Ideas and Procedures to Ponder while Judging Retriever Field Trials

Judging retriever field trials can be very demanding and stressful, and most of us want to do it well by setting up fair, honest marking tests and blinds with a clear purpose. Unfortunately, as more trials were encouraged to reduce entry numbers to create more time for better testing, the need for additional judges also grew. In some cases, this has led to judges who would benefit from some mentoring along with a better understanding of the rule book, basic test setups, the art of judging marks and blinds, time management, and the role of the field trial committee. In fact, we could all benefit from more knowledge in these areas.

For many years, Retriever News published a column titled "Judges Corner," where readers could submit questions about judging and receive answers from respondents. We discontinued the column and looked for a better way to educate our pool of judges.

Now, we are launching a new initiative of articles titled "In Touch: Ideas and Procedures to Ponder When Judging Retriever Field Trials." In many ways, we began this effort a few issues ago when we published the article "Judging Retriever Field Trials: How to Get Started." Ron Ainley and David Morrison authored that piece and did an excellent job explaining the history of getting started in judging of the sport and how to begin judging in today's game. With our new column, "In Touch," we will explore specific issues and rule book interpretations as they apply to actual field trial tests and other topics within our sport. We have already completed several articles that we will try and publish monthly in Retriever News. Each article will be reviewed by experienced retriever field trial participants, and in many cases, we will invite the AKC Performance Events Department to help validate our interpretations of the rules. We certainly hope you embrace this initiative as a positive step to helping our sport thrive. In addition, we wish to invite authors to choose a topic, write about it, and submit it to us for publication. Our goal is to have a clearer message to all judges on tough topics with the intent of bettering our sport.

We participate in a highly competitive sport, with equally competitive people and high stakes. The cost alone creates pressure for everyone involved. Trickery in testing and incompetence in judging has no place in our sport. Integrity in judging is of paramount importance. By educating ourselves, we can make a difference and keep this great sport alive for generations. We hope you all agree. Let's all be a part of the solution and not the problem. We look forward to hearing from you with ideas or articles that can help us all.

Sincerely,
Jim Rickoff
Editor in Chief, Retriever News