

NAFA Board of Directors Annual General Meeting January 16th, 2021

Meeting held via Zoom Teleconference due to COVID-19 Travel Restrictions

Steve called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm CST.

Welcome.

ED Comments

1. Welcome, introduction, trivia question

Welcome everyone to the 2021 AGM! This is our first AGM that will be done entirely virtual and I am pleased so many of you could join us. Technically speaking its being hosted in Minnesota, since that is my location, and the weather is a beautiful 37 degrees with a nice snow covering. Hopefully the rest of you also have great weather in your areas.

Some quick housekeeping items for the call

- Large conference calls can be tricky. To make it easier for people hear, we have all the attendees muted
- We will be answering questions at the end of the call that were pre-submitted. The amount of people is such that we can take questions from the audience after that

Introductions:

Neil Flood, ED, Minnesota, Region 3

Board Members:

Jonathan Bescher, North Carolina, Region 9

Steve Corona, Texas, Region 5

Kathy Haney, California, Region 16

Dana Hanson, Georgia, Region 9

Cindy Henderson, Massachusetts, Region 13

Leerie Jenkins, not in attendance, North Carolina, Region 9

Kurt Johnson, Alberta, Region 12

Emma Mak, Ontario, Region 2

Lynda Mantler, British Columbia, Region 7

In an attempt to keep some normalcy from past AGMs, we always have a trivia question for our attendees. We usually award the winner a bottle of wine or something similar, but that could be tricky with shipping, so this year we are awarding a \$50 gift card for Amazon.

This year's trivia question is:

What is the total number of dogs in the NAFA database, that have competed in both Region 8 AND Region 3?

In the unlikely event we get a tie, here is a tie breaker question:

What is the combined point total for the number of dogs that have competed in both Region 8 and Region 3?

2. Flyball stats from 2020 season

It was certainly not an ideal flyball year, having only raced for 7.5 months across NAFA. However, here are some stats from the past year:

104 events hosted
29 different states/provinces hosted events (35 in 2019)
2422 teams that raced across 242 clubs (288 in 2019)
356 new iron dog titles
1138 dogs earned titles
121 different breeds earned points

3. Election Results

Neil:

Board of Directors:

Emma Mak
Lynda Mantler
Jayne McQuillen

In addition, the Board of Directors elected the following officers to the Executive Committee:

Steve Corona - Chairperson
Emma Mak – Vice-Chair
Lynda Mantler - Secretary
Dana Hanson - Treasurer

Steve:

Clyde Moore Memorial Hall of Fame:

Chaos
Jack-Jack

Judge of the Year:
Anthony Pirnat

REGIONAL MVPs:

(There were no nominees in Regions 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22)

Regional MVP, Region 4

Shay

Regional MVP, Region 5

Red

Regional MVP, Region 6

Zip

Regional MVP, Region 7

Sonic

Regional MVP, Region 9

Jackson

Regional MVP, Region 11

Blast

Regional MVP, Region 12

Dusty

Regional MVP, Region 14

Joly

Regional MVP, Region 16

Cannon

Regional MVP, Region 18

Kilo

Regional MVP, Region 19

Wink

4. CanAm Updates - ESPN

Neil:

First, and foremost, NAFA is forging ahead with plans for CanAm 2021. We are all very hopeful that life is completely back to normal by then. I also hope many of you are excited to attend this fall. 2020 was obviously a tough year for everyone, and there is probably some form of uncertainty for people. I plan to get a brief survey out to past club owners and gauge attendance plans for this fall. It will just help us plan what volume we might expect.

Also regarding CanAm, I did want to provide everyone some exciting updates from AKC TV and ESPN. I know there was an announcement a month or so ago that created some confusion. I do want to make it abundantly clear that the event you saw posted by ESPN/AKC was in fact NAFA's CanAm event. The name on that announcement was simply an error on ESPN's behalf. They aren't nearly as aware of who NAFA is, as they've coordinated a lot of work through AKC and AKC TV. It will be corrected.

With that item cleared up, we are extremely excited to work with both organizations. We will be working with AKC TV throughout the year, and plan to have a few regular NAFA events livestreamed on their site. They are also planning to livestream the normal racing on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. ESPN is looking to broadcast the NAFA Championship races - likely recorded Sunday, then packaged to broadcast within a couple days. There are a lot of logistics we are actively working on, but it's a great opportunity for us to showcase NAFA Flyball.

