

**A Guide To The Conduct and Judging
of
Cocker Spaniel Field Trials**

Report of the Field Trial Advisory Group and the Field Trial Committee of



**The English Cocker Spaniel Club of America,
Inc.
Revised 2014**

Acknowledgements

A special thanks goes out to the members of the English Springer Spaniel Field Trial Association, Inc., who have so willingly helped in the creation of this booklet, and who have freely contributed their considerable time and talent in aiding the reintroduction and re-establishment of the English Cocker Spaniel in the fields of the United States of America.

The italicized content printed in this booklet are excerpts quoted from the "Field Trial Rules and Standard Procedures for Spaniels" Amended to December 2012, Published by The American Kennel Club.

Preface

This guide has been created by the English Cocker Spaniel Club of America, Inc. (ECSCA) with the cooperation of the English Springer Spaniel Field Trial Association, Inc. In many instances the guide is a duplication of what is found in the ESSFTA's publication *The Conduct and Judging of Spaniel Field Trials*. Much of this duplication should be expected since the two breeds operate under the same AKC rules, and indeed share many similar qualities in the field. The new reader should be aware, however, that this guide has been developed specifically for cocker spaniel field trials for English Cocker and (American) Cocker Spaniels, and therefore differs in some important areas of interpretation and emphasis from all other breed guidelines. This guide serves as the only ECSCA recognized and endorsed interpretation of the American Kennel Club's Standard Procedure for Spaniel Field Trials.

**Published for The English Cocker Spaniel Club of America, Inc.
Revised 2014**

Table of Contents

Standard Procedures for Trials.....	1
Foreword.....	1
Championship Trials.....	1
Field Trial Rules.....	2
Judges	2
Judges Required to Be Informed.....	4
Purpose of the Field Trial.....	5
Comments and Amplification of Certain Rules and Regulations of the American Kennel Club.....	6
The Field Trial Committee.....	6
The Premium List and Catalogue.....	6
Substitute Judges.....	7
Responsibility of Field Trial Committee.....	7
Authority and Responsibility of Judges.....	8
Procedure at the Trial.....	9
The Steward of the Beat.....	10
The Official Guns.....	10
What Is the Standard of Judgement?	11
Analysis and Interpretation of the Standard Procedure For Spaniel Field Trials.....	12
Style of a Cocker Spaniel.....	12
Qualities to Be Emphasized.....	13
The Performance Before You.....	14
Second and Other Series.....	15
Balancing of Time and Distance.....	16
Cover.....	17
Natural Ability.....	18
Effect of the Wind.....	19

The Judges Voice.....	20
The Flush and the Pointing Spaniel.....	20
The Positive Attitude in Judging.....	21
Working to the Handler.....	22
Marking and Retrieving.....	23
Searching and Hand Signals.....	23
The "Eyewipe".....	24
The Handler and The Beat.....	25
Bringing Game to the Bag.....	26
Game Finding.....	27
What is a "Break"?	28
What is "Chasing"?	29
Positive Qualities	31
Tender Mouth	32
The Crushed Bird	33
The Water Test	33
Evaluating The Water Performance	36
Good Gunning Essential	37
The Gun is the "Silent" Partner	38
Keep the Trial Moving	39
A Few Words in Conclusion	39
The Conduct of the Handler	40
Steadiness While Hopped	40
The Long Fall	41
Owners and Others - Keep Back	41
The Judge- Like Caesar's Wife	42
Provide Strong Birds	42
Summation	43
Informal and Sanctioned Trials	44
The Working Certificate	45
The Hunting Test	45

Standard Procedures for Trials

Foreword

Championship Trials

Since 1925 cocker spaniels have competed under American Kennel Club rules, regulations and procedures. There are three basic types of Field Trials: Member Trials which are held by the Parent or Member Clubs; Licensed Trials which are held by associations or clubs which have been given permission by the AKC to give the specific field trial designated; and Sanctioned Trials which are less formal events held by associations or clubs which have been given permission by the AKC, but at which championship points cannot be awarded.

Member clubs of the American Kennel Club, and non-member clubs which are eligible, may file application with the American Kennel Club for permission to hold sanctioned and, under certain conditions, licensed trials. One of the requirements for approval of non-member club applications is the consent in writing of the Parent Club for the improvement of the breed which is a member of The American Kennel Club. For English Cocker Spaniels the Parent Club is The English Cocker Spaniel Club of America, Inc. For (American) Cocker Spaniels the Parent Club is The American Spaniel Club. Both (American) Cocker and English Cocker Spaniels may compete in the same stake.

Sanctioned trials do not carry championship points and are frequently held by less experienced clubs. Great latitude is therefore allowed in the arrangement of stakes and in the application of standards of performance governing the

conduct of such trials, provided these are set forth in its premium list.

The number of wins required for a Field Championship (FC) is set by the Board of Directors of the American Kennel Club. As of August 1, 1994 an English Cocker Spaniel must win two Open (or Qualified Open) All-age stakes, or one Open (or Qualified Open) All-Age stake and ten championship points. Championship points are credited for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place with dogs receiving 3 points, 2 points, and 1 point respectively. As of 2005, the same requirements must be met to become an Amateur Field Champion (AFC) in Amateur All-age stakes. An English Cocker must also have passed an AKC water test one time for either the FC or AFC title. The minimum entry for points to be awarded at a cocker field trial Open All-Age or Qualified Open All-Age Stake or Amateur All-age Stake is ten (10) starters.

Field Trial Rules

All cocker spaniel trials are held in compliance with the rules of the AKC and the standard procedure as applies to spaniels. These procedures are described in the AKC publication "Registration and Field Trial Rules and Standard Procedures for Spaniels", which are available from the AKC at www.akc.org . The rules and forms for registration of pure-bred dogs may be obtained by writing to the offices of the American Kennel Club which are located at 5580 Centerview Drive, Raleigh, N.C. 27606.

Judges

AKC Rule Book Chapter 5, Section 1 *Cocker Spaniel Field Trials*

The following judging eligibility requirements apply to All- Age stakes and water tests. Note: There are no requirements to judge the

puppy stake. Judges must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Prior to Becoming a Licensed Judge: (Effective January 1, 2013) An individual must have attended an AKC Spaniel field trial judge's seminar and apprentice judged two All-Age stakes at AKC Spaniel Field Trials (either Cocker or Springer). The apprentice judge must be assigned to an AKC senior judge (a judge with 12 judging assignments). The two apprenticeships must be done under two different senior judges. (It is the club's responsibility to monitor this requirement.) Minimum Standard for the Judging Panel: (Effective January 1, 2013) In order to be approved the two Judges of an All-Age stake must have a combined record of having judged at least twelve (12) All-Age stakes at Cocker Spaniel or English Springer Spaniel field trails at a minimum of five (5) different trial locations.

The following restrictions apply to both English Springer and Cocker Field trial judges. A professional dog trainer and a client with an ongoing business relationship shall not be allowed to judge one another within one year of their relationship. The definition of a professional relationship is one where the professional dog trainer, or a member of the trainer's household, is compensated for the training of a client's dog for field trials, hunting tests or hunting, or the handling of a client's dog in a field trial or hunting test. It would not include the purchase or sale of a dog, attendance at a seminar or the purchase of dog training equipment, or other business transactions that may occur not related to the training of dogs. To further clarify, the definition of a professional relationship also would extend to anyone living in the client's household.

Chapter 5 Section 6 Apprentice Judges. Anyone wishing to apprentice judge must first make the request to the Event Chairperson. If the event committee decides to entertain the request, the committee must obtain the agreement of the judges before authorizing an apprentice judge. The judges may invite the apprentice to become involved in their discussions however the

apprentice's opinion shall not enter into the official evaluation of the dog's performance. Apprentice judges must be involved through the entire stake. Apprentice judges are subject to the same restriction as the approved judges.

