**AFA Rule Clarification Notification No. 38 – Issued November 2012.**

This Notification deals with:

1. Review of Handicap Racing format Rules;
2. Clarification on what constitutes a meaningless Heat and **Rule** **amendment** to Section 1.5 to clarify this matter.
3. Clarification of what constitutes a clean run when dog drops ball on return run and returns to collect ball;
4. Revision of Timekeepers Exam;
5. Clarification of process where a limited entry competition decision is applied and minor **Rule amendment** to Rule 1.1f).
6. Stewards Exams – exams need to be in members own words;
7. Clarification re no adjustment of points after Timesheets have been signed by Team Captain.

The two Rule amendments shown are deemed to be of a minor nature and are simply clarifications of existing Rules and accordingly do not require approval at an AGM. They are accordingly for immediate adoption. Judges and Members are asked to update the September 2012 Rule Book reprint to show the changes contained in this Notification.

1. **Review of Handicap Racing format Rules.**

The Rules Sub Committee has undertaken a complete review of all comments received regarding the trial of the handicap rage format at two recent Queensland Competitions.

The feedback indicated that the format generally worked well and was well received by teams, demonstrating that the new handicap format was a welcome option for smaller competitions.

The Committee looked closely at the suggestion in the feedback to allow teams that break out during a handicap comp to change their seed time. The Sub Committee felt that allowing teams to enter a declared time knowing they would have one or more chances to change it during the competition would encourage either laziness in working out the declared time or deliberately overestimating the time and relying on ‘fine tuning’ it during the comp to optimise their handicap, which would disadvantage teams who don’t play this game.

With a fixed seedtime, the timesheets can be prepared and printed with the correct handicap and seedtime for every team and every race. With a changing seedtime, each time it changed during a comp, the handicap time and breakout time for every future race (& heat for the race in which it happened) involving that team would have to change, and it could involve every opposing team’s timesheet as well. Under the pressure of racing, the scope for error is significant.

Regarding the suggestion that Best Times achieved in handicap comps should be fed into the Web for use in future comps, the Subcommittee agreed this was desirable. The Rules Sub Committee to look at how best to indicate best time on time sheets.

Based on the Review the following RECOMMENDATIONS were adopted:

* That the rules for handicap format be held “as is” until experience has been gained in a number of competitions, including in other States with different teams and organisers. The comments and suggestions that have been made will be held over and combined with input from future competitions when the Committee believes the time is right for a further review.
* That team Best Heat Times (adjusted for handicap when necessary) be fed back into Web Times as for regular competitions.

The Handicap Format is now generally available for competition organisers to use for smaller competitions. The Rules are available on the AFA Web site.

1. **Clarification on what constitutes a meaningless Heat and Rule amendment to Section 1.5 to clarify this matter.**

The Committee noted the question about the apparent conflict between the Meaningless heat rule and the fixed heat formats, i.e. 3-heat and 5-heat races, where even if one of the teams has an unbeatable lead before all heats have been run, the remaining heats are run anyway.

The Committee confirmed that the intent of Rule 1.5 was to stop competition officials running additional races at competitions where there was time left in the day after the AFA sanctioned running order had been completed, thus letting teams who ran those races get extra AFA title points.

This is already clarified in an explanatory note in the AFA Judges Manual on the AFA website under AFA Officials \ Judges education & training \ Judges Manual, Page 13.The Subcommittee felt however that many members did not understand this and were unlikely to read the Judges Manual, so a general clarification would be useful. The Committee agreed that Rule 1.5 be redrafted to read (changes shown in underlined text):

Section 1.5 - Meaningless Heats

Races that are meaningless to the outcome of a sanctioned competition are not to be run just for the sake of allowing teams to accumulate more points toward flyball titles. Only races that have been approved by the AFA for the scheduled competition may be run..

1. **Clarification of what constitutes a clean run when dog drops ball on return run and returns to collect ball;**

The Rules Sub Committee reported that a Judge had requested that the AFA review the Rules re dogs correcting mistakes during a run without penalty.

