with the main subject.
TC	2	Martin	Agius	1S	Electric Silence	13	15	13	41	COM	Ben	Good composition, sharp and well exposed. I like the full spectrum of saturated colours, which adds real impact and energy to the image. A winner indeed.
TC	3	Martin	Agius	1S	Floating Constellations	11	10	10	31	GOLD	Wynand	Very interesting concep and focus is sharp. Next time try and clear the liquid as there's a lot of dirt or air bubbles visible.
TC	4	Andrew	Sprunt	1S	How many eyes can you C	12	10	11	33	GOLD	Dave	This little jumper is posed perfectly for the camera, on its royal red petal throne. Good detail is captured on the head, eyes and pedipalps, with the added reflection of the ring light in the eyes. The red background colour is overly vibrant, considered a touch oversaturated and commands a large area of the image. This could be reduced by a crop top and left to put spidey on the right third.
TC	5	Deana	Adams	1S	Just bee-cause I can	11	12	11	34	GOLD	Ben	Good close-up shot of the bee, and it is nice and sharp, which really works well for this type of subject. However, I do feel the image is slightly underexposed. This can be addressed in post-processing using curves or levels to lift the midtones and improve overall brightness without losing detail
TC	6	Martin	Agius	1S	Liquid Spectrum	12	13	13	38	GOLD	Wynand	Stunning image, well done.

TC	7	Mikaela	Sprunt	1S	Pink passion	12	12	11	35	GOLD	Dave	Dynamic vibrant colour and very good use of a shallow depth of field directs the view towards the sharp central part of the flower. The light direction and exposure works well to bring out definition and texture in the petals. Consider a crop on the base to remove the green spot and large out of focus area, and clone out the two white spots for a good clean option.
TC	8	Lindsey	Nicolay	1S	Pollen collector	9	7	12	28	SILVER	Ben	The yellow colour makes for a vibrant and eye-catching image. Unfortunately, I think a lot of detail has been lost in the post-processing, which reduces the overall quality. Pulling back some of the adjustments would help retain texture and fine detail while still preserving the strong colour impact
TC	9	Andrew	Sprunt	1S	Pray Mantis	9	6	9	24	SILVER	Wynand	Praying mantis are so much fun to photograph. Try a smaller fstop and slightly different angle to get more of the face in focus.
TC	10	Mikaela	Sprunt	1S	Purple playground	9	7	9	25	SILVER	Dave	Good use of differential colour and depth of field to highlight the subject flower frond. The exposure is good, but more of the subject needs to be in focus, and consider using a portrait crop on an upright subject. Compose the subject to the left or right of centre for a more pleasing visual arrangement.
TC	11	Liezal	de Kock	1S	Purple Rose (Aeonium)	11	10	11	32	GOLD	Ben	The image is nice and sharp, with good detail throughout. I like the close-up approach, and the droplets add to the overall visual appeal. However, the lighting is a bit harsh, with bright highlights visible on parts of the leaf. Using more diffused lighting would help soften these highlights and create a more balanced result.
TC	12	Deana	Adams	1S	Red and fabulous	12	10	11	33	GOLD	Wynand	Interesting capture and very interesting colours. Consider an even tighter crop.

TC	13	Liezel	de Kock	1S	Stinky Starfish Succulent	10	10	10	30	GOLD	Dave	Sharp detail on the stinky stamens, realistic colour and tones and the crop works well for this subject in composition. The background is nicely diffused to assist the projection of the subject. The top down lighting used has flattened out a lot of the detail, depth and texture and desaturated colours a touch. Subtle side lighting or natural light could bring out more interest in this subject.
TC	14	Alexandra	Davey	1S	Sundew	8	7	9	24	SILVER	Ben	I like the square crop. The image is quite busy, which makes it difficult to identify a clear focal point. Unfortunately, the entire frame also appears soft, which reduces impact. Consider using a tripod to ensure stability and achieve a sharper, more detailed result.
TC	15	Deana	Adams	1S	Web droplets	11	10	11	32	GOLD	Wynand	Lovely capture. You can consider cropping from the left and the top to get rid of the brown sections.
TC	16	Toni	Harley	2S	Antsy	11	9	12	32	GOLD	Dave	Lovely macro detail on the head of the ant, well exposed, with nice highlights. Sharp fall off of focus to the soft background lifts the subject well. Consider a tighter crop by removing some of the space to the right which could elevate the composition.
TC	17	Lesley	Marchant	2S	Cactus flower	12	10	9	31	GOLD	Ben	A very simple image that works effectively through its minimalistic approach. The stamen is well focused, and the shallow depth of field creates a pleasing, muted background that isolates the subject nicely. The composition is clean and well considered, and the exposure is well controlled, contributing to an overall elegant and balanced image.
TC	18	Toni	Harley	2S	Dandelion	13	10	11	34	GOLD	Wynand	Beautiful image. Try a smaller fstop and adding a bit more light in post processing or in camera pushing up the flash value.