Judges Required to Be Informed

Judges as well as all other officials are required to be fully informed of the AKC rules, regulations, and explanations as they pertain to spaniel field trials. Each judge and contestant should be thoroughly familiar with the AKC publications. Final authority rests in the AKC rules and regulations. This booklet provides further direction and explanation concerning interpretation and judgment, especially as pertains to the development and improvement of cocker spaniels. It is not official. It is, however, the result of painstaking efforts of many experienced people, and should be accepted as a guide by judges and contestants. It is natural that many elements are similar or identical to recommendations found in further descriptions of other breeds including that of the springer spaniel. Notable differences exist between the English Cocker Spaniel and all other breeds, however, and judges in particular need to be cognizant of these differences for the ultimate health of the breed.

Cocker spaniel trials, although popular from the 1920's to the 1950's, disappeared by the mid 1960's. Although scattered attempts were made to hold trials in the intervening years, the first subsequent successful trial with national participation was held in Colorado by the Rocky Mountain Springer Spaniel Club in 1993. Since that time, interest in holding cocker field trials has grown rapidly; and trials are now being held throughout the country. With a small number of field trials and a limited number of competitors gaining

their experience together, it has been fairly easy to discuss viewpoints and qualities that are desirable among the dogs. Many features of field trials, in the way trials are judged, in the cover, and in the dogs themselves have been addressed with an eye to improving the overall performance of the cockers. Of course no two people or two judges will ever feel exactly alike about every question that arises. With a close knit competing community, however, some understanding of desirable traits develops. With the increased number of trials in a wider geographic area, the exchange of information inevitably becomes more difficult. Nevertheless, between handler and judges, and between judges themselves, there must be a mutual confidence that each individual is looking for the same qualities in the dogs, and that each individual has an understanding of the common methods of evaluation. In order to provide for the development of the best cockers, information that has been gathered and gained must be shared, and the process of evaluating cocker spaniels described. If a field trial is to determine the dog with the finest qualities, then the best way of identifying those qualities should be known to all contestants. The purpose of this book is to comment upon and amplify the rules of the AKC. The goal is to introduce, educate, and enhance the understanding of participants, both handlers and judges, and in doing so ensure the development of the best characteristics of the breed.

Purpose of the Field Trial

The purpose of field trials for the English Cocker Spaniel is to provide a competitive environment for the continuing enhancement of the hunting capabilities of the breed. The trial should demonstrate the performance of a properly trained spaniel in the field, and should determine the dog with the

finest qualities among the group entered in each stake. The judging will affect the values of the dogs put up and affect the breeding schedules of the future.

Comments and Amplification of Certain Rules and Regulations of the American Kennel Club

The Field Trial Committee

The responsibility for a field trial and the necessary preparations for it are in the hands of the Field Trial Committee of a club. Field Trial Clubs or associations not members of the American Kennel Club are required to obtain approval of the Parent Club through the ECSCA Field Trial Committee and of the AKC for the date and location of the trial.

The committee determines the stakes to be run, decides on the awards, selects the grounds, arranges for the birds, determines the entry fees, invites the judges (who must be approved by the AKC in advance) and, if it be a licensed or member club trial, includes the name of the judges, field trial committee, and officers of the club in its application to the AKC.

The Premium List and Catalogue

The field trial committee secretary must create a premium list for each event. When properly filled out and signed by the owner or his agent and received by the Field Trial Secretary with the entry fee before the specified closing date constitutes the entry.

The Field Trial catalogue is the responsibility of the Field Trial Club sponsoring the event. The committee is requested to follow an approved form of listing in the catalogue. Since copies of the catalogue, marked with absences and awards,

are later to be filed with the AKC, along with the Judges books certifying to such awards, and become part of the official permanent record of the trial, it is important that the required data about each entry - name and registration number (or listing if not AKC registered), sex, age, sire and dam, and breeder, owner and handler, owner's address- be in proper detail in the entry form and included in the catalogue.

Substitute Judges

In case one or both the Judges so announced are unable to officiate, the AKC permits the substitution of an approved judge or judges. The AKC allows the appointment of an additional judge or judges (providing they are in good standing with the AKC and meet the AKC judging criteria for cockers), should conditions suddenly confront the Committee that make such a move imperative. Nevertheless, such authority should be used sparingly as it is undesirable to have any departure from the announcements in the Premium list. Nearly all other departures from the standard protocol are forbidden. A judge may face discipline from the AKC for failing to show up at a trial or cancelling at a late date.

In event of a disagreement between the judges on any question, the Field Trial Committee of the club giving the trial shall appoint a referee to cast the deciding vote, though such recourse has been so rare in spaniel trials that it would be necessary to go to the AKC files to determine whether it has ever been invoked.

Responsibility of Field Trial Committee

The Field Trial Committee must be made up of at least five members of the sponsoring club including the secretary. In all matters arising at the trial the decisions of the Field Trial Committee present are final and conclusive and binding on

all parties subject to the rules of the AKC. The Field Trial Committee needs to be familiar with the rules and procedures of the trial as well as the rules concerning grievances and discipline. In particular the committee members need to be familiar with the "Guide for Field Trial and Hunting Test Committees In Dealing with Misconduct at Field Trials and Hunting Tests" published by the AKC. For conduct prejudicial to the sport a hearing must be held at the field trial by the field trial committee. The manner of the hearing, the findings and decision, conditions of suspension, and appeal process should be known to the field trial committee prior to the event. A description of the proceedings and decisions must be reported to the AKC immediately after the field trial.

Authority and Responsibility of Judges

In all cases affecting the merits of the dogs, the Judges' decision is final. Full discretionary power is given to the Judges to withhold any or all awards for want of merit. Occasionally, because of the lack of merit, Judges have awarded no first place in a stake carrying championship points though they have filled the balance of places in the stake. Judges may call upon the Committee for as many series as seem to them necessary and may ask that such additional series be of such nature that they provide the information they need to arrive at their decision.

Judges are empowered to turn out of any stake a dog that does not obey its handler, or any handler who willfully interferes with another competitor or his dog and to exclude from competition any dog they may consider unfit to compete; including the duty to require the removal from the field trial ground of bitches in heat and, of course, their exclusion from any stake.

Thus it will be seen that the authority of the Judges is considerable and, in addition to rendering judgment, their responsibility is broad. Incidentally, they are required to reduce to writing, or see that the Field Trial Secretary or Superintendent does so, all of their awards including the Awards of Merit, Water Test awards, and to sign each page of the Judges Book certifying to those awards.

Procedure at the Trial

The spaniel field trial for at least the first two series (except in Puppy stakes) is carried on by two dogs running simultaneously on parallel beats each under one of the two judges. The order of running is determined in advance by lot and should be adhered to as far as possible since thus the variations in terrain and cover are resolved to be a matter of fortune, not choice.

The dogs are put down under the two judges in some regular order, such as odd-numbered dogs under one judge on the right and even-numbered dogs under the other judge on the left. Or, the dogs may be called up in numerical order to fill each vacancy as dogs are taken up by one or the other of the judges. Such procedure is usually determined by consultation between the judges and the chief steward. It is undesirable to alter the order of running, thus determined, except when no other solution presents itself, such as when one handler is performing on one beat and another of his dogs is called up in order on the parallel beat. Dogs not in line when called, may, in the discretion of the judges, be eliminated or run last in order in the stake.

At the conclusion of the first series each judge selects the dogs from among those who have performed under him that he considers worthy of continuing in the stake and they are put

down in sequence under the other judge. After the second series the judges, at their discretion, may elect to run additional series with the dogs running singly under both judges. This applies only to the third and successive series and is optional with the judges. To receive an award, a dog must compete in all series and the water test if one is held.

When a National Championship stake is held, at least four series of parallel beats should be run; so that each dog still under consideration should be down twice under each judge.

