



NFC, FC Aikane Hokulani "Lani"

Owners: John M. Bishop &
Susan Takemoto
Handler: Paul McGagh

2016 FIELD TRIAL COMMITTEE

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"Doing My Part"

ECSCA Field Trial Committee

FTC Minutes
Tuesday, July 19, 2016
8:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Members Present: Deb Strohl, Mike Schroeder, Vicky Thomas, Keith Meissner, Pete Rizzo, Dennis Joannides, Terry Reckart

Guest Present: Bethann Wiley Chairwoman of the Hall of Fame

A. Call to order A call to order was made at 8:05pm EST

B. Approval of Minutes Dennis moved to approve the minutes, Deb seconded, and all were in favor Note: We are attaching an article that should have been part of the minutes of the prior meeting.

C. Approval of the agenda Dennis moved to approve the minutes, Deb seconded, all were in favor

D. Hall of Fame Discussion: Guest Bethann Wiley. Bethann gave a report of items that the HoF Committee has accomplished since the beginning of the year. The HoF Committee has rewritten the bylaws in order to make them easier to read and correct grammatical errors and duplication. They also eliminated the Advisory Panel as the committee felt that this was more of a hindrance and may have been preventing people to submit nominations.

Dennis wanted a clarification from the HOF Committee regarding the rights American Cocker Spaniels have to the ECS space at the BDM? He suggested the HOF Committee review the rewritten language.

Bethann has posted to Facebook and fieldcockers.com a reminder that the HOF is seeking nominations for both dogs & people to be included in the HoF. Vicky was concerned that if people don't use Facebook or look at fieldcockers.com they wouldn't receive info about nominations. Bethann will send the info to Deb or Keith and then Deb can send out the info with the FTC minutes. Dennis inquired about the nomination process. Basically anyone can nominate a dog or person they feel is worthy of being in the HoF. There is a form which can be downloaded from the HoF website (englishcockerhalloffame.com), filled out and sent to the HoF committee.

Terry asked if the display that had been set up with photos and video at the Hall of Fame was still up and running. Bethann reported that AR Ginn had recently visited the HoF and the display, as well as the showcase, trophies and photos are all in working order and displayed nicely. Dennis would

like the video display that Terry has developed for the HoF to be accessible on the HoF website. Terry & Bethann will work on getting the photos to the web site designer for the HoF.

Bethann stated that any questions about the HoF can go to the HoF website and find a list of all HoF committee members with contact info and people can direct any questions there.

Mike stated that the Fox Valley Club is considering hosting a trial concurrent with the HoF Induction Ceremonies which will be February 11, 2017. They are considering running a trial on Friday 2/10, Sat. 2/11 and finishing on Sun 2/12. There is a concern about finding Guns etc if the Springer trials are running at the same time. Another concern about running on the same dates as the Springers is it might eliminate any Springer Handlers who also own Cockers. Mike stated that there are not many Springer owners who are running Cockers so it won't really matter. Dennis suggested that running sequential trials with Cockers and Springers would be a workable solution, but the Springers already have Sequential Open & Amateurs already so that wouldn't work.

Vicky stated that it looks like the clubs are trying to create a circuit of trials in the south with the ECSCA North Carolina (Mommerts) trial the week before the HOF, then the HOF trial in Tennessee, followed by Texas. This circuit might help draw out of state trialers to the southern trials. She added there is a new club in formation called Wateree in North Carolina that would also like to "dove tail" with these Southern trial dates and as soon as the above trials are solidified, we will let Wateree know the open weekends. But, we all agreed weather is a problem in early February and it might be too many trials in a row and doubtful anyone would go to all 4 trials.

It was noted that The Bird Dog Hall of Fame has established dates for their ceremony and we can't move them to a later spring weekend with better weather. Dennis felt that if the Springer entries are low then a sequential trial would work. Vicky stated she had asked the Chairman of the HOF Springer Trial and currently, they were not receptive to that idea. We all agreed Fox Valley is a very capable club and that they shouldn't be micromanaged by the FTC. We will trust them to work out the best plan.

Dennis wanted people to know that there is now a new "Wall of Champions" plaque at the HOF. Any Field Championship dog can have his name included by making a \$100 donation per dog. This plaque joins one that accounts for all the early Cockers FC's, thanks to several donors. If anyone wants to have a plaque of their FC dog posted on the Wall of Champions they can contact Pete Rizzo.