TC	19	Jay	Nabbe	2S	Extraction	13	12	13	38	GOLD	Dave	A stunning macro capture of this bee subject and its environment, good colour, depth and composition. A few aspects to consider that could improve; the shadow areas could be a little darker and the sharpness toned down, and there is evidence of noise in the background.
TC	20	Lesley	Marchant	2S	Guttation	11	12	10	33	GOLD	Ben	The water droplet on the grass is pin sharp, drawing the viewer's attention effectively. The composition is strong, with the blade of grass creating a leading line from the bottom left into the frame, adding depth and perspective. The lighting, however, appears slightly harsh—likely from direct flash—so consider using diffused lighting to achieve a softer, more natural result. Overall, a well-composed image with a clear point of focus
TC	21	Jay	Nabbe	2S	Slow Study	12	10	11	33	GOLD	Wynand	I really like this image. The focus seems to be slightly off on the eyes.
TC	22	Toni	Harley	2S	Spidey	9	7	9	25	SILVER	Dave	This could be titled Spikey, judging from the sharp detail on the abdomen. The lighting, colour, tones and exposure suit the subject. The subject is rather small in the frame and the composition could benefit from a right vertical crop. Unfortunately the detail is too soft on the balance of the spider. Be aware of the noise apparent in the background.
TC	23	Jay	Nabbe	2S	Surface Tension	12	13	13	38	GOLD	Ben	The lizard's eye is exceptionally sharp, immediately drawing the viewer's attention. Combined with good exposure and strong composition, this results in excellent detail throughout the image. Overall, a well-executed and engaging capture
TC	24	Lesley	Marchant	2S	Waiting for the wind	13	10	12	35	GOLD	Wynand	Stunning image and I like the square crop.
TC	25	Dylan	Evans	2S	Who is the sharpest	9	9	9	27	SILVER	Dave	A stunning array of colours arranged in an appealing radial composition. The strong lighting and exposure could however be toned down, also sharper detail is necessary, a softer low angled light source could add lots to the existing detail and textures present.

TC	26	Gustav	de Wet	3S	Burnt orange	11	10	9	30	GOLD	Ben	The muted background works very effectively, allowing the subject to stand out clearly. Exposure is well handled, particularly given the side lighting, which can often be challenging. Overall, a well-balanced and thoughtfully executed image
TC	27	Sandra	Comrie	3S	Fly	9	6	8	23	SILVER	Wynand	Very nice angle. The whole image is very soft. Try not cropping in too much and have a look at using denoise in post.
TC	28	Marc	Gordon	3S	Fun guys hanging out	9	12	11	32	GOLD	Dave	A lovely little ensemble of fungi caught in a huddle. The focal point is on the tall guy, in sharp detail with good texture and contrast, the cap isolated well against the soft background. The scene is a busy one, less would be more in this case, the two foreground fun guys are stealing the stage by being brighter than the subject and also out of focus.
TC	29	Sandra	Comrie	3S	Glistening Ink Caps	12	11	12	35	GOLD	Ben	Exposure is well controlled, and the lighting has been handled effectively. All three mushrooms are clearly in focus, demonstrating good depth of field. The composition is well considered, resulting in a pleasing and balanced image. A well-seen and thoughtfully executed capture
TC	30	Minky	Goodbrand	3S	Golden Orb Eating	12	12	10	34	GOLD	Wynand	A interesting subject and nice angle. Consider using an external light source, smaller fstop and faster shutter speed.
TC	31	Marc	Gordon	3S	Hanging crystals	9	9	10	28	SILVER	Dave	A good closeup photo opportunity, the droplets offering up as real pearls glistening against the light. Exposure and lighting work well, but there is a busy confusion of the central subject due to the overlapping elements, and the impact is reduced as a result. The composition could benefit with a crop off the base to exclude the left corner drops.

