

NAFA® Board of Directors Meeting, May 8, 2010 - Working Agenda:

Officers' Reports

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Executive Director's Comments

Treasurer's Report

Secretary's Report

Standing Committee Reports

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- NAFA products

Finance:

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Judges Committee:

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- Supervising Judge Applications:
 - Scott Frerichs, Bartonville IL
 - Phil Getty, Kokomo IN
- C.17 Form ("Provisional")
- Line/Box Judging Training Video

Technology Committee:

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- Backup plans
- New server and migration

- Online EJS tracking and maintenance
- Online sanctioning
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Rules Committee:

- Balls permitted
- C.6 tournament results form
- By-law review
- Double running of dogs
- Use of shields or other attachments to box
- Minimum runback
- New racing format request
- Clubs electing into adjacent regions
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- Training in the ring
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Old Business:

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Rules Committee

May 8, 2010 Agenda Items

1. Balls permitted

The Rules Committee received questions about whether the current rule regarding balls adequately addresses some of the balls currently in use, such as foam core balls. There was also a concern raised by Steph Doerr about the legality of balls that squeak. Our current rules do not prohibit balls with squeakers. The Rules Committee unanimously recommends the following clarification, which if adopted would also prohibit balls with noise makers.

Proposed modifications to Section 1.2 – Balls (page 3 of the current rulebook):

Each club shall have a supply of round balls subject to the size, safety, and comfort of the dogs. Approved balls may be any color, must bounce when dropped onto a hard surface, must roll, and must perform as required per Chapter 1 Section 1.1(d). Balls may not contain a noise maker, e.g. bells or squeakers.

2. C.6 Tournament Results Form

The rules committee recommends modifications to C.6 Tournament Results Form to comply with new rules for sending electronic results

3. Bylaw Review

Proposed modifications to bylaws – still in progress

4. Double running of dogs

Elizabeth Theesfeld wrote to express concern with double running of dogs, specifically, the safety and well being of dogs who are run on two teams. The Rules Committee previously addressed a similar issue at the August 2009 meeting and declined to recommend a rule change, stating:

We hope that dog owners know when their dogs are capable of safely double running. Many factors may go into this equation, including weight and condition of the dog, weather factors such as heat and humidity, and the age and experience of the dog. NAFA expects flyball competitors to take care of their dogs, to realize the physical limitations of their individual dogs, and treat them humanely.

The Rules Committee continues to believe that double running is an issue, but one which depends so much on handler and judge assessment of the dog's condition and what is being asked of it that no one-size-fits-all rule is adequate. We do propose, however, the following amendment to the Code of Ethics,

to clarify that it is a violation to run a dog who is not in adequate physical condition for the number of races the dog is being asked to run:

Section 5.1 – Code of Ethics (page 23 of the current rulebook)

(d) Misconduct shall include, but not be limited to, abusive or foul language, demonstration of dissatisfaction with a judge's decision, inhumane treatment of a dog, racinɡ a dog who is not in adequate physical condition for the number of heats the dog is asked to run, demonstration of poor sportsmanship, willful violation of the rules with the intent to gain an unfair advantage, or any other behavior or altercation that would leave a spectator or exhibitor with an unfavorable opinion of Flyball.

In reviewing the rules, the Committee also noticed that non-regular classes were not included, so we are proposing modifications to make sure that a dog is not also run in non-regular classes, such as pee-wee, etc. and recommending a modification to make 3(e)(i) parallel with other rules.

Proposed rule modifications:

CHAPTER 3 - TEAMS AND TIMESHEETS

(e) A dog may be listed on two timesheets per day unless:

- (i) All entries received for a tournament's limited entry Regular Class were not accepted at the conclusion of the automated draw.
- (ii) The timesheets are in the same class of competition.
- (iii) The dog is listed on a timesheet in Veterans Class. A dog listed on a time sheet in the Veteran's class at a tournament may not be listed on a time sheet for any other class of competition in that tournament unless the classes are scheduled so as to be run on separate days to a maximum of one additional class.

Section 6.2 - Classes of Competition

- (a) NAFA® recognizes five classes of competition: Regular, Multibreed, Open, Veteran's and Non-Regular.
- (b) The NAFA® Regular class of competition includes teams made up of any breed(s) of dog and/or mixed breeds and **must be offered at every sanctioned tournament.****
- (c) A Non-Regular class (Pee-wee, four-of-a-kind, etc.), is ...
- (d) In Multibreed competition, teams must consist of ...
- (e) The Open Class is subject to all existing NAFA® Rules of Racing and Corporate Policies and Procedures except that the 87 day rule stated in Section 7.5(a) of the Corporate Policies and Procedures does not apply to the Open Class. The Open Class is subject to the following additional specific rules:
 - (i) Other Classes or Time Sheets. A dog that is listed on a timesheet for a team in the Open Class may be listed on the timesheet for one additional team in another Class on the same day, except in