Keith stated that the HoF needs to find a revenue source each year rather than relying on donors from a small group of trialers. They are considering either a Field Trial or Hunt Test to help generate income. Vicky stated that if we had an Amateur National Championship in the spring hosted by the HoF Committee the trial might generate both income for the HoF and interest in the Hall of Fame. It was agreed that this event would be better held in either March or April.

The FTC was polled with the following question, "Do you think the Cocker community is ready to have an Amateur Championship. There were 7 yes answers and 1 no as we felt Bethann also deserved a vote for spending so much time at our meeting. The FTC decided to put this on a future agenda to determine how we will proceed.

The FTC would like to thank Bethann for attending the conference call and answering questions and giving the FTC a lot of information on the HoF.

- E. Spring Trial dates and New Club formation in South. Tabled to till the next meeting

Unfinished Business:

A. Gun Committee:

1. Comments from circulation of Gunning Committee Document. Terry had forwarded the Gunning Document to Dave Barto and the Gun Committee. There was concern about the language in one section but Terry felt that it was remedied. A vote was held and it was unanimous that the FTC has finished and accepted the Gunning Committee Document in its current form and the final document is attached at the end of the minutes. We will forward this to the ECSCA BOD for approval.

The FTC is calling for nominations for the Gun Committee. If anyone would like to nominate a qualified person for the Gunning Committee please contact any FTC member with the name before August 15th.

- B. 2017 NCC Date For the 2017 NCC it has been recommended to change the date from our traditional last week in October to the first weekend in November due to the heat in Kansas in October. Not only will this help ensure the dogs are running in cool weather but will also open up an additional week in the fall trial season.
- C. Judges List: There are still some inaccuracies in the Judges List. We are pushing to have it completed so it will help Trial Clubs in making their spring judge selections!
- D. Bixby Award nominations. The **Bixby award nominations will close August 31st!** Please submit a Name, Biography and list of reasons why it is felt that the nomination is deserving of the Bixby Award.

The Harold S. Bixby Memorial Service Award Awarded for Service to the Sport

This award recognizes those individuals who have made significant contributions to our sport over many years and exemplify the high standards of Harold Bixby. It is presented at the discretion of the Field Trial Committee of the ECSCA which selects the recipient after reviewing nominations from the field.

New Business:

I. 2016 NCC

Deb recently toured the 2016 NCC and reported that the grounds for all 5 series have great cover and there is approximately 660 acres available. Deb also toured the Headquarters hotel which she says “is exceptional” and dogs will be allowed in the room free of charge. There is a perfect area to air out dogs adjacent to the hotel. The banquet and welcome dinner will also be held at the headquarters hotel.

The 1st and 2nd grounds are 12 minutes from the headquarter hotel. The Committee is having a tent and access to the 1st & 2nd series will be right out the back of the tent. The 3rd & 4th is a short ride down the road and the field cover has broken areas of brush and small trees. The broom and switch grass cover looks really nice and will be exceptional after a frost. The 5th series will be held in a large 350 yards long tree row with good cover which should accommodate 8 dogs in a beat. All 5 series have no obstructions ie..houses, roads etc. to block shooting lanes. There are 2 areas that could be used for water

series, 1 is a quarry that has clear water with no obstructions. Photos will be posted soon. (See addendum at end of Minutes)

- II.** 2017 NCC Judges Nominations- The FTC is requesting the field trial clubs and trial committees submit their nominations for the **2017 NCC Judges**. All nominations must meet the criteria (see below). Please email your nomination to Vicky at gigvicky@aol.com on or before **August 31, 2016**. Please list every trial your prospective candidate has judged.