The Steward of the Beat

The Steward of the Beat is in charge of the course and the placing of birds when birds are planted. When trials are run on native birds or birds released in advance of the trial, the Steward of the Beat designates the course most likely to produce results. Judges will, as a rule, find the Steward of the Beat amenable to suggestions and responsive to their requests so long as such requests are reasonable and within his power to grant. When birds are planted the quality of bird is vital to the success of the trial. Birds should be fit, able to be flushed and take wing, and able to fly well off the ground. Although pheasants are most often used, other suitable game birds such as chukar may be used. Pigeons may be used in puppy stakes. Only live, full-winged game birds may be used. Birds should be handled in accordance with the rules of the AKC.

The Official Guns

All shooting is done by the official guns; there may be two, three, four or more in number according to conditions. The field trial committee appoints an approved Field Trial Gun Captain. The dogs shall be shot over by official guns appointed by the field trial committee. All gun team members must be a qualified gun. In the unusual case that an

approved Gun Captain is unavailable, special permission must be granted by the Gun Committee for the club to appoint a “Managing Gun Captain”.

Since the gun is, for the moment, the good right arm of the handler, one gun per dog and handler may be enough. The gun(s) should guide themselves on the handler, moving forward when the handler moves, stopping when the handler stops and keeping themselves in position to shoot without danger to those around them, including the handler and gallery whose attention is centered on the dog.

It is part of the function of the judges to see that guns conduct themselves in a manner not dangerous to others to advise the guns as to the wishes of the judges for the best test of the dogs, and to caution a gun who gets out of position or interferes with the handler or shoots dangerously. A judge is entitled to ask that a gun be relieved for any cause and another substituted.

What Is the Standard of Judgment?

This then is a very general outline of the powers, duties, and responsibilities of judges at a Spaniel Trial. In addition there is the question of what standard of judgment to apply.

The following analysis takes the successive paragraphs of the Standard Procedure in order and attempts to throw light on their accepted meaning and the customs that have prevailed in applying them. In the analysis attention is directed to particular characteristics of the cocker spaniel. By necessity some reference is made to the cocker's similarities and differences from springer spaniels whose work is somewhat better known among field trial competitors at this time. These references are made not to enhance or diminish either

breeds characteristics, but to emphasize distinctions which are easily overlooked in these popular breeds of spaniels.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Standard Procedure for Spaniel Field Trials

In the following pages the numbered paragraphs printed in italics are quoted excerpts from the AKC Standard Procedure for Spaniel Field Trials section of the "Registration and Field Trial Rules and Standard Procedure for Spaniels."

Paragraph 1. A Blaze orange outer garment or item of clothing shall be mandatory at all AKC member, licensed and sanctioned field trials (and Working Certificate Tests) for all persons in the gallery and in the field...

This is a matter of gunning safety for all persons working, entered, or observing at the event.

Paragraph 2. The purpose of a spaniel field trial is to demonstrate the performance of a properly trained spaniel in the field. The performance should not differ from that in any ordinary day's shooting, except that in the trials a dog should do his work in a more nearly perfect way.

The above is not a complete statement since a trial has as well the very definite purpose of determining which are the better dogs among those entered in the event, and which possess those qualities which will contribute most to the development of the breed.

Style of a Cocker Spaniel

The hunting style of the cocker is characterized by a close-working pattern before the gun. Cockers exhibit a quick busy action and a merry temperament. They are thorough, speeding up in sparse cover and working meticulously through heavy cover. They may often get under and wiggle

through heavy cover, rather than sweep through it. The style is ideally suited to the dense wooded habitat of the woodcock and ruffed grouse, and may be of considerable benefit in a wide variety of interrupted or broken covers. They exhibit an enthusiastic and persistent quality, questing for game within gun range and working closely with the handler. Cockers are capable of handling both fur and feathered game, putting all before the gun with a decisive flushing action. The ideal dog will require a minimum of quiet handling, will be steady to flush and shot, will accurately mark downed game and retrieve quickly and tenderly to hand.

Qualities to Be Emphasized

The first job of the cocker is to find and flush game within a comfortable shooting range of the gun. The dog should hunt the ground ahead of the handler at a brisk and busy pace, examining all likely game holding cover and not passing any game on the beat. This he should do with great desire, eagerness and the necessary drive.

His second job is to bring the game to bag. A spaniel is a hunting dog which also retrieves. Hence, he should be able to mark well the fall of game, to persevere on wounded game, and to retrieve promptly and tenderly to hand.

Hunting and game finding are his primary requisites. To do this within gun range is an absolute requirement. This and the change from a hunting dog to a retriever demands discipline of a high order. Hence those qualities instilled by training control, steadiness and responsiveness are of great importance.

However, if hunting and game finding are primary, natural ability is clearly the most important quality and this includes

nose and brains - if the breed is going to improve. This plus training produces the capable dog.

In any stake, judges, while seeking the information with which to make their placements, must balance all factors of differing terrain, varying cover and wind. It is a difficult job. There are judges who would like to reproduce as nearly as possible the same conditions and tests for each dog since that indeed would simplify their task. But this is in the nature of things impossible, and if attempted would result in artificial rather than natural conditions.

The Performance Before You

It, therefore, depends on the judge to make comparisons as he can. The judge can only achieve this by observing and considering what occurs on that day and under those conditions. The judge must obliterate from his mind all past performances, all factors of what might-have-been, and base any decisions on what was seen and can be testified to in discussion with his fellow judge to whom each is beholden for a clear report.

The judge should not seek the advice of handlers or guns or others, but reach his conclusions solely and individually. The judge can ask a gun to indicate the point of fall of a bird, but the judge should be slow to accept the evidence of others on any questions such as whether a bird was a dead bird or a runner. The judge is free to move to any position that he feels is warranted. The judge can search the ground for a fallen bird, and may in his discretion, disregard any evidence not conclusive and proceed to a further test of the dog. It is, however, his own judgment and the duty to his fellow judge which must govern.

Second and Other Series

On the completion of the first series the judges consult and each selects the dogs he wishes to bring back for a second series under the other judge. Dogs which have committed an unforgivable fault such as breaking or chasing are obviously out of consideration for any award and are, therefore, eliminated. If time permits and the number of spaniels is not too great, all can be brought back that have shown merit and have not disqualified themselves. When in doubt, it is not out of order to give the dog the benefit of the doubt since there will be opportunity to demonstrate ability or the lack of it in the next, and, if desired, in subsequent series.

However when the number of dogs is large, a more difficult problem arises, for both judges should, in so far as possible, follow the same standard of selection. One should not condemn for the faults the other overlooks. There will be occasions when better performances seem to be all on one side and poorer performances occur under the other judge. Under such conditions an unbalanced second series cannot be helped in a stake with a small entry, but with a large entry some equitable basis of selection can usually be agreed upon by the judges.

Owners have often come long distances, spent months training their dogs and all have paid the same entry fee. It helps an owner to accept the result if his dog is given ample opportunity to demonstrate clearly its good or weak qualities.

Nevertheless, it is better to spend the time testing thoroughly the abilities of the better dogs in successive series than to dwell overlong out of a kind heart on a dog that cannot possibly enter the final placements.

Balancing of Time and Distance

In this connection it should be noted that some judges feel equal opportunity has been given in a series if each dog has the opportunity to complete two retrieves. When a long birdless beat is encountered, they will, in effect, keep one dog down on the beat for a far greater time than the others and thus place a greater burden on its strength.

Under such circumstances the dog that keeps trying should receive credit, but it is far better to attempt a balance of time and distance. Guns will miss, birds will flush back toward the gallery, and birds will run off the course. These troubles sometimes seem to happen all at once to the one poor victim of mischance. A judge should bear in mind that there will be further opportunities to test the dog in later series when, because of the reduced number of dogs, each may be given more time and attention and more retrieves.

