Member Motion from David Strong AFA 2022 AGM

Motion

"To eliminate restarting a heat after a false start. To treat false starts by the start dog as the same as an early pass by the second, third or fourth dog in that if the start dog false starts the heat continues on with the start dog re-running after the 4th dog. Also allow the start dog handler to have the option of one practice start at the beginning of each race (not heat) after the warm-up. The Rules to be amended are detailed under **Rule Changes to Eliminate False Starts** to implement the motion."

Rationale:

The start dog could potentially start a heat three times if both teams false start before a clean start, and up to 15 starts for a best of five heat race. Therefore, could in one heat run the equivalent of three heats in one heat and accumulative over a race meeting exceed the heat maximum.

Why does the lead dog/handler have the opportunity to correct an error without penalty when the second, third and fourth dogs don't have that opportunity and must re-run in the heat if the team desires. This is especially so given that the start dog has only to work to the consistent light tree cadence and not deal with inconsistences of dogs returning from the box.

Anecdotally is has been observed that teams strategically use false starts to tire the other team's start dog, unsportsmanlike behaviour and contrary to the AFA's code of ethics and fair play.

Restarting for false starts adds time to the overall running of a heat and in large competitions, like the Nationals, this has a cumulative impact on the running schedule of a competition as it requires timekeepers, teams and judges to reset, costing easily up to 30 secs to1 minute for each false start reset.

If each false start run plus heat runs are summed it is possible that a lead dog could exceed the maximum "heat" runs in a day, as a clean heat run is the same as a false start run. Obviously, if the 2nd, 3rd or 4th dogs re-run it is the same for those dogs, however, false starts are a higher probability including the same dog.

The suggested change does not change the requirements for achieving a "000" start badge. Anecdotally, some start dog handlers appear to use the benefit of false start as a free chance to gain a *000* badge."

There have been comments that start dog handlers may hold back on starts if false starts are not permitted are also misplaced as this implies that handlers of other dogs habitually hold back to avoid false passes.

The false start criteria must apply to all formats of racing, regular, **_handicap_**, open, veterans, etc this is particularly relevant if there is a requirement to recognise a time record. It is noted that the current Australian record time was set in handicap format without false starts (as per the current rule for handicap), so concerns about the effect of the change on racing as a spectacle are unfounded.

The changes would bring Australian flyball into line with NAFA. U-Fli, BFA and UKFL all restrict teams to one false start per race but our EJS is not easily programmable to facilitate that alternative. NAFA allows no false starts but a team can request a practice start which then takes place immediately after the end of the warm up period and before the first heat.

Implementation

To be implemented as soon as possible, suggest 1st November 2022.

Would require the timekeepers to set-up for a practice start for the lead dog, after warm-up.

Rule Changes to Eliminate False Starts

To eliminate restarting a heat after a false start

Rule changes to give effect to proposal

Amend definition of unsporting behaviour:

unsporting behaviour includes~~:~~
- purposely delaying the start or restart of a ***heat***~~;~~
- ~~using a false start as a deliberate delaying tactic.~~

Amend rule 5.10:

5.10   Non-competitive teams

Once a ***team*** becomes non-competitive:
- the ***team*** forfeits all subsequent ***heats*** at the ***race meeting***;
- the ***team*** will not place in ***round robin format*** and will be placed in the lowest seed in ***elimination format.***

All normal ***rules of racing*** continue to apply to a ***non-competitive team*** except that:
- the ***non-competitive team*** may run three or four dogs in a ***heat*** (unless the opposing ***team*** elects to race unopposed);
- ~~***false starts*** do not apply to the ***non-competitive team***, and before each ***heat***, the ***EJS*** must be set up with a ***false start*** for the ***non-competitive team***;~~
- a dog that does not successfully complete a run must not run again;
- the jumps for each ***heat*** may be set at any height but not more than the ***jump height*** of the ***height dog.***

The ***judge*** may exclude a ***non-competitive team*** from the ***race meeting*** for breaching these conditions.

A ***team*** scheduled to run against a ***non-competitive team***:
- to earn ***race meeting points*** must run the ***required number*** of ***heat***s and finish at least one of those ***heat***s;
- may elect to race against the ***non-competitive team*** or without opponent;
- is otherwise subject to all normal ***rules of racing***.

Amend rule 6.1:

6.1 Warm up

The ***host club*** must designate a period for ***teams*** to warm up before the start of the first ***heat*** of each ***race***.

*Note: The normal minimum time for a **warm up period** is 90 seconds. The **host club** may, in consultation with the **AFA representative**, reduce the **warm up period** to not less than 60 seconds when a delay on the day of a **race meeting** impacts the **racing schedule** and the reduction is required to complete a round in **round robin format** or to achieve a result. Examples of delays include malfunction of the **EJS**, adverse weather conditions and accidents. The **warm up period** must not be reduced in order to meet an unrealistic program of **races**.*

If a **team** advises the **judge** of a **clash**, the **judge** will delay the start of the **warm up period**. A **team** already present may set up its jumps and place its **box**.

Only dogs listed on a **team's timesheet** may warm up. If a dog not listed on a **team's timesheet** warms up the dog's **team** forfeits any placement at the **race meeting**.

*Note: During the **warm up period**, all normal **rules of racing** apply including penalties for **rule** violations.*

During the **warm up period** either **team** may ask the **judge** for a practice start.