National Cocker Championship (NCC) Field Trial selection criteria:
In addition to the judging criteria for Cocker Spaniel Field Trials, individuals nominated for NCC Judges must:

- 1. Have twelve (12) AKC Championship Spaniel Stake judging assignment points.
Three (3) of the 12 assignments must be from judging AKC Cocker Field Trial Championship stakes. These three (3) trials must be separate assignments at different locations.**
- 2. Have handled a spaniel and earned at least one (1) Championship point by placing in an Open All-Age or Amateur stake at an AKC Field Championship trial.**
- 3. Have actively handled a spaniel in an AKC field trial in the past three (3) years prior to the NCC they would be judging.**

Adjournment – Next FTC Meeting August 9, 2016 8:00 pm EST

Added to Minutes:

Article from Andrew Robinson
Update on 2016 NCC from Chris Dartt

The English Cocker Gunning Program

Based on an original Draft dated 6/4/2007

Written by

Tom Calabrese, Chairman of the Gun Committee

Dave Barto, John Lenninger, Dave Proctor

Updated by the 2016 FTC

Approved by the FTC July 19, 2016 pending ECSCA BOD Approval

Introduction: “The process to become a gunner”

Long before an individual is drawn to field trial gunning, they usually love to hunt and shoot. Because these hunters are known as “crack shots”, they are invited to shoot for Field Trial Club’s local training sessions or for a professional gun dog trainer. It is during these informal sessions that the “crack shots” are identified and the seed to shoot over the cocker spaniel field trial dog is planted.

These intense, but smaller training venues, quietly mark the birth of a transition where rudimentary gunning safety and a set of shooting skills are drummed into the prospective gunner’s mind. If the individual miraculously possesses the discipline it demands to shoot within the very strict guidelines required for gunning at Spaniel field trials, he might receive the coveted “tap on the shoulder” by a mentor willing to assume the responsibility of further training him as his protégé. For many, this “tap” will never come.

Mentoring is a “one on one relationship” that first strives for safety and secondly values a fine shot. The new gunner will always be a reflection of his tutor. A field trial Gunner must not only be a crack shot, he must have the ability to read his surroundings and immediately assess the safety of the shot. This has to be an “unerring decision making process” because any single mistake may spell disaster.

Mentoring is the core of the English Cocker Gunning Program. It is almost impossible to quantify the experience level that qualifies an individual as a gunner. It’s a judgment call. Nor would the leveling of rules or written protocol be applied to the program that would surpass or replace the importance of the mentorship that the Gunning Program relies upon. It is not the intention of this document to supersede mentorship, but to add a structure of organization among those that make up the brotherhood of Gunners. We recognize that the raw talent and judgment to become a Gunner is unique, and existing “Gunners”, “Gun Captains” and members of the Gunning Committee recognize and appreciate that talent among their peers.

Everyone appreciates safe and competent Guns, especially those hosting and participating at our Field Trial events. It is, therefore, our conclusion that no one is more qualified to select qualified guns than those on the “front lines” shooting at Field Trials.

Background:

In 2007, when the original Cocker Gunning program was created, it automatically “Grandfathered” anyone from the Springer Spaniel Gunning Program onto the Cocker Qualified list with matching qualification of either Q (Gunner) or G (Gun Captain). This has remained in effect that any “Q” or “G” qualified Springer Gun is automatically accepted into the Cocker Gunning Program on par. Ideally, the Springer Spaniel Program would reciprocate and award points for those shooting at Cocker Field Trials, however, that is not done at this time. The Cocker Gunning program is developed around “The Gunning Seminar for Spaniels” which is recognized by both the AKC and ECSCA, as the ultimate policy manual for all field trial gunning situations and it supersedes this document should a contrary situation occur.

It is now AKC protocol that at any licensed or unlicensed AKC field trial that a Qualified Gun Captain (G) is identified and made responsible for the team of guns that are assembled to shoot at a Cocker Trial.

The list of “Approved Gun Captains” is now maintained by the Gun Committee and published on the Fieldcockers.com website for all clubs to access. In the unusual case when an approved Gun Captain is unavailable, a club should immediately contact their Cocker Regional Committee Representative who may appoint a “Managing Gun Captain” by special permission. The qualifications for this would include an experienced individual gunner who is familiar with the operation and management of field trials and also the responsibilities of gun teams. Note: This person would not necessarily have to gun the trial, but would be responsible to oversee the selection and supervision of the gun team prior to and during the trial.

Steps to become recognized on the Cocker Gunner List as (Q)Gunner or (G) Gun Captain:

The steps to become either a Gunner or Gun Captain follow the same format. Therefore, it is presumed to become a Gun Captain, one is first a Gunner (Q). The application would be modified in the case of an applicant wishing to be upgraded to Gun Captain, but the parameters would remain the same. The Gunning Program relies on the “inside” knowledge Field Trial Clubs have in knowing those among their contemporaries, who are safe “Guns” as well as how to shoot over English Cockers. The integrity of the program rests on the Field Trial Clubs and their sincere administration of the election of prospective “Gunnery” and “Gun Captains” as well as the integrity of the “Gun Committee” that ensures the steps are fulfilled by potential candidates. The first basic we recommend is that the Gunner has a valid Hunting License demonstrating the Gunner has completed a “Hunters Safety Program”.