Taking a dog up too quickly is another error into which judges occasionally fall. A dog may quickly demonstrate to a judge all the qualities the judge is looking for, and have the good fortune to promptly flush game and retrieve the fall. Nevertheless, it is well to keep the dog on the beat to see if the ground work continues to be good and to study the dog's responses. If this results in one or even more additional finds, the judge has additional evidence on which to base judgment. At any moment suitable to the judge the testing may be ended by taking the dog up, though it is better not to do so when the dog gives evidence that game is in the immediate vicinity.

Paragraph 3. The function of a hunting spaniel is to seek, find and flush game in an eager, brisk, quiet manner and when game is shot, to mark the fall or direction thereof and retrieve to hand. The dog

should walk at heel or on a leash until ordered to seek game and should then thoroughly hunt the designated cover within gunshot, in line of quest, without unnecessarily covering the ground twice, and should flush game boldly and without urging. When game is flushed, a dog should be steady to flush or command, and, if game is shot should retrieve at command only, but not until the judge has instructed the handler. Dogs should retrieve quickly when ordered to do so and deliver tenderly to hand. They should then sit or 'hup' until given further orders. Spaniels which bark and give tongue while questing are objectionable and should be severely penalized.

There are differences of view between judges on the meaning of this paragraph but they arise largely from the different kinds of terrain in different parts of the country.

Cover

One of the most important duties of the Field Trial Committee is to select grounds that will put cockers in an environment to be properly judged for hunting ability. The grounds should closely approximate actual hunting conditions, that is, areas where wild birds would be found. However the grounds should also represent conditions that best test the cocker's style of hunting. Dogs can be run in woods, through and down hedgerows, in briars, across creeks, etc. all of which will vary according to the prevailing hunting cover.

When flat, level or cut fields are used there is a tendency to make quartering of the ground in a regular pattern like a "windshield wiper" the criteria. Although cockers can perform in this fashion, it is difficult for a judge to discern "bird-sense", scenting ability, and use of the wind. In addition, open field running tends to highlight the larger specimens of the breed, and emphasizes the characteristics associated with the larger breeds of spaniels. When broken

cover is used, with some parts heavy and other parts open, the dog must demonstrate the ability to discern likely game holding, use of the wind, and thoroughness in seeking. In this way the judge may be in a better position to judge the natural ability and intelligence of the dog in game finding. Because of this, only in rare circumstances should a cocker trial be run in flat or cut fields.

If heavily wooded or areas of dense cover are used, safety must be remembered. Planters may be hidden by trees or brush. Particular attention must be paid to the gallery to prevent spectators from wandering off, or casually entering into an area which may come before the dogs and guns.

Natural Ability

When terrain is irregular or cover is heavy, there are frequent occasions when a dog and handler cannot see each other.

Under such conditions the dog must constantly be relating himself to the handler. In addition the dog will work out his cover in an irregular pattern, seeking to pass through or downwind of likely cover. Resourcefulness and meticulousness are clearly more important than an unyielding structure of pattern. In broken cover an unyielding pattern suggests less evidence of bird sense, scenting ability, and use of the wind.

As the function of a spaniel is to hunt out game, the manner in which he does this should be directed to the finding of game rather than to pleasing the eye. In other words, the effectiveness of his search is a combination of thoroughness and bird sense rather than pattern, provided only that he does not neglect any area that might be productive.

Judges will have to decide what they are looking for in a dog. Certainly one that can be effective only in one type of cover or

the other is of less value than a dog that can take terrain as it comes and solve all problems even when his handler can give him little help. A tendency on the part of the handler to over-direct or over-handle should be looked upon as evidence of weakness in the dog, no matter how perfect the result, and correspondingly greater value would be placed on the performance of a dog that requires a minimum of handling and direction.

Effect of the Wind

The manner in which the ground is covered will depend not only on the terrain and the cover, but also on the direction and force of the wind. A dog working upwind may cast right and left to the limit of his range in a fairly regular manner without risk of missing game. Downwind a dog will, of necessity, range out ahead of his handler at times to the limit of range, turning back to test out cover since he cannot scent game until downwind to it unless by chance he strikes a trail.

A crosswind presents another variation to the problem, and a dog that is using the wind and hunting out his cover will vary his method accordingly. Judges should look with some doubt on the dog which follows a set pattern regardless of the variations in such conditions. Natural hunting ability in a dog is demonstrated by adaptation to conditions. The "automaton" is recognized by the maintenance of a set pattern regardless of such variations. It is as essential to use the wind in hunting as it is in locating shot game. The dog is less able to "read" the evidence when the scent is blown away rather than towards him, except when it is left on the ground or hangs in the air around the cover in which he is searching, such as when wet, heavy scenting conditions exist.

The Judges Voice

Both in this paragraph and in several other portions of the Standard Procedure emphasis is placed on the necessity for steadiness to flush and command. The whole basis of training and control is involved, and, without control, the best qualities mean nothing.

Steadiness means, of course, that the dog is governed only by his handler regardless of other distractions or sounds. For example, dogs have, in the tension of a field trial, been known to go on the sound of the judge's voice. This is a fault subject to penalty. Hence, handlers prefer a judge to issue instructions to retrieve merely by speaking the number of the dog, saying "send" or tapping the handler on the back.

The Flush and the Pointing Spaniel

The words "flush game boldly and without urging" were included to clarify the problem of the pointing spaniel. Unless care is taken in training with planted birds, a spaniel can form the habit of hesitating on game, which is only one step from "blinking", thus undesirable and to be discouraged. If all training was carried out on wild birds and all trials run on game roaming the fields at will, as in the earlier days, this problem would seldom arise. The only caution to the judge is that he should recognize the poor quality of the scent given out by a deeply planted bird that has not moved and the difficulty of quickly locating it and make allowances as judgment dictates. Much has been written about the "English" or "continental" flush in the cocker spaniel. Usually what is meant is a slight pause after the dog locates the bird but prior to continuation of the flush. This has been favored by some in Great Britain where dogs are actively discouraged from "pegging" or "trapping" which is catching a bird on the

ground before the bird flushes. It has been argued that a slight hesitation allows a bird a moment to pick up off the ground, thus giving the day more pleasurable shooting. The brief pause that occurs when a dog that has located a bird by nose and attempts to verify its position in order to pick up or force it into the air cannot be described as pointing. In addition, a brief pause prior to boldly pushing in and flushing game may not be undesirable in very heavy cover or when a bird is deeply planted. Such hesitation should not be prolonged, and should not allow a bird escape by any other means than direct flight. Under no circumstance should the dog require a command or urging to flush the bird. A judge may presume when a handler so encourages his dog with voice, whistle or hand signals, that the dog lacks boldness to flush.

Paragraph 4. If a dog, following the line of a bird, is getting too far out he should be called off the line and later he should be cast back on it. A dog which causes his handler and gun to run after him while line running, is out of control. Handlers may control their dogs by hand, voice or whistle, but only in the quiet manner that would be used in the field. Any loud shouting or whistling is evidence that the dog is hard to handle, and, in addition, is disturbing to the game.

The Positive Attitude in Judging

It is well to emphasize that good judging requires a positive attitude - a search for the good qualities of every dog - in contrast to a negative attitude in which the judge could, if he were so inclined, be primarily interested in emphasizing those faults which penalize or disqualify contestants.

Field trials were designed as a test to discover the best dogs, not as contests to discover individuals that have made no

mistakes. A negative approach will not necessarily eliminate all the good dogs, but there is no trial in which fine, energetic dogs will not have committed some fault of perhaps only minor proportion. Judging on faults rather than positive qualities can result in a set of placements that fail to demonstrate the class and hunting drive so necessary if the breed is to improve - or even hold its own.