TC	32	Minky	Goodbrand	3S	Jewel Bug Autumn Shades	13	12	11	36	GOLD	Ben	The subject is sharp, with good depth of field effectively separating it from the background. While some noise is present, it does not detract from the image; rather, it adds a subtle texture without compromising detail. Overall, a strong and well-executed capture
TC	33	Gustav	de Wet	3S	Pearly web	9	7	9	25	SILVER	Wynand	I like how the orbs flows towards the spider.
TC	34	Sandra	Comrie	3S	Pretty in Blue	10	7	9	26	SILVER	Dave	An exquisitely detailed and well composed shot with good light and exposure. The image could be improved by toning down the sharpening and cropping to just shy of the stalk on the left.
TC	35	Minky	Goodbrand	3S	Sawfly larva	10	10	10	30	GOLD	Ben	This is a very effective close-up. The sharpness around the caterpillar's head is excellent, and your use of a shallow depth of field works perfectly to draw the eye to the face while softly blurring the rest of the body. The exposure is spot-on, and the composition is very well-balanced. Great job!
TC	36	Marc	Gordon	3S	Sweet Nectar	13	8	11	32	GOLD	Wynand	lovely image. You could consider cropping a bit from the bottom.
TC	37	Liesl	Couperthwaite	4S	dew catcher	9	7	9	25	SILVER	Dave	Good lighting, composition and exposure with a diffused background. With just the very tip of the plant in focus, the potential impact is very much lessened. A deeper focal range that included the lower flower portion would contribute to improve the image. Reduction of highlights could also assist in a better score.
TC	38	Liesl	Couperthwaite	4S	moss	9	9	9	27	SILVER	Ben	You've captured a nicely muted background despite a busy scene, which isn't easy to pull off. That said, the image lacks a clear focal point, so the viewer's eye tends to wander without settling anywhere. The crop also seems to have reduced overall image quality, likely from zooming in too much on the original. In future, try isolating a single subject more deliberately and composing tighter in-camera to avoid heavy cropping later.
TC	39	Liesl	Couperthwaite	4S	purple beauty	11	10	9	30	GOLD	Wynand	Beautiful colours. The image feels soft. Consider a smaller fstop.

TC	40	Paul	Naude	5S0	Done by feel	13	13	13	39	COM	Dave	A super closeup of the beadwork craft artisan at work, great detail, lighting and contrast/tonal range in mono. A small crop on the left and right could possibly elevate it further.
TC	41	Paul	Naude	5S0	Natural born pizza	12	10	8	30	GOLD	Ben	Well exposed and sharp, with good detail in this close-up. The water drop works beautifully as a focal point and draws the viewer in. A well-seen and thoughtfully captured image.
TC	42	Tracey	Rhodes	5S1	Another sunflower	13	13	11	37	GOLD	Wynand	Textures very well captured. Try a bit more light in post production to highlight the yellow a bit more.
TC	43	Tracey	Rhodes	5S1	Bean counting	13	14	11	38	GOLD	Dave	An unusual closeup of coinage that blends all the aspects that make for a good image. The fine detail and textures have been extracted through clever use of light, tonal development and contrast with subtle use of shallow DOF for subject definition. Soft shadow reflections ground the image and provide a nice lead in.
TC	44	wynand	lens	5S1	Butterfly	14	14	13	41	COM	Ben	Well done on a strong close-up of the butterfly. The image is sharp with good detail, and your choice of depth of field helps the subject stand out nicely against the background. The bokeh further enhances the separation and adds to the overall quality of the image.
TC	45	Tracey	Rhodes	5S1	Dried seed heads	12	9	11	32	GOLD	Wynand	Interesting capture and I love the texture.. Consider a faster shutter speed or using a tripod. To freeze the image.
TC	46	Heidi	Taylor	5S1	Droplets on a feather	12	11	10	33	GOLD	Dave	The blue light effectively adds an appealing colour element to this macro image. The dark background separates the feathers with nice clarity, with the sharp subject elements present in the top third. The soft OOF lead in is effective, however it could be cropped on the base and the left to add more impact to the focal area.