It is presumed the prospective Gunnery (Q) would have an extensive background in training sessions, hunt tests and/or field trials and have proven to be safe and reliable. Individuals meeting these ideals would be candidates that the Field Trial Club would be proud to recommend to the Gun Committee as “Gunnery”.

Those aspiring to be Gun Captains would have additional abilities of leadership. The accumulated list of Gun Captain Names should represent the “top echelon” of Gunnery and persons listed should be proud to be among the other names.

Certain basics must be required for individuals to be considered by a Field Trial Club as a Gun (Q) for any field trial.

The first requirement is to successfully complete the Springer Gun Seminar. The second would be for the Field Trial Club to submit an application, signed and dated by the President of each individual Field Trial Club (samples included in this report) to their Cocker Regional Gun Committee Member. They, the Field Trial Club, should consider the following when evaluating a candidate:

- Has the trial club known this candidate for an appropriate length of time to make a recommendation of his capabilities?
- Has the trial club seen this individual shoot over Cockers and/or Springers?
- Has the trial club seen this individual shoot at Training sessions, Hunt Tests, Field Trials?
- Did the individual demonstrate the ability to shoot well and within the guidelines outlined in the Springer Gun Seminar?
- Would you agree this Gunner’s first priority is safety and he demonstrates objectivity when shooting at an event?

**English Cocker Spaniel Club of America
Gunner and Gun Captain Approval Form**

This application is for the position of (circle one)

**Gunner
or
Gun Captain**

Applicant's Name: _____

Address (Street) _____

Address (City, State, Zip) _____

Applicants Phone _____ **Email** _____

Recommending Field Trial Club _____

Recommending Gun Captain Mentor _____

Applicant's background: Include approximate years of experience shooting trials & hunt tests. Recommending Club or Gun Captain Mentor should attest to their knowledge and experience regarding the applicant's safety, proficiency and objectivity in past field trial, hunt test and/or training events.

Signature (Club President or Mentor)

Date Submitted to ECSCA Gun Committee: _____
Determination: _____ (Accepted/Rejected)
Date Returned to Sponsoring Club or Mentor _____

Job Descriptions

Field Trial Gunner

Reports to: Field Trial Gun Captain

Purpose:

This position is responsible for the safe and quality performance as a member of the Field Trial Gun Team. The Field Trial Gun (“Gunner”) is invited by the Gun Captain and participates with the field trial management, judges, planters, and handlers to ensure a successful event.

Primary Function and Responsibilities

- The “Gunner” at the direction of the Field Trial Gun Captain, reviews the trial gunning plan, course outline, rotation, etc., and any other pertinent issues prior to the start of the field trial.
- All Field Trial Guns must utilize a 12 gauge double gun, in accordance with AKC Field Trial guidelines. The double gun should be in excellent operating condition and only factory ammunition shall be utilized.
- Reloads must not be used. We are recommending the use of premium field loads as the conditions and venues warrant and determined by the Gun Captain as written in “The Gunning Seminar” page 19 “Shells” and on page 29 of the AKC handbook, item 11 under Gunning.
- The “Gunner” should look to the Gun Captain as a mentor and must be resilient and positive after honest performance review by the Gun Captain.
- The “Gunner” must have the ability to (1) “read” Spaniels and recognize when it is making game, (2) understand how wind direction will affect a dog’s scenting and the “manner” it finds its game and (3) capable to adjust shooting to the cover.
- Prior to taking a shot, the “Gunner” must have the ability and discipline to determine without question that the area (in to which he/she will shoot) is clear and safe to shoot before shooting. If there is any doubt whatsoever as to the area being clear the “Gunner” must not take the shot. There can be no compromise to safety; additionally the “Gunner” has the ability to determine when to allow the bird(s) not to be shot.
- The “Gunner” must cleanly and consistently kill the birds flushed by the Spaniel. As written in the Gunning Seminar under the topic of “etiquette”, if the bird is not dead after the first shot, it should be shot again to achieve a clean kill. Each shot should be in a sportsmanlike manner, again with no compromise to safety. The “Gunner” shoots for the dog, giving each and every dog a retrieve which will provide a fair test of the dog’s marking and retrieving skills.
- The “Gunner” should come prepared to the trial with good quality field gear and prepared for all weather conditions.
- Maintain his own record of trials he/she has shot in.

