

COONHOUND ADVISOR

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This month's Advisor Column is going to be a continuation of the past couple months, where we have gone into a deep dive into rule and procedural changes you can plan on seeing in the new, January 2023 Rulebook. In addition to this Advisor Column, Allen and I have been regularly discussing these changes in depth in a few of the past episodes on the UKC Hunting Ops Podcast. Refer back to Episodes 22 and 24 of the podcast to listen to these discussions. There will be more coming in the next few weeks so be sure you continue checking back in for more rule clarifications and scenarios.

Dogs Treeing but Not Declared Treed Receive Strike Minus Only

This rule change affects one of the more misapplied and/or misinterpreted rules in the rulebook over the past decade, dogs treeing but not declared treed. The intent of the person who submitted this rule change was to make the rules simpler for hunters and judges alike and that was achieved here. In the set of rules in the 2020 Rulebook, you'll find that to accurately score a dog treeing but not declared treed upon the judge's arrival, you would need to first score the tree. Then you would figure out whether you minus or circle strike points, or whether you award additional tree points to be minused. With this year's rule change, that is all out the window. As of January 2023, a dog found to be treeing but not declared treed when the judge arrives will be minused it's strike points. No additional tree points will be assigned to minus in any scenario.

You will find this change as Rule 4(f) in the Rulebook, and it will read, *if dog declared treed; after three minutes has elapsed no additional dogs can be declared treed at that particular tree. Dog(s) treeing but not declared treed when judge arrives receives minus strike points. Dogs shut-out* on strike will receive no minus strike points.* Refer to Rule 6(f) for Champion Division casts and off game. The rulebook defines shut-out by saying, *when a dog has not been declared struck before the first dog has been declared treed. Dog is shut out only if it trees on tree it was shut out on. Otherwise, strike points remain live.* From this we can gather that the only time a dog can be off the hook for minus strike points while being treed but not declared treed upon the judge's arrival, is when the dog is shut-out on strike. Rule 4(f) also mentioned Rule 6(f), which simply tells us that in a Champion Division cast, dogs will be scratched for running, treeing, and molesting off game. So even if a dog is treeing but not declared treed when the judge arrives, and off game is seen, that dog can still be scratched in a Champion Division cast.

So, let's talk scenarios to make it seem even more simple than the above paragraphs may let on.

1. Dog A is struck for 100, Dog B is struck for 75, and then Dog A is treed for 125. You come into Dog A's tree and find Dog B treeing but not declared treed, the coon is seen, and Dog A is plussed. What happens to Dog B? You simply minus Dog B's strike points.

2. Next drop, same thing. Dog A is struck for 100, Dog B is struck for 75, and then Dog A is treed for 125. You find yourself heading to Dog A's tree again and there is Dog B when you arrive, treeing but not declared treed. The tree is slick, and Dog A is minused. What happens to Dog B here? Again, you minus Dog B's strike points. Nothing else.

3. On the third drop, Dog A is struck for 100, Dog B is struck for 75, and then Dog A is treed for 125. Again, you arrive at the tree to find Dog B treeing but not declared treed on a big hollow den tree with Dog A. Dog A's points are circled but what happens to Dog B? You guessed it, minus Dog B's strike points.

4. Last drop of the night, luckily for Dog B's handler. Dogs are recast and Dog A jams a coon, striking for 100 and treeing for 125. On the way to the tree, Dog B can be heard, and he is struck for 75 with a line under it, indicating he was shut-out. When the judge gets to the tree, sure enough, Dog B is there with Dog A, treeing but not declared tree. The coon is found, and Dog A is plussed up. What happens to Dog B? In this situation, since Dog B is shut-out, the strike points will be deleted and no minus will be given. A dog being shut-out takes precedence over minusing strike points per Rule 4(f).

Remember, this rule change applies only for dogs treeing but not declared treed BEFORE the judge arrives. Dogs coming into a tree **after** the judge arrives, still need to refer to Rule 5(b) in the rulebook, which reads, *no dog to receive minus points for coming into tree after Judge arrives unless a coon is seen and the dogs treeing are awarded plus points.*

Six Minute Strike Time

One of the easier of this year's rule changes was changing Rule 4(d) to read, *strike points will be minus if none of the declared struck dogs open within 6 minutes.* This is a simple change, that won't require much clarifying here. Declared struck dogs now have six (6) minutes to open instead of eight (8) minutes before taking strike minus. And with hunt times getting shorter, this change does make sense. For those of you that hate change, just think, you have two less minutes to listen for that dog that blew out of the country before minusing that dog's strike points.

