



Committee to Increase NSTRA Amateur Competition REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the Committee to Increase NSTRA Amateur Competition was formed and tasked with developing supplemental guidelines to expand NSTRA's amateur program—with the ultimate goal of attracting new members to NSTRA through amateur competition. An important consideration for the committee in developing guidelines was to work within the existing amateur framework as much as possible while still maximizing opportunities for amateur dogs to compete. As a result, the proposed suggestions represent what the committee believes is an appropriate balance between changes to the existing program guidelines and potential benefits in terms of program growth.

Below were the specific objectives of the committee:

- A. Realign amateur eligibility standards so that they are uniform and allow participants more opportunities to develop using existing formats
- B. Design a pathway for amateur participants to work towards an Amateur Championship title across every trial format
- C. Develop both Regional and National Amateur Championship trial formats that provide added value to the program and further recognize amateur competitors
- D. Engage Regions by offering incentive programs for promoting and using Amateur formats across the country
- E. Develop a strategy to advertise these programs and trial formats to attract new members as well as giving our sponsors more exposure within our organization (**NOTE:** Objective E has been tabled until all other objectives are approved)

2. PROPOSED GUIDELINES

Objective A: Realign amateur eligibility standards so that they are uniform and allow participants more opportunities to develop using existing formats

The aim of Objective A is to reduce the degree to which the NSTRA amateur program serves as a transitional program to open competition. That is, in order to grow the amateur program it is believed there should be greater potential for amateur dogs to maintain their amateur eligibility and to compete as amateurs without being required to transition to open competition. Sections 17.01 and 22.01 are most relevant to Objective A.

Section 17 OPEN/AMATEUR TRIAL FORMAT:

17.01 Eligibility: Any dog that has 3 Open points or less, none of which can be first place points, is classified as an Amateur dog and is eligible for the Amateur division. An Open dog is one that has four (4) or more Open points or a dog that has earned first place points in the Open Division. Entrants are responsible for the proper classification of their dogs (Amateur or Open). An Amateur dog can run in either the Amateur or Open Division at the owner's discretion (including moving back and forth between the two, except as noted in the last sentence) until such time as the dog achieves any one of the following:

- a) Amateur Championship status (18 points - 9 of which are first place Amateur points)
- b) Earns more than 4 points in Open Division
- c) Earns any First place point (s) in the Open Division

Recommended changes to Section 17.01

17.01 Eligibility: Any dog that has six (6) or less Open points, including first place points, is classified as an Amateur dog and is eligible for the Amateur division. An Open dog is one that has seven (7) or more Open points of any type. Entrants are responsible for the proper classification of their dogs (Amateur or Open). An Amateur dog can run in either the Amateur or Open Division at the owner's discretion (including moving back and forth between the two) until the dog achieves seven (7) Open points. If an Amateur dog earns seven (7) or more points in the Open Division, and if the dog has earned at least seven (7) Amateur points of any kind, then the dog will receive their Amateur Champion title if the dog does not already have an Amateur Champion title.

Section 22 OPEN/COMBINED TRIAL FORMAT:

22.01 Eligibility: Any dog that has 3 Open points or less, none of which can be first place points, is classified as an Amateur dog and is eligible for the Amateur division. An Open dog is one that has four (4) or more Open points or a dog that has earned first place points in the Open Division. Entrants are responsible for the proper classification of their dogs (Amateur or Open). In the OPEN/COMBINED trial format an Amateur dog competes in the Amateur and Open division in the same brace.

An Amateur dog can run in either the Amateur or Open Division at the owner's discretion (including moving back and forth between the two, except as noted in the last sentence) until such time as the dog achieves any one of the following:

- a) Amateur Championship status (18 points - 9 of which are first place Amateur points)
- b) Earns more than 4 points in Open Division
- c) Earns any First place point (s) in the Open Division
- d) If an Amateur dog earns 4 or more points in the Open Division or earns any First place points in the Open Division then the dog will receive their Amateur Championship.