Knowledge and Skill Guidelines

- Has experience in training spaniels in hunt tests and/or field trials.
- Has completed the Spaniel Field Trial Gun Safety Seminar.
- Has extensive experience shooting over spaniels in club training sessions.
- Has experience shooting in practice for local “pros”.
- Has a history of safe shooting conduct.
- Be knowledgeable of the ECSCA Green Book
- Be knowledgeable of the AKC Rules and Regulations for Field Trials.

Field Trial Gun Captain

Reports to: Field Trial Committee Chairman

Purpose:

The position is responsible for the management and function of the Field Trial Gun Team in accordance with the guidelines of the ECSCA and the AKC. The position provides the leadership that fosters safety and maximizes the contribution of the Gun Team toward a successful field event. This Gun Captain manages all aspects of the field trial gunning, and works in conjunction with the field trial management, judges, planters and handlers to ensure a successful event.

Primary Function and Responsibilities

- The Gun Captain is responsible for the gun team personnel, utilizing a positive and motivating approach that maximizes each gunner's contribution to the field trial. This responsibility includes the selecting of the gunners for the event, on-site review of gun performance and discharging team member(s) as necessary.
- The Gun Captain functions as a mentor to the gun team participants. She/he sets a trial plan, oversees the gun team activities and makes recommendations for the improvement of gun participants.
- The Gun Captain offers support to the Field Trial Committee in course design focusing of event safety, and fostering a shooting environment which allows for the Cocker's field trial evaluation.
- The Gun Captain makes constructive recommendation(s) to the Field Trial Committee for the improvement of the trial and/or future trials with regard to gunning safety.
- The Gun Captain is responsible for many other trial gunning issues. Some include coordinating with Field Trial committee and advising his/her gun team regarding the local regulations and game laws, reviewing the expected number of entries to establish manpower requirements, selecting appropriate shells and shot size, coordinating the acquisition of shells with field trial committee, team rotation schedule and instructing the gun team on the proper "zones of fire."

Knowledge and Skill Guidelines

- Have a minimum of ten years of spaniel experience in hunt tests and/or field trials.
- Have completed the Spaniel Field Trial Gun Safety Seminar.
- Have extensive trial gun experience.
- Be knowledgeable of ECSCA Green Book rules.
- Be knowledgeable of AKC Rules and Regulations for Field Trials.
- Have good management skills including outstanding leadership, competence in oversight and supervision of guns and ability to communicate confidently.

NCC Gun Captain or Co-Captains

Reports to: National Field Trial Committee Chairman

Purpose:

The position is responsible for the assembly, management and function of the NCC Gun Teams. The prestige of the position shows leadership that fosters safety, demonstrates impartiality to all participants and maximizes the contribution of the Gun Team toward a successful field event.

Primary Function and Responsibilities

- The Gun Captain is responsible for assembling a premier gun team, utilizing the most experienced individuals possible that demonstrate no bias for any particular participant. The preferred guns for shooting the NCC shall be (G) rated or can be a very highly qualified (Q) rated. The prospective list of names should be reviewed with the ECSCA FTC.

- The Gun Captain or Co-Gun Captains will always have an individual in the field supervising their various teams. In the case of a single Gun Captain, he will name an “Assistant” Gun Captain that will supervise the team when the Gun Captain is out of the field so we will have an observing captain in the field at all times.
- This responsibility of supervising includes on-site review of gun performance and discharging team member(s) if necessary.
- The Gun Captain should review the course design focusing of event safety and fostering a shooting environment which enhances the Cocker’s field trial evaluation.
- The Gun Captain is responsible for providing a bio and photo from each gunner (himself included) for the Catalog.
- The Gun Captain is responsible for obtaining the results of the Gunners Award.

Cocker Gun Committee Regional Member (GCRM)

Reports to: Field Trial Gun Committee Chairman

Purpose: Provides oversight and guidance to Field Trial Clubs, Individual Gunners, Gun Captains and the Field Trial Committee while developing future guns that will regard all aspects of field trial gunning. We require representation for each region.

