

COONHOUND ADVISOR

Trevor Wade

Ah, a brief reprieve from talking about spring major events to talk rules. Sometimes the most relaxing part of my day is scouring through years of old Advisor Columns written by Allen and Todd to find scenarios that I hadn't really heard discussed or even thought about before. This is a kind of different approach than I've had in the past couple columns where I focused on rules we have beaten in the dirt with discussions over the years.

Sometimes I wonder if there are better ways to deliver these interpretations to the masses. I would be lying if I said I didn't get perplexed sometimes when I field a call from someone who informs me, I should share the interpretations to all, like how to score dogs treeing but not declared treed. You mean besides the rulebook that is printed and online, the advisor column that is printed and online, the podcast that is available on any platform you may use plus YouTube. If you really want to find it, you can. If you ever need help finding it, let me know. Sticked at the top of the forums I have a bit of a Table of Contents over the past 4ish years with each column I've shared and the links for each one. That may be a good place to bookmark on your computer or phone.

Now let's get to a couple interesting topics that Allen wrote about back in 2015. Hope you enjoy this one.

Declared Treed on Previously Scored Tree then Left Tree

Q: I have a question regarding a hunt I participated in as a spectator. In a four-dog cast all dogs were scored on the same tree. The dogs were all recast from that tree, and they all treed on another tree approximately 30 yards from the first tree. That tree was circled. From there they were again recast in the same woods.

Dog A went back and treed on the second tree and the handler, knowing his dog went back to the same tree, declared the dog struck and treed. It was obvious that it was the same tree they had just previously scored because we could see it from where we were standing. Dog A treed for approximately two minutes on said tree then left it and started treeing on the very first tree that had already been scored. The handler did not declare the dog treed on this tree. The judge minused the dog's tree points for leaving the previously scored tree but then allowed the handler to handle the dog on the first previously scored tree and deleted his strike points. Did the judge score this situation correctly?

A: Yes, the judge scored the situation correctly. There are a few things we need to keep in mind or know about declaring dogs struck and declaring dogs treed regardless of any previously scored trees being involved in your situation. Those are as follows:

- A dog **MUST** be declared struck on or before the third

bark after one minute of being released. There are no exceptions.

- A dog that has been declared treed by the handler **MUST** stay where it was called at regardless. There are no exceptions.
 - Dogs may be handled at a previously scored tree without applying a three-minute clock so long as they are not declared treed.
1. After the first minute of casting a dog, or dogs, that dog must be declared struck on or before the third bark. That is true even if a dog went back and started treeing on a tree that has obviously been previously scored. The dog may be barking every breath, but the handler is not required to declare it struck prior to the first minute. However, unless already handled the dog **must be declared struck on or before the third bark after the minute is up**. This is a key thing to keep in mind when it comes to declaring dogs struck after the first minute of a dog being turned loose. There simply are no exceptions.
 2. Anytime a dog is **declared treed** the dog **must stay where it was called treed** and stay for the duration of the three minutes (or until all dogs are declared) be it a previously scored treed, a hole in the ground or otherwise. Again, there are no exceptions to this. It's an important thing for judges and handlers to be aware of. That was the case in the scenario given above. The dog was declared treed therefore he or she became subject to tree rules. When the dog left that first previously scored tree there was no option other than to minus the dogs' tree points.
 3. Handlers are not required to declare a dog treed that is treeing if the dog is obviously on a previously scored tree. Handlers should be allowed to go in and handle the dog. If the dog was declared struck you delete those strike points. If such a dog can be handled prior to one minute of having been turned loose, then the dog would have no strike points on the scorecard to delete. Again, the dog in question was scored correctly by the judge on this last previously scored tree because it was not declared treed. Now it has its strike points deleted.

Strike Positions Available When Points are Split

Q: Recently I was the judge in a cast where a situation arose I had never had happen before. On the first turnout we split the strike points between all four dogs in the cast. Dogs A, B and C were declared treed. We scored the tree and cut them back to Dog D who was still trailing. The question is, what strike points are available to the first dog that is declared struck? Is it 50 or 25? As the judge I awarded all three dogs with 25 when they struck in with Dog D.

A: When you split the strike points between four dogs, even though each dog was given 62½ points, all four positions are taken. Forget about the strike points of 62½.

Think of it as positions. All four positions were taken so the only position available would have been 25 for each dog that was recast to Dog D. Yes, you scored it correctly.

Dealing with Scorecard Question and a Lack of Time

Q: I have been hunting for a few years in UKC events and for the most part have really enjoyed myself. Scoring nite hunts is not an exact science and hunters are regularly called upon to make judgement calls. Most of the time things go smoothly, but on rare occasions a decision may be disputed. The coonhound rulebook is fairly clear as to resolving disagreements over scoring. However, I am unsure of the proper actions to take with regards to section 14 of the Rulebook. I am particularly interested in the phrase, "It may be scored with a question mark (?) and reviewed by the Master of Hounds/Hunt Director Panel." The following example describes a scoring decision that is made that would have a significant effect on the cast and the rest of the evening:

A dog has 425+ and 300- and is leading the cast. The judge gives the dog 100- and puts it out of the hunt. The call is questioned but the cast votes to let the decision stand. The person who owns the dog receiving minus points, asks to have a question mark put on the card.