Recommended changes to Section 22.01

22.01 Eligibility: Any dog that has six (6) or less Open points, including first place points, is classified as an Amateur dog and is eligible for the Amateur division. An Open dog is one that has seven (7) or more Open points of any type. Entrants are responsible for the proper classification of their dogs (Amateur or Open). In the OPEN/COMBINED trial format an Amateur dog competes in the Amateur and Open division in the same brace. An Amateur dog can run in either the Amateur or Open Division at the owner's discretion (including moving back and forth between the two) until the dog achieves seven (7) Open points. If an Amateur dog earns seven (7) or more points in the Open Division, and if the dog has earned at least seven (7) Amateur points of any kind, then the dog will receive their Amateur Champion title if the dog does not already have an Amateur Champion title.

These changes allow a dog to maintain amateur eligibility with a higher number of open points than is currently allowed, which also includes first place points. In addition, the dog is not required to transition to open competition after achieving an Amateur Champion title, thus allowing a dog to earn multiple amateur titles. Under these recommended guidelines, the only time a dog would be required to transition to open competition would be after earning seven open points, at which time the dog would receive an Amateur Champion title so long as it also has at least seven amateur points and does not already have this title. The requirement that a dog have at least seven amateur points to receive the Amateur Champion title is to ensure the dog has in fact competed as an amateur.

SPECIAL NOTE: At the time these guideline changes take effect, any dog that holds an Amateur Champion title due to a 1st place open win during an Open/Combined trial shall retain that Champion title even if the dog becomes eligible again for amateur status, i.e., still has fewer than seven open points.

Objective B: Design a pathway for amateur participants to work towards an Amateur Championship title across every trial format

It is the view of this committee that recommended changes for Objective A regarding the allowance of open points earned by amateur dogs also address Objective B. An amateur dog must register as an amateur for a proportion of its trials; however, the amateur dog can also participate in open only trials and still maintain amateur status and a pathway to an Amateur Champion title.

Once an amateur dog has earned at least seven amateur points, the dog can then earn an Amateur Champion title by (a) accumulating another 11 amateur points (18 total amateur points, 9 of which are first place points) or by (b) earning seven open points of any type. Consequently, any trial format offering either open or amateur points is a potential pathway to an Amateur Champion title.

Objective C: Develop both Regional and National Amateur Championship trial formats that provide added value to the program and further recognize amateur competitors

It is anticipated that if NSTRA were to offer Regional and National Amateur Championship trials that these higher-level trials will increase both the visibility and perceived significance of NSTRA amateur competition. By extension, these trials may in and of themselves positively impact growth of the NSTRA amateur program. To accomplish Objective C, the committee recommends two new amateur trials.

Regional Amateur Championship:

- Qualification: Any amateur placement or having an Amateur Champion title [with fewer than seven (7) open points] during the qualification period (same time period as Regional Open Championship).
- Format: Beat your brace mate
- Minimum of 7 qualified amateur dogs
- No final hour
- Qualification rounds: Regular amateur points apply as in all other amateur formats
- Final points as follows
 - 7-12 Dogs 1st-2 amateur points, 2nd-1 amateur point
 - 13-23 Dogs 1st-3 amateur points, 2nd-2 amateur point, 3rd-1 amateur point
 - 24-32 Dogs 1st-4 amateur points, 2nd-3 amateur points, 3rd-2 amateur points 4th-1 amateur point
- All first place amateur points awarded for finals

It will be up to each region to decide if, when, and where it will hold a Regional Amateur Championship trial. Established NSTRA sanctioning fees shall apply.

SPECIAL NOTE: A dog is allowed to compete in both the Regional Amateur Championship and Regional Open Championship trials in the same year if qualified.

