

COONHOUND ADVISOR

Allen Gingerich

Coon Not Seen by Majority During Allotted Shine Time

Q: This is a pretty good question, and one that I'm going to guess most people are scoring correctly. It's also one that a handler who might be "reaching a little" is bound to question just to see what kind of response the Master of Hounds offers. At any rate, let's say that the handlers in a four-dog cast are in the process of shining a tree where two dogs were declared treed.

With only 20 seconds left in the shining time, Handler A announces that he has located the coon. Handler B also sees it at that time. Shining time expires before Handlers C and D can get into position with A and B to see the coon. The judge remarks that although he does now see the coon, it cannot be scored because the majority of the cast did not see the coon within the allotted shining time. Handler A wishes to question this decision, insisting that only one handler needed to see the coon during the shining time and as long as the majority of the cast verified that indeed the coon was there, it could be scored. How do you rule?

A: I'd have to go with Rule 3(a), which specifically says; *{When dogs strike and tree and coon is seen during shine time only}*. This rule is followed with statements that further clarify that a non-hunting judge must see the coon during the allotted shine time or by a majority of the cast when hunting judge is used. I don't think it can be any more clear than that.

Treering the Wrong Dog

Q: Dog A is declared treed for 125 directly in front of the cast members, followed immediately by Dog B. The problem is there's only one dog treering. It is quickly determined that the handler of Dog A called the wrong dog after he opened to our left. How is this scored, and does Dog B move up on tree position?

A: A handler calling the wrong dog will result in called tree position points awarded and minused as outlined under Rule 4(l). This would apply to first offense only. On the second offense the handler and his dog would be scratched in accordance with Rule 6(k) for calling the wrong dog. Because it was determined that Dog A was miscalled for the first tree position, that first tree position of 125 becomes open for Dog B, even though it wasn't called first.

Stationary Rule. A Refresher Course.

Back in the day we struggled with the cumbersome interpretation of how to handle the situations where dogs were treering and the handlers had no intentions of declaring them treed. Rule 6(q) is a basic and necessary requirement in accurately scoring hounds for their work on a nite hunt cast. Although this rule has been in effect for some time now, we do get complaints that some judges tend to abuse Rule 6(o) and want to apply it too soon or might apply it even if they think the dog(s) could very well be treed in a hole or a place other than on a tree. Simply put, a judge should not apply Rule 6(o) in situa-

tions where they think the dog(s) are treed somewhere other than on a tree.

Here is a little refresher course on Rule 6(o). The rule reads as follows:

6. Dogs Will be Scratched

(o) {if a handler fails to declare treed a dog obviously treering (Judge's decision) for a period of five minutes. Dog may be declared treed while the five is running but not after the five has expired. Judge must verify dog to be at a tree before it can be scratched.}

Let's break it down into its most basic components. First, the dog must obviously be treering. That doesn't mean tapping trees or trying to settle. The right to tree a dog should rest with the handler until it becomes obvious that the handler has no intention of treering a dog that is treering solid. This is the Judge's decision.

Once 6(o) is applied, the dog in question must tree for five minutes. Judge this as you would if the dog had been declared treed.

- If you hear the dog bark off the tree, then the five is broken.
- If two minutes gets him, the five is broken.
- If another dog in the cast comes in and is declared treed, the five is broken.

No penalty is assessed. The application of 6(o) is simply ended in each of the situations described above. At any time while the five is running in accordance with 6(q), a handler may elect to declare the dog treed. If the dog is declared treed, 6(o) is ended and you would start a new five minutes on the dog just as you would any time a dog is declared treed. In the event where another dog in the cast is declared treed on that same tree, 6(o) would also be ended. Start the five on the dog that was declared treed and normal tree rules are applied.

Okay, let's say a handler still refuses to tree the dog, and the five minutes in accordance with 6(o) is running. When the five is up, the cast will proceed to that tree. If, on the way in to the tree, the handler asks to declare the dog treed and the five is up, that request must be denied. The dog cannot be declared treed (at that particular tree) after the five minutes of 6(o) has expired. Also, the dog must be seen on a tree before it can be scratched. Not in a hole, bulldoze pile, old barn, or any other place of refuge. The thought process here is that sometimes those tree barks may sound different enough to the handler of the dog that they know the dog is not "right". Someone who does not know the dog may assume the dog is treed solid, when the truth may be he is not on a tree at all. That's why the dog must be seen on a tree. When you get in there and the dog is on a tree, then the dog is scratched. If you arrive to find the dog trailing around or on a fence or something, back on out and let the dog work. There would be no penalty. If the dog is in a hole or place of refuge, the dog may be handled without being declared treed in accordance with Rule 3(b).

It's the handler's responsibility to tell the Judge when the dog strikes and when the dog trees. Competition events are about scoring dogs, and that means the good, bad and indifferent. Any opportunity to cut down on the number of "games" being played in between should be pursued. Rule 6(o) is one of those opportunities.

Who Has the Authority to Assign Non-Hunting Judges?

Q: Do cast members have the authority to assign a non-hunting judge to their cast at their own discretion if there is someone available, such as a spectator, provided everyone agrees?

A: No, cast members do not have the authority to assign a spectator nor anyone else to act as a non-hunting judge on their cast. Only the Master of Hounds or the Club Officials have that authority as outlined under Rule 9. Assigning non-hunting judges should be a cooperative effort between the Master of Hounds and the Club Officials.

Cast members all agreeing to assign an available individual to act as a non-hunting judge is not an option. That would include a situation where only one cast member remains and no other cast members were to stay with that individual. First, we encourage cast members, although withdrawn, to stay with the one remaining cast member left to finish out the hunt and continue acting as voting members. Otherwise, the individual would need to go back to the Master of Hounds and have a non-hunting judge assigned to finish out the hunt. Assigning a spectator to act as a voting member would not be an option either.

**Attention!**

The following person's Nite Hunt Director and Nite Hunt Judging privileges have been suspended until the date listed.

Timmy Murrell • Booneville, Kentucky

Indefinite

Violations to these privileges should be reported to the United Kennel Club.

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