5. NAFA Tournament Reopening plans

Our next item is one I am sure everyone is eagerly anticipating an update on, and that is our reopening plan. The board of directors has convened numerous times to discuss reopening, and at this point we do plan to open on April 1, 2021. We are well aware that COVID conditions vary widely across the Canadian Provinces and US States. In that regard, we plan to have a “Transitional” Flyball in effect for a number of months.

Transitional Flyball will allow clubs and teams that are able to play, in a limited fashion, while understanding that may not be available to everyone. We also know that COVID numbers may be reduced by April but likely still a concern. We will be publishing a set of requirements, and recommendations in the next couple of weeks for tournament participants to follow during that transitional timeframe.

A key point to remember through this, is that we know not all regions will have the same COVID conditions and restrictions. There can be policies in place that will not apply to others. Many items we have will be recommendations, and they may flex and change across and within regions over the summer.

Some key items that we will have in place:

- a. There will be no Regional or NAFA Championships at stake.
- b. We will remove the need for line and box judges - this is for safety as we can remove 4 people from the ring, 2 of which were in constant contact with numerous people.
- c. Addition of 7th dog slot on C.2, Tournament Timesheet for the “Transition Phase”. Some people have expressed concern about introducing new dogs to flyball, and in some cases they have a number of young dogs that have not been allowed to race. To help in that transition we will allow a 7th dog to be listed on the C.2 timesheet with a valid CRN. This slot is ONLY for a warmup dog, and it cannot run in a heat. We welcome your feedback on this doing forward, and we could consider allowing them to race in the future - for that to happen though, would require some scoring rework and we will see how it is received in the interim period.

Once restrictions on large gatherings are lifted in all regions, the US/Canada border is open and the vaccine is available to everyone we will move into Phase 2 Normal Flyball. We are hopeful that this will be October 1, 2021.

One highlight I do want to share with everyone is in regards to returning to Normal Flyball. To try and mitigate all the lost dog points, when we re-open to Normal flyball, for a period of 12 months - the same amount of time we lost to COVID, dogs will accrue double the dog points per tournament.

6. Iron Dog Exception

Another COVID related item was the Iron Dog exception. We made an exception for that last year, meaning any eligible dog that didn't get to compete because of COVID would get credit towards their iron dog title. We will extend that exception to the 2021 season. This won't appear in the database until the 2022 season, however.

7. Measuring

More measuring updates!

While many of our plans to demo a new device were derailed in 2020, we have settled on a new measuring device. This device will continue to measure a dog at the withers. This device has been extremely well received. A few key points:

- a. The device is standard laser level, typical used in construction
- b. The laser is safe!
- c. We are encouraging handlers to measure their dogs on a table (typically a grooming table). This has a number of advantages. In particular, the judge doesn't need to be on their knees leaning over the dog.
- d. A ruler, which was pre-calibrated for the height of the table, is simply placed on their withers, and the laser is clearly visible to be read by everyone. It's quick and straightforward. The dog doesn't have a large wicket arm over top of them, and there is no judge leaning over them.
- e. Many dogs that struggled to be measured on the floor by a judge with a wicket were able to be comfortably measured with this new process.
- f. We will start getting devices out to RDs as soon as possible.
- g. We will have an education period for judges to get certified on using the new device starting April 1st, 2021.

Jon shared a video to demonstrate the use of the device.

In addition to a new device, we have a plan for mandatory measuring. The board appointed a special committee to work through the details, and we feel we have a plan that is straightforward, and fair.

Some key highlights:

- Change measuring device from wicket to laser level and specialized ruler. Competitors will have the option of measuring on a suitable table.
- Create measuring training videos with new measuring devices for competitors, judges and regional directors.
- Implement a measuring certification program with the new measuring device for all judges.
- Regional Directors to be trained and play a larger role in measuring, and work as a team with judges to minimize conflict of interest concerns.
- Dogs under the age of 24 months will only need a single temporary measurement so they can run as a height dog. They would then be required to get 2 matching measurements after the age of 24 months.
- Implement Mandatory Measuring. A Permanent Measurement obtained after the age of two (2) years with 2 matching measurements from two different judges and is good for the life of the dog. On implementation, dogs over ten (10) years of age are exempt from mandatory measuring requirements.
- Dogs that are ten years or older at the time that mandatory measuring comes into effect will not be required to measure. If a dog is clearly not running their height, they could be subject to unsportsmanlike charges.