Membership Requirements: To become a member of the Gun Committee an individual must

- Have been an active Gun Captain for both the Cocker and Springer Gun Programs in excess of 5 years.
- Have been gunning Field Trials for 10 years or more.
- Have gunned Field Trials in more than 2 regions and should be actively shooting in Cocker and/or Springer Trials outside of their home trial.
- Must be qualified to present a “Gunning Seminar”.
- Must be nominated by two Field Trial Clubs.
- Must be able to demonstrate a meaningful voice and show leadership qualities for the betterment of gunning and the ability to stand firm, not to be swayed by peer pressure, and be able to decline an application for due cause.
- Must have been a member of a National Gun Team
- Be capable to advise clubs on course design helping facilitate safe gunning at trials and events.
- Be capable to talk to newer or older guns in a constructive way to correct shooting problems that arise.
- The regional Members will be selected from the nominees by the FTC.
- The regional Members will serve on the committee for a minimum period of 5 years. Even if you die, you can’t get off.

Primary Functions and Responsibilities:

- Educate and mentor new guns (Training Seminars, training sessions, etc.).
- Evaluate guns for progressing up the gunning ladder (P to Q to G).
- Review any gunning complaints and initiate corrective action if warranted.
- Review the Gun Team selection for National Events and comment on same to the Field Trial Committee.
- The Cocker Gun Committee makes up the Gun Captain review board that evaluate an application to become a Gunner or Gun Captain to determine if the candidate has achieved enough experience to be rated. The criteria used to arrive at the decision is the number of years gunning, the number of ESS/ECS

field trials they have gunned, Club affiliations, Gun Captain experiences, Attendance and participation in a Parent Club Field Trial Gunning Seminar, “Q” rated (Qualified status) by Interclub Field Trial Gun Chairs, the personal recommendation by the seminar leader or a mentor/sponsor, based on their observation of the candidate’s gunning safety and protocol and Leadership qualities.

Regions:

There will be a CGC Representative from each of the following regions as long as that region has a Cocker field trial.

East: Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York (mostly Eastern NY), Virginia,

New Jersey, Pennsylvania (east of Susquehanna River)

Mid East: Ohio, Pennsylvania (west of Susquehanna River), Western New York, Eastern, Michigan

Mid West: Wisconsin, Iowa, Western Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota

Rocky Mountain: Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, Missouri, Tennessee, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota

West: California, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana

Cocker Gun Committee Chairman

Reports to: ECSCA Field Trial Committee

Purpose: The Gun Committee Chairman is responsible for the coordination and operation of the **Field Trial Gun Committee.**

Primary Functions and Responsibilities

- Coordinate with the Field Trial Committee and the NCC Gun Captain the selection of the “Master Suggested NCC Gun Team” for each year’s National Championship.
- Organizing and conducting one or more meetings per year to review potential “Gunning” candidates and “Gun Captain” candidates
- To attend at least one meeting per year with the FTC to review the status of selected “Gunning” candidates and “Gun Captain” candidates as well as other gunning issues such as not enough gunners for local field trials due to expanding field trials.
- To be the contact person when local field trial clubs are having difficulty in obtaining a Gun Captain or “Gunner” for their events by coordinating with the Regional Gun Committee Member.
- The Chairman of the Committee is elected by the Regional CGC Members for a period of three years and may be re-elected for one additional term of three years.

The Changing Face of the Cocker Spaniel by Andrew Robinson

I think it would be fair to say that there has never been such a dramatic change in any sort of trials as the one that has happened in Cocker Spaniels over recent years. I first qualified for the Championships at Sandringham in 2000 and I think there were seventeen dogs running. At Conholt the following year there were nineteen. Prior to then it was often around twelve to fifteen. This season's Championship could well have over forty dogs running. The change from what many considered to be a minor breed to the situation today, has been rapid and dramatic. Very few people would have considered running Cockers against Springers in novice stakes and a few hardened Springer judges openly mocked them. It is very different today with Cocker entries hugely increased and their popularity seemingly going ever upwards and culminating last year with FTCH Mallowdale Midge winning the Irish Spaniel Championships, a very impressive feat that would have been unheard of not too long ago.