Working to the Handler

Nevertheless, all good qualities are useless if control is lacking. Paragraph number 3 of the Standard Procedure is so clear that it requires no interpretation except perhaps to point out that the spaniel "in touch" with his handler requires a minimum of quiet handling. A dog's hearing is ordinarily highly acute and the whistle or voice should be no louder than the dog can hear.

Paragraph 5. A dog should work to his handler and gun at all times. A dog which marks the fall of a bird, uses the wind, follows a strong runner which has been wounded, and will take direction from his handler is of great value.

It cannot be stated too often that the dog is expected not only to work to his handler but to keep some sort of track of him. The handler can aid his dog by keeping in the open, remaining visible to the dog as possible, and moving up when a dog is obviously on a strong scent and likely to flush game. This action should not be penalized unless it results in leaving part of the course unsearched.

Working downwind a dog will naturally reach out and work back upwind on occasion. This should be faulted only if it results in game flushed out of range or ground unsearched.

Marking and Retrieving

Marking the fall, or the direction thereof, is one of the essential qualities of a good spaniel. However, the eye level of a dog is only a short distance above the ground, and some four or five feet lower than that of the handler, gun and judge. Often all the dog can observe, even if heavy cover does not intervene, is the line of the flight of the bird. In heavy cover or woods the situation becomes even more difficult. Only under favorable conditions can he be expected to see the actual fall itself. Hence, the importance of the use of the wind cannot be overestimated. If the dog shall go somewhat downwind to the fall whether it be crosswind or behind him, he assures himself the best opportunity to locate the bird promptly. Under such circumstances a dog cannot be penalized for failure to instantly locate the exact location of the fall.

Searching and Hand Signals

Should the dog miss the fall entirely, he should continue his search in the area until successful. If a bird has turned in its flight beyond the observation of the dog, it can, of course only be located by searching a gradually widening area of ground. When the dog's search becomes aimless and it is evident it cannot be fruitful, the dog must be taken up, provided it can be determined that the bird actually fell in the area.

On the other hand, should a dog be unable to observe either the line of flight or the bird falling in the air; that is, a blind fall, the handler should direct the dog thereto by hand, voice or whistle, as quietly as possible. A dog should be credited for willingness, ability and speed in accepting such directions.

If a bird proves to be a runner, acknowledgment of the fall is the first requirement and the dog should be able to seek out

and follow the line to a successful conclusion. A more difficult problem is when a dog misses the fall and in his search may even bring in another bird. The obvious answer is that the dog should be sent out again, as would be done in the field, and if he then fails to bring in the bird, and its presence can be verified, his failure is a fault of very real proportion.

The "Eyewipe"

If shot game drops very close to a dog which would make a retrieve of no value, the judge may consider it reasonable to offer the retrieve to the dog's bracedmate.

Likewise, if a dog fails on a retrieve, the judge may offer the bracedmate the opportunity to retrieve the bird. This ensures better conservation of downed game, as the second dog may succeed where the first failed. In this situation, the eyewipe, the second handler should be brought to the location where the first handler failed, and given reasonable directions to the fall. The handler then directs the dog to the area of the fall. If the second dog succeeds on the retrieve, the fault with the first dog is obvious, and the first dog should be taken up. If both dogs fail on the retrieve, the judge, after ensuring the downed game is indeed not in the area of the presumed fall, would instruct the second handler to return to his original beat. The judge may then take up the first dog or continue to run the first dog according to his best judgment. In most circumstances the first dog would be harshly marked down for not tracking the bird and bringing the game to bag. In some circumstances, however, tracking a lightly hit running bird with a long or unseen fall may be an exceedingly difficult prospect, and this may be taken into consideration by the judge. Of course if the judge is able to find the bird, save in exceptional circumstances, the faults are obvious and both dogs should be taken up.

Paragraph 6. When the judge gives a line to a handler and dog to follow, this must be followed and the dog not allowed to interfere with the other contestant running parallel to him.

The Handler and the Beat

Poaching on the other beat is a difficult subject, especially when there is a crosswind. It has the very grave objection of upsetting the other dog. Yet the line between courses is often a varying line of poor definition that the dog himself cannot observe and the handler is not always sure of.

Minor infractions are not important and should be overlooked. The primary fault is the interference with the other dog's work which is out of order whether it be the fault of the dog or of the handler. There will, nevertheless, be difficulties when a bird from one beat has obviously moved over onto the other and the dog has followed the line of scent. No one can advise a judge in advance how to appraise such a situation, but a dog that responds when called off such a line should receive full credit. A dog that is constantly and recurrently over on the other beat and fails to respond to his handler's commands must be considered out of control.

A word of caution is here in order. Handlers intent on their dogs vary in their ability to keep to a line even when it is clearly marked. When working on planted birds, wandering around the course can be wasteful and reduce the chance of promptly finding game. Obviously a judge should from time to time warn a handler who strays from the course and redirect him if necessary.

However, a judge who constantly directs the handler and instructs him to put the dog "in here" or "in there" can cause a handler to "hack" the dog and upset both dog and handler. The general practice is to give the handler the fullest

instructions at the start, to assume the handler knows what he is doing and aside from obvious and unintended departures from those instructions to let the handler run the dog his own way. Only when this procedure is unproductive over a long beat and the judge has knowledge of the presence of game in a neglected area is it wise to interfere.

Paragraph 7. The judges must judge the dogs for game- finding ability, steadiness and retrieving. In game finding the dog should cover all his ground on the beat, leaving no game in his territory and showing courage in facing cover. Dogs must be steady to wing and shot and obey all commands. When ordered to retrieve they should do so tenderly and with speed No trials for Spaniels can possibly be run without retrieving, as that is one of the main purposes for which a Spaniel is used.

The words "be steady" are interpreted to mean that a dog will either sit or "hup" to wing and shot or at the very least will cease all forward motion. Occasionally a dog will stand on its hind legs, better to mark the line and see the fall. If he does this and remains in position, or if he merely stands rather than sits, it is not considered a fault. The old English word "hup" is presumed to have meant "the bird is up" and that the dog should remain in place, presumably in a sitting or "humped" position.

Bringing Game to the Bag

An incomplete retrieve is a serious fault. And yet many times conditions exist which make decisive judgment difficult. The recollection of many trials is full of incidents that could not be explained by the limited evidence available. Even in the case when a judge feels that an incomplete retrieve is not wholly the dog's fault, he can hardly overlook the fact that game was not brought to hand. Nevertheless, judges may well be a

shade more tolerant when some special conditions are encountered. For example, heavy green grass recently exposed to a hard frost gives out a rank odor that kills scent; dry leaves in a woods will hold little scent and make trailing difficult; people off the course and behind a hill have been known to interfere with a dog which was trailing a runner. Handlers of long experience have noted that occasionally a bird will be instantly killed, fall in the open perhaps in a slight depression, wings and feathers closely held, head upward and prove a difficult bird to locate. This appears to happen more frequently with a hen than a cock and some observers who have watched a dog with a known good nose actually step on such a bird have wondered whether a particular condition was created such as quick paralysis of all functions so that the hen gave out little scent much as a setting hen pheasant is known to do on the nest.

No matter what the cause, the purpose of a dog afield is to bring game to the bag and a failure is a fault that can hardly be overlooked except in the most unusual circumstances. A judge under such conditions would be well advised to make the last minute inspection of the ground at the point of fall. Certainly, if the game is found there, all excuses are of no avail. A dog that failed to 'honor' the fall can, of course, have no defense of any kind unless the bird be lodged in a tree or fall beyond an impossible barrier such as a closely meshed wire fence; or if the fall be honored and the bird have made good his escape through a fence that denies passage to the dog.

Game Finding

Game finding is an interesting quality and difficult to define except in terms of results. It is a combination of nose, bird sense, thoroughness and intelligence. Some dogs seldom have

a long, blank beat; they appear to be able to convert such a beat into a productive one. Such dogs seem to find more game in a given territory than others and to find more quickly. Where there is recurrent evidence of this in a trial judges cannot fail to give credit to the dog.

On the other hand, a dog that on a considerable beat covers thoroughly territory where game is known to have been, and, who fails to give evidence that game has recently been there, must be looked upon as deficient in nose, at least on that day. Under those circumstances a judge is justified in consulting with the Steward of the Beat. Should the judge confirm the presence of game, such a dog can be taken up and much time saved that could be better spent on those dogs that are still under consideration. In heavy cover, meticulous hunting is essential. Cockers should be expected to cover the ground thoroughly, and dogs that pass birds should be taken up.

Most trials today are run over a set course with planted birds. Delays occur and this, on occasion, permits birds to move off the course. Under such circumstances if a dog trails a strong-running bird to the right or left, it is up to the judge to decide how far off the course a dog should be permitted to work. If a bird is followed off course for a long distance - even though a flush and fall are eventually accomplished - this can unnecessarily delay the trial. If the judge decides further pursuit is not necessary, the dog should not be penalized if he has failed to flush the bird, provided he has exhibited the drive and nose, and he should be given credit for being under control when ordered to leave the line.

What is a "Break"?

Steadiness is a term of varying meaning to different people, including judges, and has been the cause of much discussion.

Those who expect exact performance feel that a dog should instantly sit to wing and shot and will have no less. Others recognize that though a dog may instantly sit or 'hup' to shot (unless in the very act of flushing game), it is his duty in flushing to push game out and into full flight. They are, therefore, less prone to criticize a dog that traveling at full speed, or driving in to flush, is less exact in sitting to flush provided he gives equally prompt indication that he is prepared to stop as soon as the bird is in flight.

There is the equally difficult problem of the dog which moves to the edge of cover or around a bush or up a slope to verify the flight, observe the line and see the fall. It may be a highly intelligent thing to do if observation is the sole 'intent' of the dog. If the dog has to be stopped by whistle or voice, the judge can only assume the handler believed he was in the process of breaking and score it accordingly.

The problem can best be resolved by the judges if they are guided in their appraisal by the way the handler dealt with the situation. If the handler ordered the dog to stop and the dog didn't stop, this is a break. Once stopped, any vigorous forward movement without command is equally a break.

What is "Chasing"?

All this changes when the dog is sent on retrieve. Then his sole duty is to complete the retrieve as promptly and as expeditiously as possible, disregarding all other sights and scents that are not related to the duty assigned to him. The ability to distinguish between a fresh scent and that of a wounded bird is the result of considerable experience, and it is the dog's duty to be sure he is not passing up the bird he was sent for. If, while on retrieve, a dog flushes a bird in the direction or area of the fall, it is only natural for the dog to

determine whether it is the bird he was sent for before turning away. If the bird flies off low, the dog could well assume that it could be wounded game, at least until it assumes full winged flight when the dog should turn away and continue his search in the area of the fall.

When another bird is thus flushed during a retrieve, many handlers prefer a dog to stop or hup in accord with its training. This presents no problem if the dog is where the handler can see him since the dog may then be directed by voice, whistle or hand signal to continue his search for the dead bird.

However, the ideal conduct on the part of the dog would be to disregard the newly-flushed bird and continue his search of the wounded or dead bird which is his duty to recover. A moment's reflection will disclose the reasons for this. If the fall is a long way off or in heavy cover, the handler cannot see his dog. Should the dog remain humped or leave his humped position without command? To leave would be a violation of the first principles of discipline and training. For the handler to attempt to whistle at or give commands to an unseen dog may upset the dog's whole endeavor, particularly if he is following a vigorous runner.

The same general principle applies to a dog that is retrieving with a bird in its mouth. If he flushes game, and in surprise or in accordance with his training temporarily stops, the dog cannot be criticized. In either case, however, a dog should be given credit if he entirely disregards the flushed bird, or, having stopped momentarily, continued his search or, in the case of a retrieve, continued on in to deliver the bird in his mouth.

Paragraph 8. In judging a Spaniel's work Judges should give attention to the following points, taking them as a whole throughout the entire performance rather than giving too much credit to a flashy bit of work:

- Control at all times, and under all conditions.*
- Scenting ability and use of wind.*
- Manner of covering ground and briskness of questing.*
- Perseverance and courage in facing cover.*
- Steadiness to flush, shot and command.*
- Aptitude in marking fall of game and ability to find it.*
- Ability and willingness to take hand signals.*
- Promptness and style of retrieve and delivery.*
- Proof of tender mouth.*

Where facilities exist and Water Tests are held in conjunction with a stake, the manner and quality of the performance therein shall be given consideration by the Judges in making their awards. Such tests should not exceed in their requirements the conditions met in an ordinary day's rough shoot adjoining water. Land work is the primary function of a Spaniel but where a Water Test is given, any dog that does not complete the Water Test shall not be entitled to any award.

Positive Qualities

This paragraph is a recapitulation. There are several points. All are not of equal value, but all are to be considered in a well-rounded performance. Again the judge will have to strike a balance. It has been truly said no dog is perfect in all departments. Few dogs excel all others in the stake in every phase of the work - at least this is indeed very rare.

Hunting and game finding are the first and basic functions of a spaniel in the field. These should be done with sufficient speed to get the game into the air. Keeness, enthusiasm, and eagerness and that indefinable thing called "class" all contribute to it. The hunting should be productive, and the game should be brought to hand.

Thus positive qualities in the spaniel mean: intelligent ground covering, a "positive" nose, use of the wind, concentration on marking, directness in going to a well- observed fall, perseverance in search, self-confidence on a runner, drive and pace despite difficult cover, a prompt and attractive retrieve, a good carry and, as a matter of course, control, steadiness and willingness to take direction from its handler.

Tender Mouth

Probably no subject has caused more discussion than the question of what constitutes a 'tender mouth'. With a dead bird the best carry is preferably by the back, weight of bird on lower jaw, dog's head up so that the bird is carried easily and is not readily caught by briars or low cover. Yet birds do not fall in a way that enables dogs to pick them up promptly and still have an ideal hold. The result is either a less perfect hold or a less prompt pickup.

The real problem arises on a hard runner or a flapping bird that requires the dog to seize the bird, sometimes in mid- air, sometimes even dragging it from briars or heavy cover, and hold it with sufficient grip to prevent its escape. If the skin is broken at times, it is not surprising, nor can the dog be wholly blamed if he is doing his duty by making a prompt retrieve.

The rule of long-standing endorsement by experienced judges is that "any doubt must be resolved in favor of the dog." Judges would do well to be guided by this rule.

The Crushed Bird

When birds are weak, have been crated for several days, are carried in burlap bags and are planted with head under wing, they will occasionally smother. Sometimes a closely-shot bird will be damaged by the force of the charge or even the manner of fall on hard ground. All these considerations suggest that judges should be slow to mark down a dog for minor damage.

Occasionally during a stake a dog will have the misfortune to pick up one or more live birds which may have failed to flush for any one of several reasons and deliver them dead or dying. This is occasionally the result of finding previously wounded or damaged birds. The repeated recurrence with the same dog or the evidence provided by a damaged bird is the criteria by which the judge will have to be guided.

Certainly a badly crushed bird is undeniable evidence of hard mouth and warrant for elimination of the dog from further consideration.

The Water Test

The water test is another subject of much discussion. A spaniel, as the Standard Procedure states, is primarily a land dog. However, in many parts of the country he is used to retrieve water fowl, and in an ordinary day's shoot there are occasions when the only way of gathering shot game is after a swim or from a stream, pond or lake.

Any dog that warrants the title of Field Champion should be at home in the water, should swim willingly and adequately, and, if necessary, take directions to game fallen in water or across it. There has been much discussion of the type and conformation of the dog that swims easily and thus has confidence in the water. Since Field Champions are much

sought after at the stud and as brood bitches they should possess these qualities or the breed will not continue to develop as it should.

The successful completion of a water test is not only a very logical essential but is a positive requirement. Because adequate facilities do not always exist near a field trial ground, water tests are held at the discretion of the field trial committee. At times the committee seeks the counsel of the judges in the matter. Dogs competing must, if required by the judges to do so, take such a test and refusal by an owner or handler to let his dog take a water test disqualifies the dog in the stake at which he is competing.

Judges in making their awards are required to give due weight to the manner and quality of the performance in the water tests and to eliminate from any award a dog that fails to complete the water retrieve. It is specifically provided that such tests should not exceed in their requirements the conditions ordinarily met in a day's rough shoot adjoining water.

Since a fall in water or a series of such falls is difficult to obtain with game without elaborate preparation, boats, etc. it is customary to place the dog on or near the shore line and have a gun and man placed at a point where, upon the discharge of the gun, the dog may observe the fall of a single thrown dead pheasant or mallard duck at a distance from the dog and handler not exceeding an ordinary fall.

The requirements of the water test for a cocker vary from those for a springer as is stated in the paragraph following.

13b. Before a Cocker or an English Cocker Spaniel shall receive its Field or Amateur Field Championship or National Championship title, it must have shown its willingness and ability to retrieve game

from or across water, after a swim. The water test shall consist of a one or two bird retrieve which shall be at the option of the Field Trial Committee. The birds used shall be available dead game birds such as pheasants, ducks or various partridges. The dog and handler are to be backed up 5 to 10 yards from the water entry. The dog shall retrieve a dead game bird, thrown with gunshot, after a 20-30 yard swim.

13c. A water test can be held as a completely separate event, licensed by the American Kennel Club, or in conjunction with an AKC licensed or member field trial. The holding of a water test during a field trial will be left to the discretion of the Field Trial Committee of the club conducting the trial, but such a possibility must be announced in the premium list. It is the responsibility of the Field Trial Secretary or Committee to submit the results, properly signed by the judges, so they will carry championship credit.

13d. Once a dog has been certified by the judges as having passed a water test at a licensed or member club trial, or at a separate water test licensed by the AKC, the certification will apply toward both the Field and Amateur Field Championship titles (a dog needs only to be certified on one occasion). As a stand-alone event for English Springer Spaniels, it must have a date approved by the English Springer Spaniel Field Trial Association and be judged by 2 All Age Judges with a combined record of 12 AKC licensed English Springer Spaniel Field Stakes. The water test is not a stake; therefore the judges will receive no credit for judging the test.

Conditions of light and background should be taken into consideration, particularly at the eye level of the dog, and it is better to send the dog away rather than toward the group of spectators.

Evaluating the Water Performance

There has been much discussion of the weight to be given to the performance of the dog in the water test. Since only a portion of the above points are displayed in the water test - it is an act of marking and retrieving only - it is generally held that the test should not be called another 'series' and that it should play a far lesser part than any of the land series in the evaluation of the judges; presumably only such a part as the points relating to steadiness, marking and retrieving a single fall play in relation to the whole performance of the dog in the field.

The very artificiality of the test also supports this. It has to be borne in mind that the spaniel is primarily a hunting dog that is expected also to retrieve the game shot over it. Though retrieving is an essential part of his duties, he is not trained solely as a retriever as are some of the larger breeds and can hardly be expected to develop, along with his other abilities, the perfection of work found or developed in those used for retrieving only.

Nevertheless, the dog should in a water test, be staunch to shot, be sent only on the instructions of the judge, mark well the fall of game, enter the water willingly, take direction when necessary and deliver promptly to hand as on land.

Paragraph 9. The dogs shall be shot over by Official Guns appointed by the Field Trial Committee. The Guns should shoot their game in a sportsmanlike manner, as they would in a day's shoot. The proper functioning of the Guns is of the utmost importance. The Guns are supposed to represent the handler up to the time the game is shot, although not interfering in any manner with his work or that of the down dogs. They are supposed, if possible, unless otherwise directed, to kill cleanly and consistently the game flushed by the Spaniels, at

a point most advantageous to a fair trial of the dog's abilities, with due regard to the dogs, handlers, Judges, gallery and other contingencies. All gunners must be 21 years of age or older. It is strongly recommended that gunners wear appropriate hearing and eye protection.

Good Gunning Essential

Judges should not hesitate to assemble the guns at the beginning of a trial or a stake and give them any instructions the judges feel appropriate or interpret to them the above paragraph or either of the two succeeding paragraphs relating to the guns. If preferred, such instructions may be given to the Gun Captain to be transmitted by him to the others. In addition there should be no hesitation on the part of a judge to give further counsel or advice to a gun during the course of a stake. Such clarification will help to provide "a fair trial of the dogs' abilities".

The safety of all concerned – the handlers, the judges themselves, the dogs, the gallery and spectators - is involved. It is customary to instruct the guns not to shoot at birds that fly back over the gallery. In addition to the danger involved, a bird that falls among or beyond the crowd provides confusing conditions for a retrieve.

Guns should, therefore, feel that they will not be criticized for passing up shots that entail the slightest element of danger or those shots which would be in conflict in any way with the provisions of these paragraphs or the instructions of the judges.

Paragraph 10. Care should be taken not to shoot so that the game falls too close to the dog. If this is done it does not afford a chance for the dog to show any good retrieving ability and often results in a bird being destroyed. The guns should stand perfectly quiet after a

shot, for otherwise they may interfere with the dog and handler.

When a dog makes a retrieve no other birds or game should be shot unless ordered by the judge for special reasons. The gun must also keep himself in the correct position to the handler and others.

Paragraph 11. It has been repeatedly proven that the most efficient gun and load for this work, in all fairness to the dogs, handlers and those responsible for the trial, is a well- choked twelve gauge double gun, and a load of not less than three and one-fourth drams of smokeless powder or equivalent, and one and one-eighth ounces of No.5, No.6, No.7 or No 7½ shot.

The Gun is the "Silent" Partner

What should be the position of the gun? If the gunner is the 'good right arm' of the handler, he should be reasonably close to the handler, though not so close that the gunner interferes with the handler or the dog. The guns should not crowd after the dog, which only encourages the latter to move out, but should guide on the handler alone. Nor should wing guns be placed too far out on the flank. This is unnatural and often affects the dog in his beat and the type of fall he receives.

After a fall, the guns should stand quietly until the dog has been sent on retrieve. Then the gunner may break his gun and step quietly aside to leave a clear and unobstructed view of the handler. They should volunteer nothing to the handler or judge, speak only when spoken to by the judge and give aid to the handler only as the judge authorizes it. They are the silent partner of the judge in providing the test required - and of the handler in producing the result.

Paragraph 12. All field trial-giving clubs should clearly recognize that Open All-Age Stakes are of the first importance and that all other stakes are of relatively lesser importance and that an entire

day should be reserved for the running of an Open All-Age Stake unless there is a very small entry.

Keep the Trial Moving

This paragraph obviously needs no clarification except to point out that judges have often wished in vain for more time and more daylight toward the end of a trial. It is advisable, therefore, when the entry is large (and even when it is not too large), to avoid spending too much time on early series that might later be devoted to more thorough testing of those dogs that warrant consideration for awards.

Many such situations can be avoided if judges plan their time and keep "on top" of the trial, forcing its progress in accord with their schedules. The benefits are many. All dogs will receive more nearly equal attention and much embarrassment will be avoided as the remaining daylight wanes far sooner than anyone expects.

However, even this is not possible unless the Field Trial Committee sets the starting time early enough, assures the early arrival of strong, full-winged birds in good condition, provides for the presence of bird carriers, planters and guns at the time specified; in other words, has everything in order for a prompt start at an early hour.

Three or more series are usually essential to disclose the abilities of good dogs in an All-Age stakes. Two series are required by the rule that each dog should be down at least once under each judge. Final determination is in the hands of the judges.

