

COONHOUND ADVISOR

Trevor Wade

I'm writing this column the first day back in the office post Winter Classic and feeling refreshed on the writing front. After a winter with limited traveling, I was on the road and talking to a lot of folks about rule interpretations. There still seems to be some confusion over two rule changes that took place in January of 2023 so I'm going to revisit those today. I would suggest saving this article or taking a picture. That would be one way to keep it fresh on your mind when on the way to a hunt. Before then though, I want to talk a little about sportsmanship.

This article is not meant to be me preaching. I've fallen short in my life many times. I've argued over calls made by judges in the woods, referees on a court, and umpires on a diamond. I've made Facebook posts that made me look petty and disrespectful to fellow competitors. I have no high horse to be on. But after a great weekend with only a couple issues over hundreds of casts, it's always those areas of opportunity that keep me up at night. Let's talk about a few of them quickly.

The most discussed issue over the weekend had to do with a handler allegedly not seeing a coon at the conclusion of a cast that altered who the cast winner should've been. Devastating. There were multiple issues at play here. The owner/handler of the dog who should have won the cast had made a post in the middle of the night that raised awareness of the issue. I don't blame him. He had a video of the occurrence. Videos are always a tough piece of evidence to dissect. There have been multiple times over the past few years where I have watched a video and quickly formed an opinion on what happened, only to later see a different angle, or a longer video that provided more context on the situation and shifted my views. Ultimately the owner/handler brought it to Allen and I and filled out a misconduct report. A hearing panel was put together at the earliest possible time and the issue was able to be resolved at the event. When I don't have all the details, I try my hardest not to jump to conclusions and attack people personally. I think that is a great practice in the social media era we live in. Not just in hunts but in all walks of life with the amount of "fake news" that is being circulated out there.

Next would be a complaint we had about a guide. I'll keep this one short and sweet. We appreciate all the guides. Without them, we wouldn't be able to have major events. Think about this, how many places in the country could handle putting 400 dogs in the woods on a Friday night? That number seemingly gets smaller every year. People causing issues in the woods and losing a guide their hunting rights is a good way to cut into that number drastically. In this case, an out of state hunter guiding to a place where they allegedly didn't have permission is a

great way to give the entire hunt a black eye. This area gets bombarded with hunters for a week every year and if we aren't careful, we could very easily overstay our welcome. Be respectful to the landowners and use your best judgment when you put down your self to guide. Coon hunters don't need additional factors like trespassing working against them in this world.

Lastly, I want to briefly mention scores. When I see a large score that reaches 4 digits, I'll be the first to cringe. Not because it's impossible, it's just a perception issue. Ultimately the registry will be judged on the legitimacy of their scores for an event, as we should be. On Saturday night there was a large score which you all have seen by now. Allen and I both stopped what we were doing and looked long and hard at the 1st Place scorecard. Ultimately, we were able to conduct interviews with each of the six participants that walked in the woods during the cast. Not because we had any suspicion that something was wrong with the card, but because we'd rather get ahead of the issue if there was one rather than play from behind. Most of all, we wanted to be able to reward a handler and their dog who had the night of their life, who was sure to be ridiculed by people who weren't in attendance to see the feat. Every so often, things break just right and when you add in withdrawals and other circumstances, unordinary things can happen. Don't be so quick to throw stones without all the details.

Now let's get to the questions at hand.

Treeing But Not Declared Treed

This topic continues to be the most discussed rule in the rulebook. Honestly, this might have been a little confusing before the 2023 rule change, due to the fact that you had to score the tree before knowing how to score the dog. With the 2023 rulebook, this has become much easier to deal with.

I would recommend taking out your rulebook and either highlighting, or circling Rule 4(f) under the Strike Minus section. It reads, *if dog declared treed; after three minutes has elapsed no additional dog can be declared treed at that particular tree. Dog(s) treeing but not declared treed when judge arrives receives minus strike points. Dogs shut-out* on strike will receive no minus strike points. Refer to Rule 6(f) for Champion Division casts and off game.*

Pretty much everything you need is right there. Dogs treeing but not declared treed when judge arrives receives minus strike points. That means regardless of whether the tree is plussed, minused, or circled, you minus the strike points. There is no mention of awarding next available tree points because that is no longer something that happens. You simply minus the strike points. The next sentence tells us that a dog shut-out on strike will receive no minus strike points. Pretty straight forward as there are no strike points in that instance to minus with the dog being shut-out.

I will just briefly mention that this rule we just talked about had to do with dogs treeing but not declared treed

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when the judge arrives. If the judge and cast are there, and a dog comes into the cast at the tree, you would refer to Rule 5(b) (yes highlight that one too). 5(b) is under the Circle Points section and reads, *no dog to receive minus points for coming into tree after Judge arrives unless a coon is seen and the dogs treeing are awarded plus points.* Let's break that down for you. If a dog comes into a tree after the Judge arrives and a coon is seen, the dog will get it's strike points minused. If the tree is minused, circled, or even off game seen, the dog that comes in after the Judge arrives will get it's strike points circled.

Recasting a Hound with Declared Struck/Treed Hounds

This one seems to be causing the most questions early on for some reason. The bulk of the questions seem to be based on the six-minute clock on dogs declared struck in relation to recasting hounds coming out of a scoring situation. And while historically those two things have gone hand in hand, they are no longer married to each other and have no bearing on each other.

Let's take a look at Rule 11(d) which is all about recasting your hound. The first three sentences there read, *after being scored, dog(s) may be released immediately or led a reasonable distance (judge's decision) from scored tree before recasting. However, if another dog in cast is declared treed, hander(s) has the option to recast or keep scored dog on leash. Handlers opting to keep dog on leash may not recast dog until next opportunity arises (next tree is scored or dog leaves tree).*

You will find no option to keep your dog on leash while running the six-minute clock on struck dogs. In fact, when you are pulling your hound off of a scoring situation, your first priority should be the hound on your leash. Get somewhere and cut your hound loose, then worry about running the time on struck hounds.

If another dog in the cast has been declared treed, that's when you have the option to keep your dog on the leash as the second and third sentences of Rule 11(d) tells us. That's a decision you'll have to make fairly quickly and remember, if you decide to keep your hound on leash, you will be bound to that decision until the next opportunity to recast arises which will be after you score that next dog's tree, or if that declared treed hound were to leave the tree you were in route to.

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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