National Amateur Championship

- Qualification: Must obtain Amateur Champion status or have an Amateur Champion title during qualification period (same time period as Trial of Champions). **NOTE:** A dog earning Amateur Champion status via 18 total amateur points or via 7 open points combined with at least 7 amateur points is eligible to compete in the National Amateur Championship trial until that dog earns an Open Champion title.
- Format: Beat your brace mate
- The National Amateur Championship trial will require a minimum of 24 dogs

- No Final Hour
- Amateur points awarded during qualification rounds in accordance with any other all amateur trial format
- Open points awarded for final round placements as follows
24-32 Dogs 1st-3 open points, 2nd-2 open points, 3rd-1 open point
33 or more Dogs 1st-4 open points, 2nd-3 open points, 3rd-2 open points, 4th-1 open point
- No 1st place open points awarded

Objective D: Engage regions by offering incentive programs for promoting and using amateur formats across the country

After careful consideration, the committee moved away from developing any financial incentive programs based on region use of amateur trial formats. Rather, the committee voted to incentivize region membership growth. This change is based on the understanding that membership growth is the ultimate goal behind increasing NSTRA amateur competition. Furthermore, the additional revenue generated by increased membership will largely offset the cost of a membership-growth incentive program. With these considerations in mind, the committee recommends the following:

Region Incentives Based on Membership Growth

Incentives are based on region membership numbers at the time of the region's Open Regional Elimination trial. If a region's membership numbers are higher at their Regional Elimination trial date than they were at the corresponding trial date of the previous year that region may be eligible for an incentive.

- Regions with a membership increase of **5% to 9%** will receive a **\$250** incentive
- Regions with a membership increase of **10% or more** will receive a **\$500** incentive

Each region will have discretion in how best to use of these incentive funds to promote their region.

3. Additional Changes

Change A: Because of the proposed changes above, the guidelines pertaining to eligibility of bye dogs will require edits to be consistent with the proposed guidelines.

17.17 Bye Dogs: Should an uneven number of Amateur entries be received, a bye dog may be used to round out the field provided the bye dog meets all the eligibility criteria for Amateur competition (3 or less Open NSTRA points, none of which can be First Place points). If no suitable bye dog is available, the last Amateur entry received will be returned with a full refund. In the event of an uneven number of entries in the Open Class, a standby dog may be used. An Amateur entry may compete in the Open Class if he so chooses, but may not compete in both classes on the same day. There are no changes to the rules governing bye dogs in the Open Trial.

Recommended changes to Section 17.17

17.17 Bye Dogs: Should an uneven number of Amateur entries be received, a bye dog may be used to round out the field provided the bye dog meets all the eligibility criteria for Amateur competition (6 or less Open NSTRA points). If no suitable bye dog is available, the last Amateur entry received will be returned with a full refund. In the event of an uneven number of entries in the Open Class, a standby dog may be used. An Amateur entry may compete in the Open Class if he so chooses, but may not compete in both classes on the same day. There are no changes to the rules governing bye dogs in the Open Trial.

Change B: Similarly, the proposed changes necessitate changes to sections 18.02 and 18.03 concerning open versus novice dogs. These changes keep the definition of an open dog consistent across trial formats.

18.02 A Novice dog is one that has a total of three (3) Open points or less and none of the points are first place points. An Open dog is one that has four (4) or more points.

18.03 Entrants are responsible for assuring their Novice dog has three (3) points or less.

Recommended changes to Sections 18.02 and 18.03

18.02 A Novice dog is one that has a total of six (6) Open points or less. An Open dog is one that has seven (7) or more Open points.

18.03 Entrants are responsible for assuring their Novice dog has six (6) Open points or less.

Change C: The committee is also proposing changes to the all-amateur trial format with the goal of increasing continuity between the different types of amateur trials and reducing the degree to which NSTRA amateur competition represents a transitional program to open competition.

The proposed changes are as follows: (a) award amateur points for all-amateur trials instead of open points, (b) only require there to be seven dogs in the trial for the award of three first place amateur points, and (c) no restriction on how many all-amateur trials a region can host each season.