- circumstances where a second entry would be prohibited by Sections 6.2(f) or (g) of the NAFA® Policies and Procedures.
- (ii) Club Affiliation. A dog's club affiliation is not affected by reason of running in the Open Class.
 - (iii) Seeding. ...
 - (iv) Record Times and NAFA® Seed Times...
 - (f) In the Veteran's class, every dog ...
 - (i) Race Schedule...
 - (ii) False Starts. In the Veteran's class, ...
 - (iii) Jump Heights. In the Veteran's class, ...
 - ~~(g) No dog shall be listed on more than one time sheet in any given class of competition. A dog listed on a time sheet in the Veteran's class at a tournament may not be listed on a time sheet for any other class of competition in that tournament unless the classes are scheduled so as to be run on separate days to a maximum of one additional class.~~
 - ~~(h) Dogs may not compete in more than one class at a NAFA® sanctioned tournament except:

 - ~~(i) When the tournament's regular class is unlimited or;~~
 - ~~(ii) When all entries received for a tournament's limited entry regular class are accepted at the conclusion of the automated draw.~~~~

5. Use of shields or other attachments to box

Lisa Peckham submitted a request to the Rules Committee for clarification of whether shield or wings could be attached to the box and, if so, what rules applied during the race.

The Rules Committee has reviewed this issue and believes that currently shields, wings, or other attachments to the box are permitted as long as the boxloader does not change them during racing. There was a split as to whether the attachments may exceed box dimension during the race, for instance, if a dog bends a wing outside permitted box dimensions during racing. The majority of the committee recommended a modification to the rule to find that any attachments could not exceed the box dimensions during racing. Other members of the committee were against such a proposal, primarily because of the difficulty of enforcing the rule.

The proposed rule change to Section 1.1(e)(v) (page 2 of the current rulebook):

The box shall not exceed these dimensions at any time during racing (including any attachments to the box, e.g. carrying handles, cocking devices, or shields/wings). The boxloader may not change the configuration of the box during the heat except as needed to load the ball or to straighten the box if it has shifted during the heat.

Alternate proposed language:

The box shall not exceed these dimensions at any time during racing (including any attachments to the box, e.g. carrying handles, cocking devices, or shields/wings). The boxloader may not add or remove any attachments during the heat except as needed to load the ball. There should be no moving parts operational during the heat other than those responsible for moving the ball. Parts of the box should not move except for loading and launching the ball.

6. Minimum runback

The Rules Committee received a proposal from Jon DosPassos requesting tournaments with less than 45 feet of runback not count for regional points.

The current rulebook specifies a minimum runback of 29 feet. The Rules Committee discussed at length possible safety and training issues involved with tournaments with runback this short. Training methods have changed substantially over the years and there was concern that the existing minimum runback rule did not provide adequate runback for an increasing number of dogs and teams. After discussion and research, the Committee was unanimous in recommending that the minimum runback be increased to 50 feet. The Committee was also unanimous in recommending that the Executive Director should be empowered to grant exceptions to the minimum runback where adequate notice was given to teams and appropriate safety measures were put in place. The Committee was split as to whether tournaments where exceptions were granted should count for regional points.

The proposed rule modification is:

Section 2.4 - Ring Layout

(a)The minimum area required for two regulation lanes is approximately 30 feet by 110 feet. There shall be two racing lanes set a minimum of 12 feet from center to center and a maximum of 17 feet center to center. In cases of racing lanes being placed on hard surfaces or carpet (such as indoor/outdoor carpet where rug burns are possible), each racing lane shall be matted at a minimum 4.5 feet on either side of the racing lane center line for the length of the racing lane leading up to the first jump and an area from the last jump to the backstops. Where sod, dirt, grass or similar surfaces are available, matting shall not be required. All racing surfaces must be free of apparent contaminants. The length of the racing lane shall include an area not less than 50 feet leading up to the start/finish line and an area behind the box and in front of the backstops to a minimum of 5 feet and that the backstops may protrude up to 2 feet in front of the box line. For tournaments held in venues that will not accommodate 50 feet of runback, the tournament director may apply for an exception from the Executive Director if adequate notice is given to teams and appropriate safety measures are put in place. If the Executive Director grants an exception, the tournament will/will not count for regional points.

The Committee also recommends a modification to the diagram in the rulebook to reflect any changes to the minimum runback.