My main question is, when do we check with the Master of Hounds? This has not always been an easy question for me to answer and I would like your help. Here are just a few of the complications that I have witnessed at our hunts:

- * In our part of the country, it is not unusual to take an hour to drive to the clubhouse. Then the questions take a minimum of half an hour to explain to the Master of Hounds. Then you still have to drive back to your hunting spots to finish the cast and still have time to make it back before deadline.
- * In many instances the decision is based on a judgement call and the Master of Hounds has conflicting information from cast members to work with.
- * Some handlers develop a pattern of questioning any call that is not in their favor.
- * These complications bring to mind the following questions:
- * Is there a point when a cast can vote to complete the hunt "as is" and leave all questions until the end of the night? Even if a dog may be wrongfully put out of the hunt?
- * Is there any time that you might deem a person who questions a call to be "stirring up trouble?"
- * Are there some decisions that a Master of Hounds should not overturn? I really would like to hear your thoughts for applying the rules and dealing with questions. Nite Hunt cast questions can be complicated and emotional issues. In my area, some judgement calls are debated for years. Do you have any "common sense" you can share?

A: I don't know if you would consider the procedure for dealing with this situation common sense or not. It is basically a matter of knowing how UKC interprets the situation and what precedence has already been set for dealing with it when it comes up. There really is no way for well-intentioned competitors to know what to do without prior instruction from UKC. So, it is a great question that I would be happy to help you with. Let's get with it.

Some UKC rule historians will remember back some 30 years or so when the rule was amended to actually be less defining in addressing this situation. The old rule used to say if there was a question, score with a question mark and check with the Master of Hounds later. The way it was written, even the casts who were just around the corner from the clubhouse and could easily come back, get a question answered, and still have plenty of time to finish their hunt, were refusing to do so and pointing to the word "later" to back them up. The handler with a legitimate question, the answer to which depended on whether or not they continued in the event, was left high and dry. A change had to be made.

The Rules Committee addressed the situation and felt that by dropping the word "later," a cast would have the opportunity to address the situation immediately if it was feasible to do so. Because it gave the cast more options, UKC had to make an interpretation on when the cast should return to get a question answered. I'll give you UKC's interpretation then we will break it down and look at it. The interpretation is this: If the situation in question is one that will put a dog out of the hunt, or develops later into a situation that will put a dog out of the hunt and, if it is feasible for the cast to return to the clubhouse to get the questioned answered and still finish their hunt by the deadline, then the cast must make every effort to get the question answered by the Master of Hounds.

A situation that will put a dog out of the hunt is self-explanatory. An example of a situation that would later develop into one that will put a dog out of the hunt would be where a dog is minused 100 points on the first drop and the situation is questioned. Later in the hunt, this same dog acquires enough additional minus points to put him out. At that point, if it is feasible, the first question should go back to the MOH to be resolved. We use the word feasible which is iffy at best when it comes to knowing how much time it is going to take to get everything done. UKC maintains that you need to be pretty darn confident that you can get everything done before it is worth the risk of nobody getting to finish the hunt. Keep one thing in mind, the Master of Hounds does not have the authority to extend the hunt deadline for a particular cast just because they came in to get a question answered. The advantage of an extended deadline is only afforded to those who get left alone in a cast and must return to the clubhouse to pick up a non-hunting Judge.

The answer to each of your specific questions is this.

A cast is in essence voting to leave the call “as is” if they decide that, time wise, it is not feasible to get the questioned answered. However, if there is time, the cast cannot vote to not go back for an answer. You need to be careful about considering the asking of a question stirring up trouble. Although, I would say that yes, if a person questioned literally every decision that was made, it could be considered stirring up trouble. You would have to be able to prove that an individual was intentionally trying to disrupt the cast. You asked if there were any decisions that the Master of Hounds should not overturn. I would say that the only question a Master of Hounds cannot overturn is one that was procedurally, not correctly questioned. In that case, the MOH has his hands tied. If the procedure to ask a question is followed correctly, then I can’t think of a situation where the Master of Hounds would not have the authority to overturn. We all know that some situations, depending on the Judge’s decision and that of the majority of the cast, may be next to impossible to overturn, but I don’t believe any are impossible. The Master of Hounds has the authority to go against the Judge and the majority of the cast but it doesn’t happen often and rightfully so.

And there you are, my thoughts and UKC’s interpretation on this subject. I hope I have been able to help!



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
Andrew Ratliff • Winchester, KY • January 1, 2025
Cliff Monroe • Mooresboro, NC • Indefinitely
Chris Simmons • Cramerton, NC • Indefinitely

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



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