

### **Three Rivers Draft Test, October 1, 2011, Northmoreland Park, Apollo, PA**

Judges, Sara Steele and Mary Alice Eschweiler

Test Chair, Nancy Melone, Secretary, Kimberly Moran

1 Open Brace, passed

1 Novice Brace, passed

6 Novice, 1 pass, 4 fail, 1 absent

Weather : steady rain, no wind, 43-45 degrees.

The test committee and judges set up the course on Friday afternoon before the rains came in. The park is beautiful, somewhat remote and making it private. The area for the maneuvering was flat with no trees. We had absolutely no need for shade. The ring was rectangular with hay bales as maneuver points. All were festively decorated with pumpkins, leaves, corn, or small scare crows. The latter proved to be a visual distraction for one dog.

The course was designed to be as fast as possible considering the weather. Harness and hitch. Long stretch to corner with no exercises. Audio was a bell at the first corner (left turn). Load was 1/3 across. Circle left was at 2<sup>nd</sup> corner and the team went around to do a diagonal across the ring and through the narrows. At the next corner, somewhat in from the entrance, was the circle right. Moveable obstacle was a garden cart which handlers had to replace. At 3<sup>rd</sup> corner, the team made a right turn and went into a weave. The visual distraction was a man waving American flags, done as the team faced him on the 3<sup>rd</sup> bale of the weave. After the 4<sup>th</sup> bale, the team went to the unload. Next was the right turn at the 2<sup>nd</sup> corner. Slow was along that leg. Right turn at the 1<sup>st</sup> corner. Back exercise was along first/last leg. The exit was a left turn .

Because of the rain, the handlers chose to forego the walk through on the freight haul. Instead the novice handlers followed behind the Open Brace team. This saved lots of time for us!

Failures included 2 dogs failing recall, one with a dog that shot past her handler and left the ring to the group of spectators huddled under the tent. In the rest of this test, the handler of this dog adapted to the dog's pace and direction. The dog was the only one to go to the visual distraction, so much so that the handler went out of the ring to get her under control. The other dog had a double command on the recall, with the handler giving both verbal and hand signals (clapping). This team also failed the back and needed physical guidance by the handler at certain points of the course. One dog took one large step toward the greeter on the load, causing a failure. This was a real pity as the handler was doing a great job up to then and this was her first dog and second test. One dog did all the maneuvering exercises but, when it came time to come into the ring for the group stay, she stopped dead 20 feet into the ring. The handler could not get her to move. This also happened on the freight haul. She was 8 years old and simply told us that we were crazy to do this in the rain!

The freight haul went up and down gentle, grassy slopes, across a road, through some hard-packed mud. By the last freight haul, there was a running stream that needed to be crossed, dubbed the 4<sup>th</sup> River. There were some areas of large gravel. Most of the course was on grass.

This test was very well organized. The rain caused sheets to get soggy fast, even though mine were in a covered clip board! This is the first time that I have left the score sheet at the table, indicating that I was confident in the entrants to pass. It was unfortunate that this was a one day test as there might have

been more entries with two tests. At least two of the failing dogs would have passed the second day, in my opinion. This was Kim's first time as a Secretary and she did a great job!

My thanks to Nancy Melone and committee for their hospitality and organization. Cheryl Sams and Deb Godfrey and Randy Walter worked very hard in helping. The stewards were all men, some recruited at the last minute. The spread of food served after the test was outstanding!

Sara was a joy to work with!

Respectfully,  
Mary Alice Eschweiler