7. New Racing Format Request

Jules Comeau presented a request for recognition of a new racing format:

After the round robin is done in a 5 team division, each team has raced 4 races. Instead of running a single elimination round which will leave one team with 5 races and the others with at least 6 and the possibility of 7 races, tournaments in region 10 have, for several years, been using a tournament format that we call extended round robin every time there are 5 teams in a division. We started using it when it was proposed by one of our tournament directors and was approved by Sam. This format has become very popular and is supported by all clubs in the region. It works like this:

Teams are reseeded after the round robin based on the result of the round robin. The extended round robin has 5 races : 1vs2, 2vs3, 3vs4, 4vs5, 5vs1.

The Rules Committee considered this request, but does not recommend its approval. Some of the considerations were that the existing round robin and elimination formats already provide adequate options for tournament directors. And, the proposed format may put teams seeded in second place in a more challenging position than those in third and fourth place.

8. Clubs electing into adjacent regions

Request from Tammy Bonas for a rule change to 8.3(c) (page 39 of the current rulebook):

(c) All points and tie-break times for Regional Championships must be earned in the Club's home region, i.e., an "in-region" team. A Club's home region, absent a written request for change, is the place of residence of the Club owner shown on NAFA® Form C.11. A Club that is located within 60 miles of the regional border may change regional affiliation by written request to NAFA®. Requests to change regional affiliation to an adjacent region must be received before the start of the racing year to take effect that year. A host club's regional affiliation shall determine the region in which regional points accrue for tournaments hosted by that Club.

Tournaments hosted out of region, but declared in region because of a regional exemption on the host club, must be within 60 traveling miles of the region border, otherwise the tournament will count for regional championship points in the geographical region where it is held.

The Rules Committee considered these requested rule changes. None of the Committee supported placing a limitation on clubs being able to elect into an adjacent region based on a mileage limitation from the club owner's residence. Clubs often comprise members from different locales and, in geographically large regions, especially towards the mid-west and west, this type of mileage restriction would be unworkable.

The Committee was split as to whether there should be some form of mileage restriction on how far tournaments could be from the regional border. Some members felt a mileage restriction, although larger than that proposed, would be reasonable. However, others are concerned about the potential impact, especially in the geographically larger regions. All members agreed that if there was repeated abuse, such as a club hosting many tournaments per year in a remote location not readily accessible to the region, this should be able to be addressed to the Executive Director.

9. Assessing regional points for multiple tournaments on the same weekend

Request from Zac Chernik for clarification of how regional points are assessed when a region has two tournaments in different cities on the same weekend. Specifically the question was whether a club could accrue regional points from both tournaments if they sent teams to both tournaments.

In reviewing this request, the Rules Committee unanimously agreed that the answer depends on whether more than 7 weekends of tournaments were held in that region during the racing year. If more than 7 weekends of tournaments are held, then under Section 8.3(f) (page 40 of the current rulebook), then points would only be awarded based on the club's best finish. To clarify the rule, the Rules Committee recommends modifying as follows:

When a region hosts events in more than 7 tournament weeks, a Club will earn regional points from up to 80 percent of the tournament weeks in that region based on the Club's best finish from any event to a maximum of 10 tournaments held in separate tournament weeks. In the case where multiple events exist in a tournament week, regional points are still awarded based on in-region placement within each tournament. When regional points are not awarded due to a Club's ~~prior~~ win in the same week, the points will not be awarded to teams finishing lower in the tournament. For example, if a Club finishes first on each day, then the fastest time will be used for that Club's regional points but no first place points will be awarded on the second day as the winner has blocked out the win from other Clubs.

If there are 7 or less tournament weeks in a racing year for the region, then points are awarded from tournaments regardless of the number of tournaments in a tournament week, so a club could receive multiple points from multiple locations.

10. Training in the ring

The Rules Committee received questions from Emily Venator about various types of conduct inquiring whether they would constitute training in the ring. In reviewing these questions, the Rules Committee had concerns about whether the current rules gave sufficient support to a judge to call training in the ring when the assistance was from someone other than the handler, whether that person be inside or outside the ring. The Rules Committee recommends the following change:

Chapter 3 (page 5 of the current rulebook)

(c) Each team is to consist of a minimum of four dogs and four handlers, with a maximum of six dogs and six handlers, plus a box loader and at the discretion of the team, a runner or two, to pick up loose tennis balls, to set up knocked down jumps, or to otherwise assist the team, provided doing so does not interfere with the judges or the opposing team and does not in any way assist the dogs in navigating the course or violate the rules.

This rule change would make it clear that other people may assist the dogs and handlers, but may not assist the dog in actually navigating the course. A person helping catch the dog in the back area, or revving the dog up before they run would not violate the rules. But, a person funneling a dog into the jumps or running alongside the dog as they run over the jumps (even outside the ring) would not be permitted. Using food in the ring is permitted, as are tugs and other motivators.

