

# COONHOUND ADVISOR

Trevor Wade

Just when I think the dark, cold winter will last forever, we get a day like today that shows that spring is approaching soon. It's no secret that spring is my favorite season. Warm but not hot temperatures here in southwest Michigan, baseball on every day and night to watch, and spring travel season all highlight my favorite time of year. The fact that my allergies will make me feel miserable for the next few months does little to dampen my spirits after months of gloomy skies, and 5 PM sunsets.

At this point of the calendar, we've been on the road a little. Grand American, Winter Classic, Southeastern Treeing Walker Days, etc. We've had a couple months of events for people to get their feet wet with the new rules. Allen and I taped a podcast today, March 1st, where we talked about some of the early feedback to the new rules that went into effect on January 1st. You can find that on the UKC Hunting Ops Podcast with an estimated air date of March 8th. I figured I would also put those thoughts into words here for the Advisor Column's faithful readers.

I haven't had the first question yet about the eight-minute strike clock going to six minutes. The same can be said about stripping the first offense warnings for handlers failing to strike their dog on or before the 3rd bark, or calling the wrong dog. The other three have led to a few different calls and discussions which are good things. Let's talk about them here.

## Thermal Imaging Devices

There seems to be a little bit of confusion because the only mention of thermal imaging devices in the rulebook is found under Rule 6 which lists all scratching offenses. Rule 6(t) reads that handlers will be scratched, *For use of scoring aids other than light, mechanical squaller, or thermal imaging device. Laser pointer light is permitted.*

The two words that some seem to be overlooking are **other than**. Lights and squallers have been listed under this section for years but now that thermals are in there, I think people have become paranoid. It's alright to relax. Use your thermal. Find that hot spot in the tree and show them the coon. It will be a good deal for everyone, especially with the foliage coming back on the trees over the next couple months.

## Treeing But Not Declared Treed

This topic is the early favorite to win most discussed rule for 2023, defending its crown from the past five years or more. Honestly, this might have been a little confusing to some in last year's rulebook, due to the fact that you had to score the tree before knowing how to score the dog. With the new rulebook, this has become much easier to deal with.

I would recommend taking out your rulebook and either highlighting, or circling Rule 4(f) under the Strike Minus

section. It reads, *if dog declared treed; after three minutes has elapsed no additional dog 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.*

Pretty much everything you need is right there. Dogs treeing but not declared treed when judge arrives receives minus strike points. That means regardless of whether the tree is plussed, minused, or circled, you minus the strike points. There is no mention of awarding next available tree points because that is no longer something that happens. You simply minus the strike points. The next sentence tells us that a dog shut-out on strike will receive no minus strike points. Pretty straight forward as there are no strike points in that instance to minus with the dog being shut-out.

I will just briefly mention that this rule we just talked about had to do with dogs treeing but not declared treed when the judge arrives. If the judge and cast are there, and a dog comes into the cast at the tree, you would refer to Rule 5(b) (yes highlight that one too). 5(b) is under the Circle Points section and 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.* Let's break that down for you. If a dog comes into a tree after the Judge arrives and a coon is seen, the dog will get it's strike points minused. If the tree is minused, circled, or even off game seen, the dog that comes in after the Judge arrives will get it's strike points circled.

## Recasting a Hound with Declared Struck/Treed Hounds

This one seems to be causing the most questions early on for some reason. The bulk of the questions seem to be based on the six-minute clock on dogs declared struck in relation to recasting hounds coming out of a scoring situation. And while historically those two things have gone hand in hand, they are no longer married to each other and have no bearing on each other.

Let's take a look at Rule 11(d) which is all about recasting your hound. The first three sentences there read, *After being scored, dog(s) may be released immediately or led a reasonable distance (judge's decision) from scored tree before recasting. However, if another dog in cast is declared treed, hander(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).*

You will find no option to keep your dog on leash while running the six-minute clock on struck dogs. In fact, when you are pulling your hound off of a scoring situation, your first priority should be the hound on your leash. Get somewhere and cut your hound loose, then worry about running the time on struck hounds.

If another dog in the cast has been declared treed, that's when you have the option to keep your dog on the

## Competition: Coonhound Advisor

leash as the second and third sentences of Rule 11(d) tells us. That's a decision you'll have to make fairly quickly and remember, if you decide to keep your hound on leash, you will be bound to that decision until the next opportunity to recast arises which will be after you score that next dog's tree, or if that declared treed hound were to leave the tree you were in route to.



### **ATTENTION!**

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

**Justin Crockett • Senatobia, MS**

**May 1, 2024**

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



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