However, without wanting to sound too negative, a rapid increase in a breed's popularity can lead to problems. I found a field trial card the other day for a Novice Cocker trial at Lauder in August 1994 that I ran in. Only two of the dogs running were sired by the same dog, FTCH Jasper of Parkbreck. All the rest were sired by different dogs. Only six of the runners were sired by Field Trial Champions and out of the dogs that ran that day, four eventually ended up as FTCH's, one became an Open Field Trial Winner and three more won Novices. That is quite an impressive strike rate for one novice trial and I don't think the same thing would be replicated today. More interesting perhaps is the breeding side of it. Fifteen different sires on the card and seven dogs running with a COI (Coefficient of In-breeding) of under 10%, with some as low as 2-3%. That certainly would not be the case today. Many novice trials I have been to in the last few years have had two or three very dominant sires that have sired nearly 90% of the card. I am not going to get into a discussion about whether the standard is so much better now because of recent breeding policies but the continued use of a few very popular sires can lead to problems. People who used to run in trials when I started did not get too hung up about using Champions on their bitches, whilst today a lot of people almost become obsessed by it. It is very common now to see litters advertised purely on the number of Field Trial Champions in a Five Generation Pedigree even though the same dog is replicated several times. This can just add to the narrowing of an already small gene pool. Cockers have always varied considerably in type, from large to small, to black to roan and a multitude of different colours in between and often with very different ways of working. Not so long ago, it was quite common for trialling people to say Springers were in trouble because everyone was using the same sires and they were in danger of going up a blind alley. Springers seem to be a very good place now with some superb dogs and a good choice of different studs, I am not sure that there is such a wide choice of studs available for Cockers.

Cockers now look quite different and also go quite differently to those in the past and the variety seems to be being lost. Living in the North, my early competition days were spent running in the numerous trials in Northern England and Scotland which were run entirely on rabbits. Although there are still rabbit trials, there are certainly not the number of trials that there used to be and the dogs are starting to change to adapt to that. Dogs like FTCH Anahar Kirsty and FTCH Anahar Tippet were deadly on the line of a legged rabbit and on their day were very hard to beat. It was not however always the small dogs that were used to rabbits, that won – I remember seeing Parkbreck Jake, not a small dog, win a Novice trial in a white grass allotment at Wemmergill that was crawling with rabbits and the trial was over by 11.30am. Keith Erlandson wrote that to win rabbit trials the dog had to be very accurate in everything it did from hunting, flushing, line taking and retrieving. I was told a lot of years ago that whilst bramble tested a dog's courage, rabbits in white grass tested its nose. There is nowhere to hide out in the open fellsiderunning a dog. However, sometimes if they had to be handled onto a loose pheasant, then problems could ensue. It wasn't only in the North though – in one of the very first trials I judged on an horrendous day in Hampshire, with gales, sleet and swiped bramble, we lost half the Novice dogs because they would not handle from the edge of a wood to pick retrieves a short distance out into a field and most of the others did not want to go into the bramble anyway. I will not be drawn as to whether I think the dogs are any better these days, but the standard of training and especially handling is certainly better but strangely you still often only get five or six Novice Cockers finishing a trial. Fewer dogs, especially Novices, seem to go out on shoot days and are more often trained and shot over on specialist training days and this will inevitably affect the way that the dogs go, but that is probably the subject of another discussion.

The dogs of today are certainly more direct, tend to hunt a faster, flatter pattern and are starting to look very similar to each other but with the breeding policies over the last few years that is hardly surprising. The rabbit

specialists are going and seem to be being replaced by close hunting dogs that quite often don't pay much attention to the wind. I suppose that any comparison between the dogs of the past and today is ultimately futile because it all comes down to personal opinion. I think however we would be wise not forget the hunting, natural gamefinding ability, line taking and maybe most important of all, the diversity of the dogs that are now some generations back in the pedigrees of most of our Cockers. I for one would be very sad if they all ended up looking the same and going in the same way.

NCC UPDATE From Chairman Chris Dartt!

I am very excited to give you an update on this year's NCC - all is coming together for an awesome event!!

Many thanks to Steve and Karen Roddock, Jackie Loveitt and Stacy Brown, Deb Strohl, and Fred and Corrinne Lucas, for traveling to Alexandra/Forada, MN last weekend, and to Ken Hanson for hosting the campers and making us walk, and walk and walk:).