11. Consolidation of rules for running without EJS

Dana Nichols requested that the Rules Committee consider consolidating rules that apply when racing without an EJS into one location.

Section 8.7 – Racing without EJS (Electronic Judging System)

The following rules apply when racing any heat without EJS for any reason:

- a) The breakout rule (section 8.1) does not apply;
- b) Racing procedures
 - (1) The Head Judge (starter and referee) shall be positioned between the racing lanes in the area between the start/finish line and the lead dogs to start the heat. If necessary, a Head Judge shall reposition himself/herself so as not to interfere with competing teams.
 - (2) The Head Judge shall maintain a consistent starting cadence of approximately one (1) second intervals throughout the tournament, and shall indicate the start with a whistle. For example, please see illustration 5.1. In tournaments with multiple judges, uniform visual start signals should be used.

INSERT: Illustration 5.1 – Starting positions without Electronic Judging System
“Ready” “Set” “Tweeet”

- (3) Early passes and other infractions will be indicated by the Line Judge and/or the head judge;
- (4) If necessary, the Head Judge (starter and referee) should be in position to assist the Line Judges in determining winners of close heats.
- (5) When a heat is judged to be a tie with, the head and line judge's decision as to the winner of the heat must be unanimous and shall

be based on their visual view of the finish line, not on the clocks. If the Line Judges are not in agreement, the Head Judge shall consult with the Line Judges and either declare a winner or declare the heat to be a tie.

These sections would then be deleted from the current locations in the rulebook.

12. Modification of aggression excusal

The Rules Committee received an email concerning the dog aggression rules from Ken Bullard. This email came in after the two lengthy pre-meeting conference calls to prepare for the May 8 meeting the committee conducted and thus has not been discussed in formal committee meeting at this time. The request was that this be addressed at the May 8 meeting and so we have listed it on the committee report. (Note that rules amendments normally have an effective date of October 1.)

Ken Bullard proposes to modify 8.4 – Aggressive Dogs as follows:

If a dog, not provoked, bites, regardless of damage, a person or other dog or exhibits escalating aggressive behaviors, the dog may be suspended by the judge for the duration of the tournament (weekend). The participant may be warned as a precursor to excusal. If however, a dog, unprovoked, inflicts injury on another dog or person, then the dog will be excused from racing and a determination will be made by NAFA as to the dog's continued participation in flyball events. With regard to the judge, he/she must be willing to clarify any decisions made during a tournament.

The current rule states (on page 13 of the current rulebook):

Section 8.4 - Aggressive Dogs

If a dog shows undue aggression toward another dog or handler at any time during the competition, the Head Judge may excuse the dog from competing. Dogs that are excused, are excused from competing for the remainder of that event. The degree of aggression that warrants excuse is to be determined by the Head Judge. The Head Judge must report any dog excused from competition to the Executive Director on NAFA® Form C.12.

The proposal appears to be substantially copied from the U-FLI rule on aggression.

As noted, we received this too late to evaluate it formally. Some members of the committee are concerned that, under the guise of providing more specificity, the proposal actually seems to narrow the instances in which aggression can be effectively addressed. The use of the word “unprovoked,” for example, suggests that aggression isn’t subject to the rule even if it’s hugely disproportionate to the provocation. What is meant by “escalating and continuing aggression” is also unclear. Last, it seems to mandate excusal and perhaps an outright ban even if a dog bites accidentally, in going for a tug or in two dogs going for the same ball or toy.

Any rule must allow the head judge the discretion to assess the situation at the time. Under our existing rules, the head judge has the ultimate decision as to whether to excuse a dog for undue aggression. Our judges go through a rigorous training program and we trust in their ability to make appropriate decisions. Additionally, Section 5.3 (page 26 of our current rulebook) was amended last year to provide review of aggression excusals and provide an appeal process for owner/handlers of these dogs. Our judges also have many other tools to ensure safety in the racing lanes. If there is interference, judges stop the heat immediately and the interfering team is awarded a no finish. And, if the judge believes that a dog poses a threat to safety, they may be excused from the tournament using the same C.12 form. While we expect judges to indicate the reason for their decision and reference the rulebook where appropriate, we do not think it is appropriate for judges to engage in protracted discussion with disgruntled competitors. This is another area where we believe training and experience give our judges a good guide to appropriate conduct.

13. Definition of runback or runoff

The Rules Committee also received a request from Ally Stern to include a definition or clarification of minimum runback or runoff. Her concern was that for tournaments held indoors on concrete, the minimum amount of runback or runoff should be the minimum matted runback or runoff. To include non-matted portions does not adequately address the safety concerns.

The Committee received this request after the above request, but before the May 8, 2010 meeting. Although not able to debate the issue at length, the Committee indicated it would address this issue when addressing the minimum runback raised in #6 above.