- The dog's height will be tracked and published in the NAFA database to make things simple
- Eliminate the Certified Measuring Judge position/program.
- Eliminate challenges from competitors and judges.
- Implement Owner-Initiated Remeasure process. If an owner is unhappy with the measurement they received, they will have a one-time opportunity to initiate a re-measurement of their dog's height.
- Eliminate the need to measure for World Record (assumes the height dog has a Permanent Measurement).

We understand that this will take some time and adjustment. With that in mind here is our rollout plan:

- April 1st, 2021 - judges will begin getting certified on using the new device. Competitors are welcome to measure their dogs on the new device. They do not need to be "official" measurements for the purposes of racing.
- Once "Normal" racing begins (target is October 1, 2021), we will commence a 12-month training period of mandatory measuring. Competitors are encouraged to try the device, and practice measure as much as they choose. They have the opportunity to get their permanent measurement from a judge certified on the device, but will not be required to. We want to get people familiar and comfortable with the new device.
- At the conclusion of the training period, mandatory measuring will be in effect and dogs running as height dogs will be required to get the two matching measurements. Anticipated effective date for this is October 1, 2022
- Dogs over the age of 10 years of age at the beginning of the mandatory measurement period are exempt from the requirement. However, if they run a height that is clearly not accurate, they could be subject to unsportsmanlike charges.

The board has agreed on the high-level concepts and is working on finalized, and specific wording for the 2022 rulebook. We plan to publish the details around mandatory measuring prior to April 1st.

8. Q & A

Questions that were submitted before the meeting.

Susi Evans, Region 19 - If exploring other measuring options purpose was to ensure making it less stressful for the dogs, (currently using same method) do you think measuring being required in every tournament will help with that?

Neil – while we are continuing to measure the withers, our method is changing to the new laser device with the option to measure on a table. No more wicket and a judge leaning over the dog. After 2 matching measurements from 2 different judges, dogs will no longer need to measure so there should not be long line ups to measure as it will only be new dogs after that.

Susie Evans, Region 19 - When can I start sanctioning a tourney for end of April and can the closing day be earlier than 30 days. Need to guarantee enough participation

Neil – We will accept sanctioning requests now. The closing date is up to the club but the sanctioning date must be 30 days from the closing date. Need to allow the RD enough time to review the divisions and schedule.

Kelly Price, Region 2 - Is NAFA still committed to mandatory measuring, in some form, and - if yes - what steps are still required in order to finalize the process and rules?

Neil – Was covered above. NAFA is still committed to mandatory measuring. We have a phased in approach to bring that in. We are working on the wording for the rule book wording. The board has agreed to all concepts that have already been covered.

Randy Dillman, Region 5, Nancy Murphy, Region 11, Curtis Smith, Region 18, John Rohling, Region 3, all submitted similar questions – What are the benchmarks for reopening?

Neil - A lot of this was talked through already. We are looking for no restrictions on gatherings and the opportunity for people to receive the vaccine.

John Rohling, Region 3 - With the long hiatus, has NAFA resolved all the measuring issues (device, height card, whither or leg measurement, etc.)?

Neil – The measuring changes were covered earlier in the meeting. The withers measurement was decided on some time ago after we did the study. There will no height card. The measurement will be recorded and accessible in the database.

John Rohling, Region 3 - Is CanAm planned? Any amended qualifications?

Neil - Absolutely, CanAm is planned. There are no qualifications to attend CanAm. We are planning for the same format we have followed for the past few years. We are excited for the publicity we will be getting from ESPN and AKC TV.

John Rohling, Region 3 - Details on AKC involvement with NAFA. Are they a sponsor for CanAm or is it their event? If so, why would NAFA relinquish their name and sport to a breed organization that one time didn't even recognize mix breeds which is now a cornerstone of Flyball? If this is the case, it should have been voted on.

Neil – The announcement that came out was just some confusion on the part of ESPN. We are a standalone organization and excited to work with them to broaden the participants that we are able to reach and get people that have never seen the sport interested.

Dale Smith, Region 21 - What is the air speed velocity of an unladen swallow?