Removing the Stipulation of Hearing a Dog Open Before Recasting

In the 2020 rule change, all but one scenario where a dog was leash locked unwillingly was removed from the rulebook. With the 2023 rule change, that last situation is being removed and there will no longer be a period of time where a dog is leash locked, without the handler agreeing

to do so. The rule that is being removed, is the stipulation in Rule 11(d) that read, *after being scored, dog shall not be released until another dog struck in on track, or on tree, opens*. In the 2023 version of the Official Coonhound Rulebook, Rule 11(d) will read, *after being scored, dog(s) may be released immediately or led a reasonable distance (judges' decision) from scored tree before recasting*. No need to run the 2-minute or 6-minute clocks on declared struck or treed dogs before recasting, just cut your hound loose (at the judge's discretion of course).

Handlers will still retain the option to keep their scored hound on the leash if any other dog in the cast is declared treed. That is clarified in the 2nd and 3rd sentences of Rule 11(d) by saying, *However, if another dog in cast is declared treed, handler(s) has the option to recast or keep scored dog on leash. Handlers opting to keep dog on leash may not recast dog until next opportunity arises (next tree is scored or dog leaves tree)*.

Same as it has always been, upon releasing the scored hound, it will be important to head to the last spot you heard other hounds in the cast that were declared struck or treed to run appropriate times. In the case of the recently released dog opening up and being struck, the judge needs to make it a priority to split the difference the best way possible to accurately judge all dogs in the cast that are declared struck.

Hunt Directors Participating in Their Events

One of the most requested changes I've received in my tenure as Coonhound Program Manager is finally happening. Starting in January 2023, Hunt Directors will be able to participate in the UKC licensed event that they are officiating. What does this mean? Hunt Directors have always been able to enter their dog in the hunt, but they had to have a handler for their hound, as they were tasked to stay at the clubhouse to deal with issues as they arose. With this change, Hunt Directors will be able to actually participate in the event they are officiating, whether it be hunting a dog, or acting as a non-hunting guide or judge. You can definitely see where this change is going to help the clubs on the local club level that sometimes struggle to find the help needed to run a successful event.

One of the positives that will come from this, is ensuring that clubs are using knowledgeable, experienced individuals to run the hunt, draw casts, and complete the final paperwork that gets turned into UKC. This should help cut down on mistakes and/or issues that we are seeing more frequently as the Hunt Director format rises in popularity. I have a feeling there are going to be a lot of happy spouses out there when they find out they won't have to sit in the clubhouse all night anymore.

Slams – All Dogs Draw Together

For the past four or five years, slam events have been run the same as any standard UKC licensed event, with dogs being drawn into two different categories, Registered and Champion. In January 2023 the slam events will revert

back to how they were originated, with all dogs being drawn out together, regardless of their championship title.

This is another change that we have heard plenty of requests for, over the past few years. The main crowd asking for this change has been the host clubs. With this change, they will cut down on guides and judges they need for an event, just by getting rid of sometime unnecessary casts. A situation that you may see regularly, would be a 12-dog entry, 7 Registered and 5 Champions/Grands. In 2022, the club would have four casts, one 4-dog cast and one 3-dog cast in the Registered Division, with a 3-dog cast and a 2-dog cast in the Champion Division. Now, in 2023, the club will be sending three 4-dog casts to the woods, cutting down on a guide and judge used.

This will work out well for the hunters too, on the payout side. In the above scenario, the prize pool would theoretically be split between four cast winners in 2022, if there were no dead casts. In 2023, barring any dead casts, the prize money would be split between three winners, making for a larger payout for all involved. Hopefully this change ends up being a positive for clubs and hunters alike.

Definition of Implied Scratch Added

One phrase that long time readers of this Advisor Column may be familiar with is, implied scratch. Simply put, an implied scratch occurs for a hound or handler in a cast doing something that the rulebook specifically tells them not to do, or not doing something that the rulebook specifically tells them to do when no penalty is notated. To make things simpler for judges and event officials, the definition of the implied scratch has been added to the "Scratching Offenses" section of the rulebook in 2023. The newly added Rule 6(x) now reads, *Implied scratch (For violating a stated rule when no specific penalty is noted.)*

This is a topic that I wrote about fairly recently in this column and with this one getting lengthy with lots of information, I would point you toward the November 2021 article to read an in-depth article related to Implied Scratches. You can find that column in the November 2021 issue of Coonhound Bloodlines, or in the Advisor Column archives on ukcdogs.com.

Less Rule Changes

The past couple rule change years have been very productive for UKC as a company, in my opinion. I think right now, we have a strong set of rules, that need little to no tweaking. Of course, there are always going to be rules that you and I aren't going to agree with, but if the main focus is awarding the best dog with a cast win at the end of the night, I believe the rules we currently have are set to do just that in most cases. Having said that, after discussions with the breed associations at Autumn Oaks, the decision has been made to increase the time between rule change years from three years to five years moving forward.

Again, we hope this change gives people the