TC	47	wynand	lens	5S1	Golden fly	14	12	11	37	GOLD	Ben	<p>Your subject stands out well against the muted background, which works nicely. The image is sharp, but detail is somewhat moderate—likely due to post-processing, as there appears to be some loss of fine detail, especially in the insect’s eye.</p> <p>Consider using an aperture around f/11–f/16 to improve overall sharpness and depth of field. At f/8, the depth of field is quite narrow in macro work, which may be why parts of the subject fall out of focus and appear slightly soft.</p> <p>Also watch the lighting on the leaf—there are some blown highlights that distract from the image. Softer, more diffused light would help retain detail and balance the exposure.</p>
TC	48	Heidi	Taylor	5S1	Inside a dandelion	14	13	8	35	GOLD	Wynand	<p>Really nice capture but very soft. Try adding a bit more light and lowering your f-stop.</p>
TC	49	Jan	Lens	5S1	Jacks eye	12	12	8	32	GOLD	Dave	<p>Eyes make for great closeup subjects as this shot shows. Good light, spot on exposure, sharp detail and that super glint in the eye! The narrow band of focus effectively picks up the eyeball and softens away to the rear. There is some evidence of noise that could be easily removed.</p>
TC	50	Heidi	Taylor	5S1	Lichen	11	9	10	30	GOLD	Ben	<p>The colourful lichen stands out well against the black background, creating strong visual contrast.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the image appears soft, with a noticeable loss of fine detail. As there is no EXIF data available, it’s difficult to determine the exact cause, but the softness could be due to camera shake or the use of an incorrect aperture</p>
TC	51	Jan	Lens	5S1	Orchid on Ochre	11	9	9	29	SILVER	Wynand	<p>Love colours. Consider adding a bit of external light and find a different angle to get a cleaner background.</p>

TC	52	Cornelia	Appel	5S1	Paper butterfly	12	9	9	30	GOLD	Dave	A clever take on the subject, the butterfly fitting nicely with the overall bokeh lighting and colour concept. A suggestion would be to remove the dark object on the left as it is a visual distraction from the otherwise soft ethereal feel of the image. Some noise is apparent in the background.
TC	53	JOAN	JUNG	5S1	plug fittings	10	12	11	33	GOLD	Ben	The image is sharp, with good detail and texture, and a strong choice of depth of field. I like how you've separated the subject from the background, creating good visual impact. The saturated colours really help the image pop against the dark background. I would have liked to see the connection point on the right included—always pay attention to your edges, ensuring elements are either fully included or deliberately excluded
TC	54	JOAN	JUNG	5S1	red lights and bokeh	11	10	8	29	SILVER	Wynand	Interesting subject. I find the focus a bit soft. Consider a slightly smaller f-stop and manual focus to get the front lights into focus.
TC	55	wynand	lens	5S1	Springkaan	11	13	12	36	GOLD	Dave	Vibrant impactful colours draw the viewer in to delve deeper, the subject framed tightly within the swirl. The locust's forebody is focussed in sharp detail. The lighting is strong and relatively flat, with little shadow depth which could add more texture and contrast to the scene. Due to the dominance of the bright coloured areas, the subject loses impact, some burning in of these bright areas could improve the overall scene.
TC	56	JOAN	JUNG	5S1	tithonia	11	9	9	29	SILVER	Ben	The subject is sharp, especially considering it was taken at f/32, with a long exposure of 10 seconds at ISO 100. Unfortunately, the image appears underexposed. This could be corrected in post-processing using levels or curves to bring back brightness and detail
TC	57	Jan	Lens	5S1	Working dogs foot	11	7	9	27	SILVER	Wynand	You can see the miles on this foot. I find the image soft and can do with some denoising.

TC	58	Terry	Burne	5S2	One broken Snowflake - 4918	9	8	9	26	SILVER	Dave	I'm always amazed at how a tiny snowflake can be captured before it melts, this is a good example of that it is indeed possible. As a closeup/macro shot, the lighting and exposure are competently handled. It however needs more contrast, perhaps if shot on a darker (black) background, and with more detail in the out of focus parts. If possible, try and fill more of the frame for visual impact.
TC	59	Maxi	Holder	5S2	One Hairy Mushroom	11	10	8	29	SILVER	Ben	<p>Good detail, sharpness, and exposure throughout the image. I like the muted dark background, as it helps the subject stand out and gives the image strong visual separation. The contrast is well handled, and the tones feel balanced without any obvious blown highlights or blocked shadows.</p> <p>The composition works well overall, but just a reminder to watch your borders—there are elements that feel slightly cut off. Consider recomposing or rearranging the subject so that everything is either fully included or deliberately excluded, which will give the image a more polished feel.</p> <p>You might also experiment slightly with your depth of field to see if isolating the subject even more strengthens the impact, or alternatively, bringing a bit more into focus if it adds to the story. Overall, a solid image with good technical execution and just a few compositional refinements to take it further</p>
TC	60	Maxi	Holder	5S2	Palystes Showing Fangs	13	13	11	37	GOLD	Wynand	Very sharp where it matters. The out of focus legs adds a bit of mystery but an even smaller fstop would help getting a bit more in focus.
TC	61	Terry	Burne	5S2	Snowflakes - 5145-1	11	9	9	29	SILVER	Dave	A scattering of flakes in an appealing composition, fine detail and well lit. To improve - try more contrast and a darker background, remove the black spot top centre, and run denoise to remove the chrominance (colour) noise evident in the background.

