

English Cocker Spaniel Club of America
Field Trial Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, August 11, 2015
8:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Members Present: Deb Strohl, Mike Schroeder, Vicky Thomas, Keith Meissner, Joe DeMarkis, Pete Rizzo
Absent: Robert Griffin

- I. Call to order
- II. Approval of the agenda Deb Moved to approve the agenda, Keith seconded.
- III. 2015 NCC Update. Jim Karlovec was not able to be on the conference call.
- IV. Calendar deadline reminders

Tonight was the deadline for NCC judge's nominations. We received 8 nominations & biographies.

It was noted that several bios did not include the number of trials the candidate had judged and we did not have a process to verify qualifications in place. A lengthy discussion took place regarding the candidates.

All nominations meeting the NCC Judging Criteria have now been forwarded to a committee handling the balloting process. The ballot will be mailed to the 145 qualified dog owners to vote.

The nominations are: Bob Childs, Tim Edwards, Dean Koehler, Brent LeMaster, Mhari Peschel, and Pete Zuleger.

We discussed the timing of the election and the possibility of a run-off election depending upon several scenarios which could present themselves. Therefore, we are requesting the ballot be mailed as early as possible, hopefully as soon as this week, but certainly before the beginning of September, with a voting deadline of 30 days to return the ballots to the ECSCA Secretary. The votes will be then be tallied and reviewed by the FTC using a blind number system to determine if a runoff election is necessary. The FTC is mindful of the feedback from previous minutes, but the fact that we'd had discussed the judge's election for a full 50 minutes, we noted the futility of predicting every possible outcome and determined we should wait to review the actual outcome of the election and then decide if we need an additional ballot for the selection of judges and alternates.

In the future the FTC will review the Judges Criteria regarding NCC Judges with an eye to altering the qualifications.

*****A note from Chairperson regarding the above minutes added 8/18/15***

To all our trialing friends.

The 2016 NCC Judging nomination process had its challenges. This committee worked diligently to present a well-qualified slate of NCC Candidates. As in all rules, flaws can appear as circumstances and times change. We ran into just such a dilemma causing us to eliminate two

possible (and qualified) candidates for failing to meet the specific criteria of having judged only two US Cocker Stakes. Both candidates had placed numerous championship titles on Cockers and met all other criteria, including judgeships in Canada.

Our decision was challenged and we subsequently met to review our deliberation.

Upon review we feel it lacks integrity for us to “off handedly” change policies that were voted into place by prior FTC committees without public review. While this kind of protocol may have happened in our past, we feel it undermines the trust of a governing FTC committee.

We do, however, question several specific areas of the Judging Criteria as to its’ value in determining the quality of a judge such as the requirement for a judge to run a dog in a field trial within 18 months or have judged 3 US Cocker Trials. We believe the efforts of prior FTC committees were to see the criteria strengthened but the subsequent result may have inadvertently restricted opportunity rather than enhance it.

We believe it is time to review and we strongly recommend a revision of the current NCC Judges Criteria as to its restrictive nature to qualify candidates. We believe the process should be “streamlined” and more inclusive.

We would appreciate your comments and again call for your input.

Thank You

Joe DeMarkis

V. August 30th Bixby Award nominations

The FTC would like to remind everyone that it is taking nominations for the Bixby Award up until August 30th. We discussed if there was a “formal” nomination procedure, such as the one for the judges (see above) to be nominated for the Bixby Award. Remarkably, there was no clear recollection within the committee and everyone that hadn’t already withered away with boredom, offered their independent opinion(s). We decided to forgo any formal procedure and that we’d accept any nomination presented to us for evaluation. So, we welcome any and all nominations for the Bixby Award, with or without biographies, ECSCA members or not, of any length of service to our cause as long as we receive the nomination prior to August 30th. Qualifications for the Bixby Award are as follows:

The Harold S. Bixby Service Award recognizes the individual, who during the course of the year has continuously, unselfishly, and distinctly given of themselves to advance the cause of English Cockers fieldwork. The Awardee selected is to exemplify the high standards set by Harold S. Bixby, the award's namesake, whose generosity and unselfish support of English Cockers in the field has contributed enormously to their success in all field events, trials, and hunt tests.

VI. New Business

Dogs: Tonight’s FTC meeting was slated for a discussion solely dedicated to the following topic that had been submitted by an FTC Committee Member and agreed by all was an important issue to review:

As I mentioned at the last FTC meeting, an issue I would like to bring to the Cocker community is the proper use of the wind. A type of training whereby a dog is trained to run a windshield wiper pattern down a course is becoming more prevalent in the Spaniel world. I think we should get ahead of this manner of training before it becomes established in the Cocker community. We want to see our dogs hunt utilizing the wind, not run a trained, robotic pattern down a beat without regard to the wind direction.

The two attachments are from Lisa Brown from last Oct. 18 and Dec. 4 in the Yahoo discussion. Due to their timing near Nationals and Christmas, they did not receive much attention. I think we need to give this issue an emphasis in the Green Book and consider it to be a fatal flaw.

- a) We decided to hold off on this discussion until Robert was able to attend the meeting. In the meanwhile, there was a question as to the evolution of the “Step Program” and if it was a common training program around the time the “Green Book” was written. We assumed the Green Book was written in 1994 and therefore predates the Step Program.
- b) We noted we’ve not often found this trend in Cocker Trials. However, there is a concern that a developing trend for Cockers to fall into the same artificial hunting pattern due to inviting springer judges that already utilize “Bucket & Board or Step” training styles to judge our events. The assumption is those judges value pattern, regardless of the wind, over good finds and therefore, the judges are not following what is already written in the “Green Book.” It was argued that we should value “finds” and our dog’s natural hunting style over patterning and at least break pattern on a find. The FTC is concerned about artificial patterning becoming more and more evident in the cocker hunting style. We feel this will be detrimental to the future hunting ability of Cockers. We would like to hear input from field trailers as to this question and if the general consensus is that the “Green Book” should be further amended to address this trend. This discussion will be continued in the next FTC meeting.
- c) Gunning It has been suggested we review our current Gunning Program.
- d) Future Vicky would like to explore some ideas around creating an ECSCA program to promote and/or support our 20-30 year old handlers that face the high cost of field trialing while balancing their family and job obligations as an investment in our future. This could include “ride-sharing”. An additional idea would be a program to encourage, should a dog be qualified, attendance at our National Championships so the scope of the sport would be shared beyond the limits of local field trials. It was noted that several FTC members had faced making the hard financial choices when they were young and it was part of the evolutionary process involved in field trialing. To be discussed further at the next meeting.
- e) Note: Due to calendar conflicts our next meeting will be held on a Monday, not Tuesday, August 24th 8PM Eastern Time.

VII. Adjournment – The Meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM.