



JUDGE'S TAILGATE

Often you hear a judge say something that might make you wonder exactly what they mean. Interpreting the rules often is not exact. Let's take the phrase "challenge the blind". What does that mean? How do you relate that phrase to what is in the rule book?

From Chapter IV- Judging Guidelines:

SECTION 11: BLIND RETRIEVES

Par. 1." When performing a blind retrieve, a dog should take the original cast given to him by his handler and continue on it until he either makes the find or is stopped by the handler and given a new directional cast when commanded. The dog should then continue in this new direction until he finds the bird or is given further directions, etc. We are looking for cooperation with the handler, but not rigid straight lines; we want a dog that is kept in a good general corridor and is making improved progress toward the bird with each additional command."

The dog should take the handler's direction, stop when told to, respond towards the bird when cast all the while staying within the "corridor" and also make "progress" to the bird. That would be challenging the blind.

Another phrase heard is "I'm looking for teamwork". Well, there is no doubt that a dog that is in sync with its handler can be similar to poetry in motion. What's the book say?

Chapter IV, Section 15: SCORING, Par 15. "Judges should evaluate dogs on nose, memory, intelligence, attention, courage, suitability as a hunting retriever, perseverance, style, accuracy and control during all available tests. Evaluating a dog's performance relative to the objectives of the test demands a judge with hunting experience and a thorough knowledge of the standards and procedures, as well as good dog sense."

Judges please be careful. A judge's job is to evaluate the dog. Although working with the handler is important for "suitability as a hunting retriever", the handler does not get a score!

Finding a suitable test dog can be difficult. A dog with the same skill set of the category being tested is ideal but not always available. Although a test dog is not required, it is encouraged and also quite useful.

Is a test dog required to be in compliance with the rule book? Yes, with some judge discretion pertaining to skill level.



A judge does have considerable latitude while using a test dog if the skill set is different than the category being tested. This is not desired but would be acceptable under certain situations. Examples are running multiple retrieves as singles for a Hunter, Intermediate or Senior test dog. Allowing the test dog to be steadied by using a leash (as per Started). It is not acceptable to make a retrieve while wearing a collar or to violate the Code of Conduct. The Book of Regulations for Testing of Hunting Retriever is to be adhered to during all aspects of a NAHRA Event.

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Can a judge require that a dog retrieve a diversion bird? Yes, the rule book actually requires it.

If a poison bird is used, does the handler have the option of sending the dog to retrieve it or not? No, it must be retrieved.

The rule book: Intermediate – Chapter II “..... Diversion birds shall not be scored as marked retrieves, but the dog must find and deliver the bird to hand.”

Senior – Chapter II “.... Diversion and poison birds shall not be scored as marked retrieves, but the dog must find and deliver the bird to hand.”

As a handler, can I find out why my dog did not qualify at a test? Please see below

Chapter II, Section 1, Par. 18: A judge is not required to discuss his or her judging evaluations with any participant. The decision of the judges is final. In the interest of improving performance NAHRA strongly encourages judges to make time available to discuss their evaluation at the end of testing. This is not an opportunity for handlers to dispute or argue but rather gain insight to improving their performance. As part of the event the code of conduct applies during any such discussions.”

A courteous discussion can be beneficial for all involved.

Hot blinds and/or piles of birds. Judges are those practices of any tangible benefit, paor do they actually contribute to conditions or outcomes less than ideal?

Anyone having a question about the evaluation of our retrievers or about the rule book, please contact Harry Williams (contact info on NAHRA website)

Hope everyone has a Safe, Happy and Joyous Holiday Season.