

## Responsibility vs. Heat of the moment and other comments (June 2005)

Flame suit on!

I too have read all these posts that were generated, with great interest and often dismay, after the "Grins Incident". I have been introduced to this sport in an entirely different culture. I am not saying it is better or worse, just different. An owner questioned what went wrong. Responses ran the gambit from the very technical to the very whimsical. However, the responses that seemed to be generated the most were flames and those that talked about responsibility. I will never argue against the fact that the ultimate responsibility of the safety our pets, whether they are couch potatoes, show, or performance pets, lies with the owner or handler. "Just pull your dog if you feel ~" Easier said than done. In my observation, competition events of all kinds have three types of competitors. 1. Novices (beginners with no real knowledge about the capabilities of their animals) that we knowledgeable competitors have convinced to bring out their pets to try it. 2. Competitors of all experience levels that will do almost anything for that ribbon and title. 3. Those that fall somewhere in between 1 & 2. Most competitors fall in number 3, but it is those that fall into 1 & 2 that there must be rules to protect the safety of the pets.

What would be wrong making a rule that stated something like: if the on-site temperature reaches "x" degrees the trial will be stopped. (in Germany  $x = 90$  degrees) If prelims have been run those will be the final standings, if the prelims have not been run then either reschedule or cancel. If you are not willing to do this, make it mandatory to have an on site vet with intravenous capability and adequate cool down/warming facilities, if the forecasted temps are in the dangerous range (high or low).

What would be wrong with a rule that stated: re-runs should have a minimum of "x" minutes between runs? What would be wrong with a tiebreaker rule that prevented endless run-offs? I've seen some folks in all breeds willing to run their dogs into the ground for a placement.

A lot of folks will say we have enough rules and regulations. I often commented that the Germans had too many rules on the books for performance events. As with most rules however, they have been developed because of some abuse of the system. As an example, you would not think that in an amateur event you would have people drugging their animals to either enhance performance or mask a medical condition. In Germany 1 euro of every entry fee goes toward the cost of random drug testing. You'd be surprised at the amount of "respectable" folks they catch drugging their dogs. Most are not performance enhancement but pain meds, muscle relaxers, and antibiotic drugs to mask a medical problem.

The I.I. is not a local trial but "THE" ASFA event of the year. I, as a participant, expect it to be a large step above. I will take this moment to thank all those that worked so hard to put on each years events. I have been to only 2 and have been very impressed by the dedication and hard work that all you that put these events on do. As in all major events there should be someone or a group responsible for a lessons learned report. What worked? What did not work as planned? What failed? How do we correct the failures next time? How can we do it better? Then pass this on to the next people in charge in the form of an I.I. guidebook.

At this years I.I., I was a tenter. (great privacy, plenty of shade, and personal toilet) It worked really well for me as it was a 10 minute walk to the water pool, then another 5 minutes to the field on Saturday. Then after the run 5 to 10 minutes to the water and 15 to 30 minutes back to the tenting area. This was perfect for me to observe the dogs as the adrenaline wore off and they started to return to normal. I take pulses before a run and every 5 minutes (if I can) after a run and analyze the return to normal time. I know what my boys are when fresh and healthy so I know when there are problems when it takes too long to return to normal. I could see how the heat was affecting them. One of them did really well in the heat the other did not. If a second run-off for my hound on Saturday would have been required I would have forfeited. In the past I have had a dog go into heat stress, heat stroke, heat exhaustion (one of those) and if it were not for an onsite river and onsite vet with the right equipment I would have lost him.

I would also advocate choosing 2 primary sites to hold the I.I. Somewhere central east and central west and alternate each year. Time of the year is not as important. The Europeans hold their Oval Championship in June and Coursing Championship in September. Both timeframes present their own problems pending location. Having a known location, familiarization of the site will help solve the unknowns plus provide better travel planning and accessibility for the participants.

I would have a limited entry where the top 10 from each region were invited (not free of charge) along with the previous years stake winners and then an open entry with qualification requirements similar to what we currently use, that would close when the predetermined entry number was reached. Organization of the event could be rotated by region.

So I have rattled on enough but hope to have put a little different perspective of thought to those of you who believe that we all have great judgment when in the heat of competition. It's alright – he can run 1 more time. Just pull em – How about some guidelines that protect our dogs from us.

Tom Golcher

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