

A Webinar Series on Field Trial Judging Topics

Facilitated by the Women's Field Trial Club



THE WOMEN'S FIELD TRIAL CLUB recently hosted a 3-part webinar series where experienced field trial judges discussed several topics related to judging field trials. While most judging seminars have traditionally been conducted in person, this series went digital to reach a wider audience. The webinars covered essential topics such as Judging Marking, Blinds, and Time Management for Judges.

To provide a sneak peek into the wealth of knowledge shared in this series, we present 2-3 intriguing question and answer summaries from each webinar. Thank you to the Women's Field Trial Club for facilitating this opportunity and encouraging excellence in field trial judging.

The Women's Field Trial Club has made this webinar series available to all at: www.womensftc.org



WEBINAR ONE – JUDGING MARKING

Judges: Lou Vreeland & Mitch Patterson

Q1 The rule book states that a dog that stays in the area of the fall and quickly and systematically hunts it out has done both a creditable and intelligent job of marking. How do you then determine what dogs should be dropped based on relative merits?

A Lou: "I usually give them two strikes, and an extended hunt on one mark would be a strike."

A Mitch: "In marking tests, it is relative to the work of all the other dogs. Normally, I don't look at the line to the mark. I like to see where the dog lands and starts his hunt – that's important to me. If he hunts in an area where there is no bird and then [eventually] gets the bird, that's not a mark. But it really becomes relevant the more dogs you watch.

There is an old joke, 'you watch the first several dogs and write 'out' on your sheet. Then you watch the next 10 dogs and go back and correct the first few to 'standing' because their work became very nice as you watch the rest of the work.'"

Q2 How do you recognize a well-placed mark?

A Lou: "Hard to get to! Lots of factors on the way, like terrain changes. The dog has to know where the bird is to end up there."

A Mitch: "It's hard to get to and they must dig it out once they get there. And you've put factors in their way."

WEBINAR TWO - JUDGING BLINDS

Judges: Laura Parrott & Bill Kennedy

Q1 How do you judge a handler who attempts to handle a hazard or obstacle (a brush pile, log, cover, puddle of water, keyhole) but is not successful?

A Laura: "I'm not going to judge it harshly – I do not judge keyholes or brush piles. I might put it out there to make you handle. My favorite thing is a stylish, hard-running dog that sits good and takes a cast. That's what I'm looking for. I'm not going to exclusively judge a brush pile as you're in or out."

Q2 How do you feel about dry pops, poison birds or sluices?

A Laura: "You need to know what you need out of your blind; it depends on your first series. You've seen the marks and generally know if you need more in your blind. As far as a dry pop or sleuce, that's a conversation between you and your co-judge. But I see a poison bird as a bird that the dog will see on the ground, or smell as he goes by... I'm not going to put a poison bird out that the dog needs to run right by at 200 yards. [If I throw a poison bird] it will be within 80 yards – most well-trained all-age dogs can do that. [Poison birds punish] those dogs that aren't quite there yet, they're excited, and you'll have to throw them out. So I don't think you need poison birds – there are other ways to evaluate dogs."

Q3 When do you decide to run a land/water blind combination? And is the water blind by invitation?

A Bill: "Everything depends on your grounds, weather, and mechanics. A double blind can be a great way to save time, but you've got to have the right location, help and wind to run a land/water blind combination. And no, the water blind is not by invitation. You can get yourself in a whole lot of trouble starting to drop dogs before others have run ... you pigeonhole yourself. It's much easier and saves more time to let everyone run both blinds unless there is an obvious failure."

WEBINAR THREE - TIME MANAGEMENT FOR JUDGES

Judges: Julie Cole & Larry Morgan

Q1 What general time management tips do you have for new Judges?

A Julie: "You can never get an hour back, so whether you have a small or large trial, you cannot waste any time at all. Spend the time on set-up day to ask the questions; Can we run here? Is it safe? Where's the traffic? Do we have a set up dog? This makes sure your grounds are safe and you're not risking injury. Then ask questions about your workers; Can they throw? Have they done this before? Be sure to talk with your workers and be sure they are comfortable with what you are asking them to do. Just be sure to get as much information as you can on set up day."

A Larry: "The sun is always going down at the field trial, it's never going up! So, mechanics are critical. I suggest the day before you get there, read the rule book. I do this before every trial to remind myself of minor and major faults, etc. When you show up to the trial, be ready. Have your book in order, pages numbered and know the starting number. I suggest that every morning you're judging, be there an hour before you're scheduled to start. Things can and will go wrong. You must be ready to handle them and have the appropriate time to do so."

Q2 How can the field trial committee, the stake chair, and the marshal assist judges with time management issues?

A Julie: "They are your best friend! They are not there to wait on you, they are your partners. The more you can do to communicate with them and treat them fairly, the better. If there is a new person or kid throwing birds, ask someone to help them learn how to throw. Don't just put them out in the field. Make sure radios work. Make sure the kids have comfortable clothing. If it's raining, pause to ask if any of the help needs additional gear. Do everything you can to make sure everyone is taken care of."

A Larry: "Make sure to discuss logistics of everything, especially traffic. Ideally, you don't want to have people walking a quarter mile to get to the line. Especially in the open where people are running multiple dogs. You don't want the trucks right behind you, but you've got to work that out with the stake chair. Work with the marshal to understand where the rebirds are – take advantage of that time to chat with your co-Judge, etc." ■