A Few Words in Conclusion

Few judges can remember every performance without making adequate notes for reference in conference with a

fellow judge. This is particularly true in stakes with large entries. Some judges have found it valuable to rate the performance of each dog on some simple scale; others have developed a check system based on the Procedure. Each judge must develop his own system. Nevertheless, the retention of notes for a reasonable time after the trial provides a ready and quick reference in case any questions arise and is less fallible than memory.

The Conduct of the Handler

What should a judge require of a handler? It is generally considered that a handler should run his dog as appears most likely to provide a display of the dog's abilities. He should be in control at all times, with a minimum of quiet, unobtrusive handling. When game is flushed by either dog, the handler should hup his dog and remains still unless otherwise instructed by the judge. The handler should, of course, send his dog on retrieves only when so instructed and after the judge is assured that the dog is steady. In instructing the handler to send the dog the judge should move quietly and make every effort not to make any sudden movement which the dog might mistake for a command from his handler to retrieve.

Steadiness While Hupped

Handlers who assume the privilege of calling their dog to them without instruction from the judge (when the dog on the other beat is retrieving) run the risk of having the judge assume, with some justice, that the handler lacks confidence that the dog is perfectly steady. The same thing applies to a handler who moves closer to his dog without orders to do so. This differs from the case of a dog that is in the general area of a fall or the line of retrieve when a judge may well use his

discretion in instructing the handler to move his dog away in order not to interfere with the work of the brace mate.

A properly trained spaniel will remain where hopped until called off and a dog which gives evidence of such control is entitled to a higher rating than a dog which the handler feels must be called back in. In championship stakes it is well for judges not to be in a great hurry to deprive themselves of the evidence of steadiness thus obtained, provided the dog is not in a position to interfere with the other dog's work or retrieve.

The Long Fall

Since a championship stake is completed in one day, or at most a day and a half, judges should seize every opportunity to learn all they can about a dog. Because of shortage of time, judges are reluctant at times to send a dog for a long fall or one well off the course. If information about a dog is sought, this is a lost opportunity. Probably the best rule in a championship stake is that any practical retrieve should be attempted which will not unduly disturb game planted ahead on either course. In a minor stake such falls may well be disregarded since a young or inexperienced dog may miss the fall badly, encounter and flush other birds and generally disturb game on the course for a considerable distance ahead.

Owners and Others - Keep Back

In an advisory resolution passed a number of years ago it was pointed out that no one except the judges (and an apprentice judge, if any), the handlers and the guns should be forward of the Field Steward. This gives a better opportunity for the gallery to see and makes it easier to keep them in order. This applies equally to owners eager to watch their dogs, to guns not in line, stewards not presently charged with a duty and to all other officials. Any conversation, no matter how trivial, of

owners with judges, handlers and guns should be avoided if only for the sake of appearance.

The Judge- Like Caesar's Wife

What about the judge at a trial? During the course of a trial the judge is probably better off to keep his own counsel, thus avoiding even the appearance of being influenced by the views, the opinions or even the knowledge of others.

Certainly any discussion with owners or others (except his fellow judge) of the performance of a dog still under judgment would be shocking bad taste on the part of both.

The judge must base awards on what he has personally observed of the performance on that particular day. When the judge was invited, it was because the committee had confidence in his/her judgment, powers of observation and capacity to be objective, which is another way of saying the judge is expected to put emotions and sentiment under lock and key, The judge has a personal responsibility to inform his fellow judge clearly and to jointly appraise the several performances. Each has an obligation to render fair judgment.

Provide Strong Birds

One word about the problem created by the inability to run trials on natural game as in former years; birds recently removed from pens vary somewhat from wild birds in the character and strength of the scent they give out. When closely planted in a grass bed or clump of cover without opportunity to move, there is a greatly reduced opportunity for the wind to carry their scent on the surrounding ground or cover. When these birds also show a reluctance to fly or are weak-winged and incapable of prompt escape, trials are run under an additional disadvantage. Birds are retrieved from their 'beds' or are pulled from heavy cover by force. If weak,

they sometimes suffocate from being carried in bags or from the manner of planting or the dog's grip required to hold them, or from a combination of all three.

Field trial committees should make every effort to provide strong-winged, healthy, vigorous birds and employ skilled planters. Too much concern about not wasting birds can be wasteful in itself, since deeply planted birds will be more readily caught by the dogs. Birds planted well ahead of the dogs, even if they move off the course, will at least give the judge an opportunity to observe the ability of the dog on a recent scent.

There are a number of game bird farms throughout the country who raise birds on the "open range" procedure. Others who buy young birds continue to keep them in large pens and exercise them daily. Some even use dogs to make them fly so that they will develop some fear of people and dogs. Such birds, if strong and full winged, will provide a far better trial than the run-of-the-mill. There is no real excuse for not providing such birds in a licensed or member trial in stakes that require game birds even if the regulations prescribe only that they be full-winged. They should also be full-tailed, healthy, vigorous and eager to escape by flight.

Summation

In conclusion certain points can well be repeated and some additional observations added to the discussion of field trials.

The purpose of trials is to emphasize the qualities of breeding and of training that produce the best dog afield. Certain qualities such as scenting ability, game finding, stamina, and responsiveness to the handler are highly to be desired along with that eagerness and spaniel quality which is so attractive and adds so much to the pleasure of a day's hunt.

Tendencies in these and other directions are inheritable traits. If the breed is to improve, bad tendencies should not be rewarded. These include barking while questing, hard mouth, extreme willfulness and others that will occur to each reader.

The degree of training is a matter of both the ability of the dog and of the trainer. Training cannot put into a dog the natural qualities; it can take them out. And yet natural qualities are not useful unless accompanied by a degree of control that makes a team of a dog and handler.

Therefore, the purpose of training is to produce control while at the same time fostering and encouraging the natural qualities of the hunting dog.

Informal and Sanctioned Trials

The hosts of informal trials that are held throughout the year are a valuable contribution to the experience of both dog and handler. The stakes can be varied to suit local conditions, pigeons can be used to save expense, and many other details varied to encourage participation of the inexperienced.

Particularly in Puppy Stakes, Prospect Stakes and Field Dog Stakes the requirements are relaxed as to give an owner the opportunity to compare his puppy with others, much as the Novice Stake is helpful to handlers in determining their own capacities.

Much of the above applies to sanctioned trials, particularly as to the choice of stakes and the application of standards, Errors and faults that would be grievous in a championship stake are overlooked if the contender otherwise displays desirable qualities. However, judges should bear in mind that, though the requirements be relaxed to the extent that the dog is forgiven much and hence not eliminated from the stake, the performance of a dog that is steady to wing and shot and

gives other evidence of control is entitled, other things being equal, to a higher rating.

The Working Certificate

From the late 1970's, there has been a continuous effort to keep the working qualities foremost in the minds of breeders of English Cocker Spaniels, both in the field and in the show ring. The Working Dog Certificate (WD) and Working Dog Excellent (WDX) are granted only by the English Cocker Spaniel Club of America, Inc. Information on the working certificates is available from the ECSCA. The name and address of the current secretary of the ECSCA can be obtained from the administrative division of the American Kennel Club, 51 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10010 or online at www.akc.org.

The Hunting Test

The Hunting Test was set up by the American Kennel Club in January, 1988 to provide a noncompetitive performance test for all AKC flushing spaniel breeds. Several other upland hunting breeds are now able to enter these events. Successful completion of standardized performance criteria over the course of several tests qualifies for the AKC titles of Junior Hunter (JH), Senior Hunter (SH), and Master Hunter (MH). More information and the rules are available from the AKC in the booklet "Regulations for AKC Hunting Tests for Spaniels and Guidelines for Spaniel Hunting Tests", which can be obtained from the American Kennel Club division at 5580 Centerview Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606 or online at www.akc.org.

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