Neil – It wasn't specified if the swallow was African or European so we can't answer that question. 😊

Questions submitted during the meeting.

Katie - With the transition phase and not having box or line judges, does this prevent a team from setting a world record?

Neil – The world record still has to be videoed, and the dog would need to be measured under the wicket while it is still the official measuring device.

Katie - what happens if a dog gets two different measurements? And once they are recorded, does the height dog need to be remeasured in the case of a world record like the current rule states?

Neil – The dog needs two matching measurements. Typically, a dog would not need to measure more than three times to get their Permanent Measurement. If a dog is on a world record heat and has a Permanent Measurement, it does not need to be measured again. If the height dog is less than 24 months and does not have a Permanent Measurement, it would need to be measured. Also, if the height dog is over 10 years old it would need to be measured.

Lyndsy Dvorak - Do you have to apply for the “height card”?

Neil – If a dog runs as a height dog it needs to be measured. You don’t have to apply and there will be no actual card.

Jane Horsfield - Any dog without a measure runs maximum height?? the do not have to measure if they are obviously larger than jumping 14??

Neil –If the dog is jumping the maximum of 14 inches; it does not need to be measured.

Terry - Are the no line/box judges and the 7th spot on the C2 in effect April 1?

Neil – Yes. Taking away the box and line judges reduces the amount of contact spots. The 7th dog needs to be written on the C2 but cannot run in the heat.

Jayne McQuillen - Along with the 7th warm up spot, will teams get a longer warm up time, like 2 minutes?

Neil – the rule book does not specify warm up times. It is up to the tournament director.

Steve O'Donnell, Region 16 - has there been any news in developing a new version of EJS?

Neil - No, we have kind of paused development as there has been no revenue. There have been no events at which to test new ideas and components.

Lyndsy Dvorak - will the heights be stored in the database or will you be responsible for keeping the information?

Neil - Yes, they will be stored and published in the NAFA database.

Curtis Smith - Will practice measurements still be allowed at tournaments both before the measuring of height dogs is required and afterward?

Neil - Yes, we are strongly encouraging practice measuring.

Katie - In the transition, is NAFA still approving the “mat time” for small tournaments to bring in extra money

Neil - Yes, still cannot run teams and dogs cannot be listed on timesheet.

Louie – Do the 2 identical measurements need to be the actual measurement or the same jump height?

Neil – the 2 matching measurements need to be for the same jump height, not the actual measurement. For example, a dog measuring 14 ¼” and 14 ½ “ would be the same jump height.

Louie – what about when dogs shrink with age like humans do. Should they be remeasured?

Neil – There is Owner Initiated Remeasuring available.

Duck Face - Any consideration for NAFA provided tournament software?

Neil – This is something to consider, however the board has not discussed it recently. Emma notes that there is a nice program out there that we might be able to look at in the future.

Carle Lee – Will the warmup dog number 7 be able to do mat time during the tournament?

Neil - Great question; will make a note of that for further discussion as that scenario has not been considered.

Judy Rowley- Can something be done to rehab existing timing lights? There have been many times racing has to stop due to light issues.

Neil - We will get these serviced if we can. Please contact the RD and the EJS coordinator.

Mindy - can you further explain the 12 months of double points?

Neil - When normal flyball returns (expected date October 1, 2021), for 12 months, dogs that are racing will get double the number of points they would normally get. It is just a means of recouping the points that dogs lost while NAFA was not sanctioning events.

Mindy - does this include the first place bonus points?

Neil – Yes.

Katie - In the transition where a wicket is the only “official” measurement, could you still apply for a permanent measurement?

Neil - No, you cannot because it won't be in the rulebook. You have to wait until October 1, 2021.

Neil invited meeting attendees to reach out to him with additional questions.

9. Trivia winner and meeting close

Cindy announced the trivia winner.

Total number of dogs racing in Region 8 & Region 3 is 385;

Katie from Skidmarkz has the winning guess of 375 and will receive the gift card.

The total number of points earned by those dogs is 10,025,886 points.

Neil gave Steve the floor for final comments.

Steve thanked everyone for joining the meeting. The board has been hard at work and is still open to questions. He encouraged everyone to check the new information about measuring on at www.flyball.org.

He also thanked Kurt Johnson whose term on the board has ended.

Lynda moved, Jon seconded to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:17pm.