Holiday Inn Alexandria- (Corrinne and Jackie) We have a bargain rate of \$94.99, and the spacious hotel facilities are amazing- one of the best for dogs I have seen - "dog rooms" which you need to specify when reserving (but no extra charge) are on the far end of the complex adjacent to over 10 acres to let dogs out and is fenced from the highway. Food is not typical Holiday Inn - restaurant independently run by Rudy's Red Eye Grill (and bar) who will cater our welcome party (Isabella Room)and banquet (in "the barn" across the parking lot) - and are open each weekday starting @ 6 AM for breakfast through dinner hours. Huge pool area with pools, hot tubs and volleyball court.

Camping: About 15 min away at an all season resort *still pending a rate and reservation info*. Facilities will be electric - individual water turned off but will have water fill-up available, as well as shower and bathroom facilities available on the property. (Sorry - no camping at base camp- limited to Roddock, Poquette, and Dartt trailers)

Grounds - (Steve Roddock) Are about 15 minutes from the hotel - almost 700 acres unobstructed native hunting land. The landowner met us at the grounds, and is extremely accommodating for mowing/brushhog and helping with whatever we need - excited for our event. Steve Roddock has done an amazing job selecting courses that are uniform each side with cover differentiation that is increasing difficult as the trial progresses. Also plans a and b for alternatives based on rain, snow and other factors. All series are off the same gravel road - with 1st and 2nd out from "base camp". Water is in a gravel pit with clear water and graduated entry - 3 miles from base camp.

Dog Trolley and ATV: (Kevin Gadde) We will have an 8-crate dog trolley for 1/2 and 3/4 series courses to accommodate dogs that anticipate running *IN THAT ROUND*. There will also be an "OMG" ATV for emergencies or if someone is "stuck", and potentially a vehicle or vehicles for judges/guns. Kevin Gadde will co-ordinate drivers, gas, etc. - please plan on using "public transportation" for the event versus personal vehicles - contact Kevin Gadde to make specific arrangements outside of this.

Donations and other stuff:

Trophies: (Chris Dartt) ***NEED one more sponsor* - 2nd (\$300) or 3rd (\$275) places** - Fieldcockers will graciously sponsor the last trophy - a couple others pending club approvals.

Thanks to the sponsors who have already sent checks - those with checks pending make check to:
ECSCA NCC 2016 - send to me @ 31175 Heather St NW, Cambridge, MN 55008

Fundraising:(Contact Jackie Loveitt) ***Need your help/participation* - basket auction, bag raffle and silent auction**
Based on a very early preliminary budget, we elected to keep the entry fee @ \$225. and supplement funding for NCC activities with a couple fundraising events. Thanks in advance for your help!

(1) Basket Auction - initiated by the 2006 MI NCC, also @ 2007 WI NCC - we are resurrecting the basket auction!! Clubs and individuals donate baskets of goodies representative of their geography (amazingly the most popular are those containing adult beverage:))that are auctioned Tuesday night at the welcome party. Several clubs and individuals have already committed to contributing a basket - the more the merrier ! Please contact Jackie.

(2)"Bag" raffle - (Need donations - no item too big or small - collecting @ welcome party) Anyone that has attended MHSA events is familiar with the famous "bag raffle" . Donated items - (under \$100.) clothing, artwork,

shotgun shells, dog treats, etc. are spread out on tables with a paper bag for tickets for each item. Tickets are \$20 a stretch - winners are drawn for each item. ****No registration for this - please bring something to donate to the raffle table!!****

(3) Silent Auction - **Need donations -Larger items, services, trips**

Larger items will be sold via silent auction at the Banquet

Contact Jackie with description of your item -

So far:

- Guided Trout Fishing on a private Lake - John Bishop
- Custom Cedar Kennel - Bruce Britton
- Hunting Trip for 4 at Daybreak Facility near Aberdeen -South Dakota- pending details Pine Shadows
- **Your item here :)**

Patron Program (Deb Strohl)

Details coming soon

and NCC Merchandise:

Preliminary info - details/pricing in progress - pictures and pre-order will be available

Caps, T-shirts, Denim shirts, Coffee mugs, orange fleece scarves

note clothing will be ordered in M, L, XL - if you are a small or XXL - *PLEASE pre-order*

That's it for now - draft notices will be coming soon as we develop jobs and people needed to help!

Sincerely,

Chris Dartt

2016 NCC Chair - Forada, MN