A **team** is not required to use the practice start.

A practice start will take place immediately after the **warm up period** ends.

Only one practice start is permitted in each **race**. However if a practising dog is **interfered** with before crossing the **start/finish line** the **judge** may offer an additional practice start.

Only one dog from each **team** may participate in the practice start.

Props are permitted during the practice start.

Amend rule 6.5:

6.5 Starting and Restarting a Heat

Each **heat** starts when the **judge** begins the start sequence for the **EJS**.

*Note: For starting a **heat** when **manual timing** is used see rule 6.25.*

If a **judge** stops a **heat** and **restarts** the **heat**~~:~~
- ~~a **team** may change the order of its dogs but may not substitute a dog.~~;
- ~~a **false start** by a **team** in the stopped **heat** carries over to the **restarted heat**.~~

Amend rule 6.6:

6.6 False starts

A team ***false starts*** if any part of the first dog's body (whether in the air or on the ground) or any part of the ***handler's*** body (or any part of anything worn or held by the ***handler***) breaks the beam before the start sequence has been completed.

*Note: For **false starts** when **manual timing** is used see rule 6.25.*

~~For the first *false start* by either *team*, the *judge* will stop the *heat* and *restart* the *heat*.~~

~~*Note: In **handicap format** and in **veterans class**, a **heat** will not be stopped for a false start.*~~

If a~~the same~~ ***team false starts*** ~~for a second time,~~ the ***judge*** will indicate a fault~~, the *heat* will continue,~~ and the first dog must run again without a fault for the ***team*** to finish the ***heat***.

Note: See rule 6.20 for requirements for running again.

~~If a *team's* second *false start* occurs concurrent with the opposing *team's* first false start, the opposing *team*'s first *false start* supersedes the second *false start*. The *judge* will stop the *heat* and *restart* the *heat*.~~

Amend rule 6.21:

6.21   Forfeits under rules of racing

When a ***team*** must forfeit a ***heat*** for breach of the rules of racing:
* if the forfeit relates to a ***heat*** in progress and the ***judge*** does not stop the ***heat***, both ***teams*** must continue to run the ***heat*** but the forfeiting ***team*** cannot win the ***heat***;
* if the forfeit relates to a subsequent ***heat***, both ***teams*** must run the subsequent ***heat***~~; however, the *heat* will not be *restarted* for a *false start* by the forfeiting *team*, and~~ but dogs in the forfeiting ***team*** may not run again after a fault.

Amend rule 6.22:

6.22   Breakout

*Note: This **rule** does not apply to **teams** in Division One of **regular class** racing in **scratch format**.*

A ***team*** which has a ***breakout*** in a ***heat*** forfeits that ***heat***.

If a ***team*** has a ***breakout*** in three ***heats***, the ***breakout team*** forfeits all subsequent ***heat***s and the right to place at the ***race meeting***.

*Note: This means that a **breakout team** racing in **round robin format** cannot participate in run offs to decide placings.*

All normal **rules of racing** apply to a **breakout team** except that~~:~~
- ~~**false starts** do not apply to the **breakout team**, and before each **heat**, the **EJS** must be set up with a **false start** for the **breakout team**;~~
  - a dog may not run again after a fault.

A **team** scheduled to run in a **race** against a **breakout team**:
- to earn **race meeting points** for a win in the **race** must run the **required number** of **heats** and finish at least one of those **heat**s;
- is otherwise subject to all normal **rules of racing.**

Amend Appendix 4:

Rules for handicap format

Rules for the conduct of **handicap format** are the same as for **scratch format** with the following variations:
- ~~**false starts** do not apply. If a **team false starts,** the **judge** will not stop the **heat** and the first dog must run again without a fault for the **team** to finish the **heat**;~~
- the sound on the **EJS** is to be disconnected (or programmed to be silent) during the start sequence so that both **teams** receive light signals only. It must be reconnected after the first **team's** start to signal **early passes**;
- **handicap times** will be calculated for every **race**;
- all **teams**, including **teams** in **division** one, will have a **breakout time** which is one second less than the **team's seed time**.

Amend Appendix 6:

Special rules for open class racing

1. **Open class** racing may not be conducted at a **race meeting** if only one **team** nominates for **open class**. When insufficient entries are received for **open class**, the **host club** may combine **open class** and **veterans class**. The limits on the number of **races** and **heats** for **veterans class** will apply to the combined **division** ~~and **false starts** will not apply~~.

Amend Appendix 7:

Special rules for veterans class racing

1. Jumps for every **team** must be set at seven inches regardless of the **jump heights** of the dogs in the **team**.
   ~~2. **False starts** do not apply. If a **team false starts** the **judge** will not stop the **heat** and the first dog must run again without a fault for the **team** to finish the **heat**.~~

3.2. Races must be either three **heats** or best three of five **heats**.

4.3. The **racing schedule** must not include more than six **races** per day for each **team**.

5.4. A dog entered in a **team** in **veterans class** at a **race meeting** cannot also be entered in a **team** in another class at the **race meeting**.

6.5. When insufficient entries are received for **veterans class,** the **host club** may combine **veterans class** with **open class** in a single **division**. The limits on the number of **races** and **heats** for **veterans class** will apply to the combined **division** and **false starts** will not apply.