The committee considered and discussed the following:

* Rule 9.2 b), which describes the run, does not require a “perfect” return. The dog only has to carry the ball over the four jumps and across the line. Exact text is “ . . . retrieve the ball from the box, return over all 4 jumps, and cross the start-finish line between the start gates with the ball in its mouth.”
* The subcommittee did not believe that the spirit of the sport would be served by tightening up this rule. It felt that any dog that was well trained enough to go back and retrieve the ball after dropping it should not be penalised with a foul. The time lost was already a penalty, and the subcommittee considered this to be enough.
* Concerning the problem for the Judge trying to keep an eye on both lanes where one dog has dropped the ball and is returning to retrieve it, when there is doubt in the Judge’s mind that the dog has actually carried the ball over all four jumps and across the line, the Judge should consult the line and box stewards, as their entire focus is only on the one dog.

The following clarification is accordingly issued:

“Clarification of Rule 9.2 b): A return run is clear PROVIDED the dog has carried the ball over all four jumps before it crosses the start/finish line, and the ball is in the dog’s mouth as the ball crosses the line.

To illustrate, the following scenarios are ACCEPTABLE under 9.2 b) for the return run:

* The dog drops the ball, goes over one or more jumps without it, returns to the ball (either over or around any jumps between), picks up the ball and continues its return;
* The dog carries the ball over the same jump twice;
* The dog carries the ball around a jump but then returns and carries the ball over it;
* The dog carries the ball over the jumps in a different order and/or in reverse direction;
* The ball is in the dog’s mouth as it crosses the start/finish line but the dog drops the ball before all of its body has crossed the line.

Line and Box stewards are required to assist the Judge if asked to confirm that a dog has completed the key requirements for a successful run, which are:

* Crosses the start/finish line after the inbound dog has crossed it or the countdown has finished (i.e. not an early cross or start foul);
* Jumped all four jumps to the box in succession (i.e. in the correct order and once only);
* Triggered the box and retrieved the correct ball;
* Carried the ball over each jump on the return (Note: taking the jumps in incorrect order or direction and carrying the ball over the same jump twice are not fouls);

The ball must be in the dog’s mouth when it (the ball) crosses the line.”

1. **Revision of Timekeepers Exam;**

The Committee has approved a revised Exam format for the Timekeepers Exam. The new format includes a practical component as well as a theory exam. The new format of the exam is being loaded to the AFA Web site for member access.

5. **Clarification of process where a limited entry competition decision is applied and minor Rule amendment to Rule 1.1f).**

The Sub Committee reported on the suggestion that a suitable sentence be added re teams being able to re-submit their seed times if one or more teams from the same club are excluded from the comp and team composition is changed as a result.

The Sub committee considered and discussed the following:

* Clubs would most likely appreciate the opportunity to reorganise and rearrange their accepted teams when one or more could not be accepted at a limited entry competition;
* The Subcommittee agreed it was reasonable to allow the clubs to resubmit their seed times when this happened;
* Given the delay this would add before division splits, formats and running orders could be worked out, the Subcommittee felt that comp organisers should make their entries closing date for limited comps at least one week earlier than they would do for unlimited comps.

The Subcommittee’s RECOMMENDATION that Rule 1.1 f) be amended by adding the following clarification (new text underlined) was accepted :

“ . . . . required to indicate the priority of selection for multiple team entries. Clubs notified that one or more of their nominated team(s) cannot be accepted due to competition limits may resubmit the composition and seedtime of their accepted team(s) within one week of the notification. Organisers must allow for this extra time”.

1. **Stewards Exams – exams need to be in member’s own words.**

The Committee noted that there had been a number of recent Stewards Exams where identical wording was being used by a number of members from the same club. The Committee accepted that this could be as a result of the members completing the exam in group format. The Committee is of the view that whilst group discussion of exam questions is quite acceptable each members answers should however be in their own words and reflecting their own understanding of the Rules.

1. **Clarification re no adjustment of points after Timesheets have been signed by Team Captain.**

The Committee some years ago made a decision that once a Captain had signed a Timesheet as correct no adjustments for dogs or points would be accepted. It is the responsibility of Team Captains to check Timesheets at the end of each Competition to ensure that Dogs CRNs shown are correct and that 4 dogs are circled for each heat. Despite this decision some members/clubs continue to request amendments to signed off timesheets. Accordingly the Committee agreed to insert on Timesheets ,where captain signs, a statement to indicate that it is the responsibility of Team Captains to check that all details are correct and no adjustments will be made after the competition. Members are encouraged to consult with Team captains to ensure CRN details shown are correct for their dog/s.

**Brian Lindsay (AFA Secretary).**