

Dear NAFA Board Members,

I am writing to clarify and establish your thoughts on altering a flyball box using a training aid. At the Ulti-Mutts Tournament in Madison, Wisconsin on July 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Bordering on Insanity Midwest Flyball Team, Zac Chernik of (BOI) had modified a Jim Sova box to include a jump board in front of the box, but still attached by an extended piece of matting.

At the start of this tournament Zac was successful in arguing his point to the Regional Director (Ule James) and head judge (Scott Frerichs) that with this jump board modification, BOI's box still met the NAFA requirement of 30" long (not including where the box loader stands) and was allowed to use this flyball box.

Attached are photos of their altered flyball box.

From the NAFA rule book Chapter 7(b) page 9 "There shall be no practice or training in the ring for the duration of the tournament, except for the warm-up as permitted prior to each race. Training in the ring during the competition will mean a forfeit of the heat." Also in the glossary of the rule book "Training in the ring – where, once racing has started, the handler uses techniques and/or devices that would be used to train."

My question, is this box/jump board hybrid configuration legal?

Not only does it allow a jump board to remain in the ring during a race, I witnessed a loaded tennis ball falling out of the box hole during a race and fell between their box and this jump attachment, the box loader (Zac) was able to reach down to retrieve the tennis ball and successfully place it back in the flyball box hole, completing that dog's run without violation. Plus a bobbled ball that is knocked down gets trapped instead of rolling loose; I believe adding an advantage to the box loader and a dog for not having to chase a loose ball.

Please let me know if your intention is to allow this alteration of boxes. When does a jump board stop being a training aid?

Sincerely,

Tim Ulrich  
TNT, Region 4  
e-mail ([HouseOfLabs@sbcglobal.net](mailto:HouseOfLabs@sbcglobal.net))

9/6/2007

-----Original Message-----

From: Zachary Chernik <zchernik@4gci.com>

To: captainmirk@aol.com; ripperjrt@sbcglobal.net

Sent: Wed, 1 Aug 2007 10:51 pm

Subject: Re: Flyball Box / Jump Board Hybrid

Dear Ms. Pickering,

I first want to establish what was left out of the attached e-mail to the Rules Committee. First I had a discussion with Mr. Brian Fay about a month ago. We talked about flyball boxes and what some other clubs have tried in the past. I guess some clubs squared off the front end of the box so that the pad angle stopped at 4-6 inches above the ground plane then dropped perpendicular to the ground. I thought that design would be very dangerous for the dogs front legs if they did not jump high enough to clear the perpendicular part of the box. Then we talked about the use of foam on the front of the box to create a safer squared off surface or upside down triangle at the front of the box. So during our phone conversation, I came up with what would be our current design.

I've been doing research of flyball boxes and the box turn of dogs for over 3 years. I have reviewed over 100+ hours of box turn video frame by frame, not just of our club but clubs from Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 14 and 19. I have consulted with some of the DVM's that currently run in NAFA regarding safety of our dogs including a DVM from TOPS rehab located just outside Chicago, IL. Most of our club members are engineers. One of my club members next door neighbor works with NASCAR as an engineer, he is currently helping us design the next generation flyball box. We have started gathering statistical data of our dogs and the lb force that they generate. Our fastest dog Riff generates over 1200 lb of force at impact. With the current designs of flyball boxes that are static and only have 3/8" tough spun matting, I'm concerned about the safety of our dogs first and foremost during their flyball racing career and how we can create a safer playing environment for them.

The Madison tournament is a 3 day event with Multi (unlimited) and Regular (limited) on Friday Night. Bordering On Insanity raced on Friday night. The box design was discussed with Mr. Ule James that evening before racing started and approved for use. Also present was Chris Boles the Tournament Director. We discussed that if the white triangle piece became detached during racing that if the loose piece was not removed immediately from the racing lane before a dog was in the area that it could be considered training in the ring. I agreed to that statement. TNT did not arrive until after racing was finished and the building was locked up for the night so they were not present for the discussion. The next morning before racing I brought Scott Frerichs over to the box to let him know about our box design a good 30 minutes before racing started. So before racing started on Saturday, we had agreement again from Ule, Scott, Brian (not judging) and Chris (TD). During the early part of racing on Saturday morning Val Rogalla of TNT stated to me "That it is an illegal box", but I stated "The judges approved the box". The comment back to me was "It would not be legal in U-FLI" and I stated back "This is not U-FLI but NAFA".

As for the box it conforms to the 18x24x30 volume of space that is described in the NAFA Rulebook. The triangle piece is attached to the matting with 4"x22" of Velcro and made out of swimming noddles. The matting would rip long before the triangle piece would detach. The triangle piece itself is about 22.5 inches and the extended matting is 23 inches wide. The depth of the front of the matting to the extended ball launcher handle is 28.5 inches. So when I move the box or pick up the box the whole box including the triangle piece moves as a whole it does not fall off the matting. The entire matting on the box is attached using industrial Velcro. This allows me to replace the entire matting on the box in a few minutes verses hours to remove the old glue and reapply the new glue and matting and wait for it to set.

Meets NAFA Standards:

## CHAPTER 1 - EQUIPMENT

### Section 1.1 - Flyball Boxes

- (a) Each team shall supply a Flyball box.
- (b) All boxes are to have a mechanical (not electrical) mechanism.
- (c) The boxes may be painted or decorated as the team wishes.
- (d) The ball, when released, must have a free unobstructed flight of not less than 24 inches from the point that the ball is released, in the direction of the start/finish line from all holes.
- (e) Boxes:
  - (i) Shall not exceed 24 inches in width, nor 18 inches in height from the bottom surface of the box excluding mat grabbing devices/materials and outdoor staking devices;
  - (ii) The body of the box shall not exceed 30 inches in depth;
  - (iii) The base of the box upon which the boxloader stands may exceed 30 inches in depth;
  - (iv) Mat grabbing devices/materials shall not raise the box by more than one half inch;
  - (v) The box shall not exceed these dimensions at any time during racing (including any permanent attachments to the box, i.e. carrying handles, cocking devices).

The difference that I see is that most if not all clubs use white tape on their box to simulate a jump. The triangle is a 3-dimensional part of the box vs the 2-dimensional tape. The disadvantage of this new design is that the ball hole on the box will set farther back than a typical flyball box from the box line. Based on most flyball boxes, and using 6 inches as an example of distance, BOI dogs would have to go an additional 4 feet as a team, 6 inches to and 6 inches back per dog to cover that extra distance from the box line. With a total of 4 feet and based on a 4 second dog's speed which is about .033 per foot, the additional time would be .132 for the team. As for the triangle piece stopping a tennis ball, this would be no different than the ledges that are on most boxes. Also, if a dog does not have a basic good turn or has no respect for props during warm-ups, this design can actually be a disadvantage to that dog. We experienced that first hand with one of teams dog wanted to go around the triangle piece.

If you need additional information, please contact me either by e-mail or cell 847-951-5809.

Sincerely,

Zachary A. Chernik

Bordering On Insanity - Flyball Racing Club