

Report on the FCRS Inter-Area Team Competition held at Hatton Country World, Hatton, Warwick on 19 August 2017.

Hatton Country World was the venue for this event last year and it provides excellent facilities for hosting larger events, and for the working side this turned out to be a large event! We were well supported by the HCW management team and they were able to provide us with some additional ground which enabled the setting of a good mix of tests.

Each Area team comprised 4 dogs and handlers; a Puppy or Novice Dog/Novice Handler, two dogs of Novice standard, and a dog of Open standard. It was notable that some of the teams interpreted the "Area" definition with great creativity!

The theme of the competition was a picking-up day for a team of dogs and in setting the tests the first objective, influenced by comments from earlier competitions, was to set real team tests, rather than individual tests carried out by individuals in a team. We also wanted to give the teams options so that the less experienced dogs and handlers could be challenged to attempt more difficult tests and so score extra points for their teams.

As ten teams had entered the competition it was decided that all 5 tests would be run at the same time, each with a dedicated judge; Francesca Prentice, Angie Cooper, Steve Smith, Graham Bird and Elaine Whittaker, each with a team of helpers.

In order to enable teams to prepare, 30 minutes prior to the start of the competition the teams were given the following instructions:

Test 1: The Orchard Drive

A drive is just finishing and 6 birds have fallen in the orchard in two groups; four birds nearer and two further away. A single bird is shot (a mark) as your picking-up team arrives.

The Puppy is sent to pick the mark and can then elect to pick one of the nearby birds shot earlier for extra points. The first and second Novice dogs will then be sent in turn to pick one or two of the nearer birds shot earlier, or one of the nearer birds and a more distant bird for extra points. The Open dog picks the last 1 or 2 birds.



Test 2: Distracting Memories

Birds are being shot at the edge of a cover crop and are falling onto a track and into the edge of a wooded area. Each dog will be sent in turn to retrieve two birds, one from the track (a mark) and one from the wood (a distraction).

The puppy may pick the distraction first and the two Novice dogs can elect to retrieve the mark ahead of the distraction for extra points. The Open dog picks a blind before the distraction



Test 3: The Walk-Up

Your team joins a walk-up in fodder beet. Birds are being shot from the line initially singly and then in a flush. Each dog will be sent in turn to pick individual birds and the Puppy may elect to be off a lead until it has completed each retrieve for extra points.

Test 4: The Long Marks

A gun is walking the boundaries of a field and has already shot three birds in the south east corner when your picking up team arrives. Walking along the western hedge boundary, he shoots four more birds which fall in the field.

The dogs are all off a lead, the Puppy for extra points. Each dog is sent in turn, the Puppy picking the last (seen) bird shot and the Open Dog picking the first (seen) bird shot. The three hidden birds are then to be picked by any three dogs, with the Puppy and Novice dogs scoring extra points.

Test Five: The Timed Drive

Two guns are freelancing and blanking in a section of hedgerow and rough grass away from the main shoot and are pushing birds out of the hedge and across the field. They are on excellent form and manage to shoot 10 birds, all of which fall in the field in-front of your lined out team. All dogs will be off leads except the Puppy. To demonstrate how good you and your dogs are all 10 birds are to be picked as quickly as possible. The Puppy will be sent for the first retrieve and may then be put back on a lead. When this bird has been retrieved to hand the other 3 dogs are to collect the remaining birds. Every dog must retrieve at least 1 bird but as many dogs as you like can work at the same time.



Tests 1 and 2 ran smoothly with several dogs electing to pick more difficult retrieves and so score extra points. Test 3, the walk-up also went very well and with most dogs steady, and demonstrating some good marking and excellent retrieving.

Test 4: The Long Marks, proved the most challenging on the day, with a strong wind blowing across the field towards the dogs and handlers. Many of the less experienced dogs found it difficult to get across the field to the fall stopping well short and having to be handled, which then put extra pressure on the following dogs. However, other teams found the test more straightforward, and also gathered the blinds without difficulty.

Test 5: The Timed Drive was completed by all teams but with very varied times up to over 9 minutes. However, one team was able to work their three dogs together but without using whistles, and posted a remarkable time of 3m 49s.

The final comments must go to the judges and the enormous team of helpers that made this a great day - thank you all!

One of the judges was kind enough to comment afterwards on social media as follows:

"I had the pleasure of judging the Flatcoat Inter Area Team challenge at Hatton Park today and I mean PLEASURE great to see so many Flatcoats in one place my thanks to all who were involved with the organisation of this event but most of all to all the competitors for all your dedication to the breed looking forward to seeing you all again soon."

The Team results were as follows:



**The Midlands
NorthTeam**

1st - MIDLANDS NORTH

D Locking's Blakanis Wyken Pippin
D Myatt's Wainhawke Woodcock
M Bibb's Brother Bear in Torwood
D Higgs' Feather In My Cap at Higgscroft

2nd - NEFRA NORTH

M Johnson's Wolfthistle Alfred Unus Est
C Hewison's Venus in Transit over Casblaidd
W Pattison's Donascimento Ramires
G Awty's Venetian Red at Maddistream

3rd - MIDLANDS SOUTH

A Gardiner's Kulawand Kookaburra for Svenjack
G Clelland's Neccesares Sorrel
P Egginton's Pajanbeck Heaven Can Wait
R Birch's Mahinda Pumice

4th - NEFRA SOUTH

D Bull's Keepersway Alana
S Hurstfield's Star Polly
J Matthews' Ollersett Shining Nymph
G Ellison's Ollersett Sparkling Nymph

The individual results were as follows:

Best Open Dog - Gill Awty's Venetian Red at Maddistream

Best Novice Dog - Dave Myatt's Wainhawke Woodcock

Best Puppy, Judges Choice and Highest Overall Score -
Suzi Price's Ruddleberry Songbird



**Suzi Price with
Ruddleberry Songbird**