Section 20 AMATEUR FIELD TRIAL is most relevant to Change C:

Section 20 AMATEUR FIELD TRIAL:

20.01 All Amateur Trials shall be run under National Shoot-To-Retrieve Association rules. Each region may hold no more than four (4) Amateur trials per year (two during the spring trial season and two during the fall trial season). All trials must be scheduled through Region Presidents. There is no sanctioning fee required to be paid to NSTRA for Amateur trials.

20.02 All scheduled Amateur field trials will be officially sanctioned trials by NSTRA.

20.03 Championship points shall be awarded as follows:

12-17 entries One point for first place

18-23 entries Two points for first place One point for second place

24-32 entries Three points for first place Two points for second place One point for third place

20.04 No Amateur points shall count as first place points in qualifying as a champion.

20.05 All Amateur points acquired in the time frame for qualifying for Regional Elimination trials shall count as qualification points for Regional Elimination trials.

20.06 No Amateur points shall apply toward the Top Performance Award.

20.07 Entrants shall be responsible for assuring their dog does not have any placements before entering an Amateur trial.

20.08 Entry fees shall be limited to **30.00** per entry. Total number of entries per owner and/or handler shall comply with 8.08 under Rules for Recognized Field Trials.

20.09 Trial participants must be NSTRA members.

20.10 Awards: plaques, trophies, etc. shall be awarded to the top six placements of each Amateur trial.

20.11 Trial articles and photos of the placements of Amateur trials will be published in the NSTRA magazine if forwarded to the NSTRA office.

Recommended changes to Section 20.01

20.01 Eligibility: Any dog that has six (6) or less Open points, including first place points, is classified as an Amateur dog and is eligible for the Amateur division. An Open dog is one that has seven (7) or more Open points of any type. All Amateur Trials shall be run under National Shoot-To-Retrieve Association rules. All trials must be scheduled through Region Presidents. Entrants are responsible for the proper classification of their dogs. There is no sanctioning fee required to be paid to NSTRA for Amateur trials.

20.02 All scheduled Amateur field trials will be officially sanctioned trials by NSTRA.

20.03 Amateur points shall be awarded as follows:

4 entries One point for first place

5-6 entries Two points for first place, One point for second place

7 or more entries Three points for first place, Two points for second place, One point for third place

20.04 All Amateur points acquired in the time frame for qualifying for Regional Elimination trials shall count as qualification points for Regional Elimination trials.

20.05 No Amateur points shall apply toward the Top Performance Award.

*20.06 Entry fees shall be limited to **30.00** per entry. Total number of entries per owner and/or handler shall comply with 8.08 under Rules for Recognized Field Trials.*

20.07 Trial participants must be NSTRA members.

20.08 Awards: plaques, trophies, etc. shall be awarded to placements of each Amateur trial.

20.09 Trial articles and photos of the placements of Amateur trials will be published in the NSTRA magazine if forwarded to the NSTRA office.

Change D: Guideline 22.05 pertaining to number of dogs allowed per owner/handler during an Open/Combined format trial requires a change to be consistent with the existing guideline for open trials.

22.05 Entries in the Open/Combined trial: Entries in both the Open and Amateur divisions of the trial shall be limited to five (5) dogs per owner and or handler per trial. Two shall be specified with the additional dogs to be added to the field seven (7) days prior to the trial only if the trial is not full per rules of a recognized field trial. Under the Open/Combined format 24 dogs (12 braces) is considered a full 3 point Open trial. Preference shall be given to entering 8 Amateur dogs in order to achieve a 3 point Amateur trial.

Recommended changes to Section 22.05

22.05 Entries in the Open/Combined trial: Entries in both the Open and Amateur divisions of the trial shall be limited to five (5) dogs per owner and or handler per trial. Three (3) shall be specified with the additional dogs to be added to the field seven (7) days prior to the trial only if the trial is not full per rules of a recognized field trial. Under the Open/Combined format 24 dogs (12 braces) is considered a full 3 point Open trial. Preference shall be given to entering eight (8) Amateur dogs in order to achieve a 3 point Amateur trial.