TC	62	Terry	Burne	5S2	When snowflakes die holding hands - 5972	9	9	9	27	SILVER	Ben	The image lacks critical sharpness, and the image is "soft" (blurry). I find this image to be more of a "record shot" The viewer's eye wanders around the frame without knowing what to look at. This usually happens when the frame is cluttered rather than isolating one distinct, beautiful subject. The specific snowflake you captured is not visually interesting and lacked the classic, geometric "wow" factor.
TC	63	Maxi	Holder	5S2	Yellow Dragon	13	13	9	35	GOLD	Wynand	Stunning image but it looks to be a bit heavy on the denoise tool. It has a very unnatural feel to it.
TC	64	Rob	Hart	5S4	Dragonfly profile 925	13	13	12	38	GOLD	Dave	A very well rendered macro shot, super fine detail in the plane of the head and body, and especially on the eye matrix, which is quite phenomenal. The strong flat directional lighting brings out the really vibrant colours. The only distraction is the busy overlap of the wings on the body, which is of course unavoidable.
TC	65	Rob	Hart	5S4	Hairy bug mating	15	15	11	41	COM	Ben	This is an exceptional macro shot. The focus on both insects is pin-sharp, displaying impressive detail throughout. Your use of a shallow depth of field effectively isolates the subjects against a beautifully muted, well-exposed background. I particularly enjoy the dynamic diagonal composition and the punch of the vibrant colours. A clear winner—well done!"
TC	66	Des	van Tonder	5S4	Pretty on Pink	14	14	10	38	GOLD	Wynand	I like the fly placed on the thirds and the purple works with this image. Try a smaller fstop and add a bit more light from the flash.

TC	67	Des	van Tonder	5S4	Silk petals	11	12	10	33	GOLD	Dave	It's a closeup, but could also be an abstract, the orange/blue complementary colours coexist well, the blue flows almost as water. The subject is a small but yet vital component in the vast blue void, and pictured side on without the usual head and eyes perspective. The spider could be sharper, and the crop could be pulled in 20%top and right - but maintaining the 16:9 profile.
TC	68	Rob	Hart	5S4	Spiny caterpillar 069 DM	11	14	11	36	GOLD	Ben	Another excellent macro study. The caterpillar is rendered with impressive sharpness and fine detail. Your choice of a shallow depth of field perfectly isolates the subject against the muted background, and the exposure is spot-on. I especially like how the vibrant colours of the caterpillar contrast with the surrounding tones. Very well done
TC	69	Des	van Tonder	5S4	The Crossing	13	12	12	37	GOLD	Wynand	Stunning image and timing is perfect.
TC	70	Leon	Heyes	6S2	Cyber City	12	10	10	32	GOLD	Dave	Macro of electronic circuitry can be fun, and this is a good example of where the components can resemble architecture. Pin sharp from front to back and well exposed, the fine detail, colours and textures have been well captured. Some nuances of light and shadow could add depth and interest through local dodging and burning. A low angle shot with shallow dof can also work well.
TC	71	Leon	Heyes	6S2	Obliging Moth	10	13	9	32	GOLD	Ben	A great example of macro photography. The subject stands out beautifully, thanks to the effective colour contrast between the tan moth and the green leaf. The focus is sharp, and the level of detail is superb. Well done
TC	72	Leon	Heyes	6S2	Rainbow Discs	13	10	11	34	GOLD	Wynand	Rainbow colours from this very interesting concept. The discs can be cleaned a bit but otherwise a very creative image.
TC		Martin	Agius	1S	Electric Silence	13	15	13	41	BUNIOR		
TC		Rob	Hart	5S4	Hairy bug mating	15	15	11	41	BSENIOR		