

Committee Report – ABC National Gun Dog Championship

CHAIR

Ed Tillson, Albuquerque, NM

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Bob Fleury, Stonington, CT – representing the East Coast Region
- Ron Gulembo, Hudsonville, MI – representing the East Central Region
- Tom Jagielski, Deerfield, IL – representing the Central Region
- Terry Gowin, Whitewater, KS – representing the Midwest Region
- Jim Hammett, John Day, OR – representing the West Coast Region
- Bob Rankin, Edmond, OK – ABC President

ADVISORY MEMBER

- John Perry, Claymont, DE

PURPOSE

To examine the current American Brittany Club (ABC) Gun Dog National Championship held yearly in October in Ionia, Michigan, its perceptions (positive and negative) among ABC membership, and to recommend to the Board of Directors any needed changes in the event.

METHODS

Committee members and the Chair communicated by email and telephone over the course of late-spring and summer of 2016 to complete the majority of this work. Individual members were responsible for the distribution of a questionnaire in their respective regions and tabulating responses received. Likewise, committee members gathered data from a variety of sources, and analyzed, presented, and critically reviewed the data via email and telephone. On August 10, 2016, the full committee held a conference call, reviewed the findings and data, and voted on the recommendations herein.

The committee initially identified two areas to examine: 1) ABC members' perceptions – to do this we developed and distributed a questionnaire (Appendix A). Members that own or run gun dogs competing in ABC field trials were targeted for input, but we welcomed responses from any ABC member. 2) Facts and data – next we examined available data associated with the identified perceptions to verify and test their validity.

RESULTS AND COMMITTEE FINDINGS

We received 105 responses to the questionnaire (summarized in Appendix B). While there was significant variability in the responses to the questionnaire based on regions, the two primary areas of concern among those responding were:

1. Geographic location for ABC Gun Dog Nationals
2. Neutrality of the grounds where it is held

Secondary issues were:

1. Time of year for the event
2. Whether or not the National Amateur Championship should remain a walking stake (vs. horseback-handled)
3. Bird planting/quality of birds used
4. Course equitability at Ionia

Committee Finding 1. Ionia is not centrally located. West Coast and Midwest members must travel much longer distances to attend the National Gundog Championship than members from other regions.

Supporting data:

<u>Region</u>	<u>Estimated Central Point of Region</u>	<u>Miles to Ionia</u>
West Coast	Winnemucca, NV	1943
Midwest	Ulyssis, KS	1103
Central	St. Louis, MO	478
East Central	Nashville, TN	579
East Coast	Washington, DC	624

Figure 1:

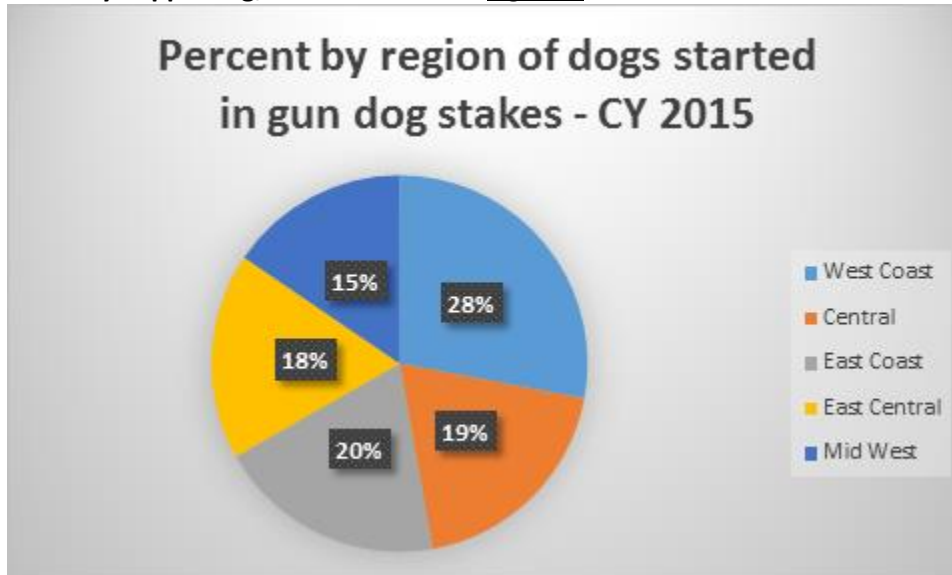
Map of the United States



Source: Mileage was derived from Google Maps from indicated point to Ionia. Mileage is based on least travel time on surface roads, not line of sight. Geographic center for each region was visually estimated.

Committee Finding 2. Gun dogs competing in ABC field trials are spread more or less equally across the United States – there is no evidence that we found that would support a belief that there is a concentration of quantity or quality of gun dogs in any specific geographic region.

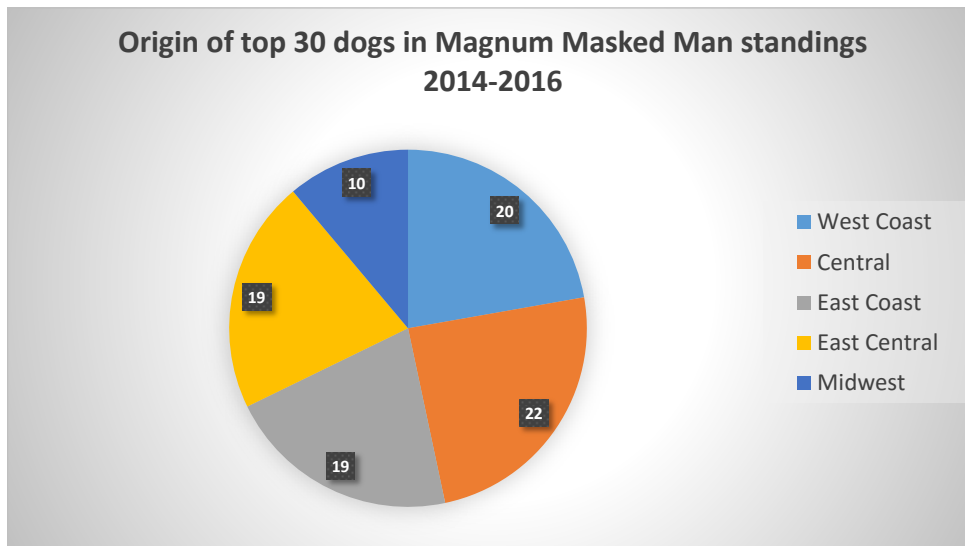
Quantity Supporting/Associated Data - Figure 2:



Source: Data provided by Skip Wonnell, who maintains the fieldtrialdatabase.com website. Gun dog starts includes all AKC licensed trials run by ABC regional clubs (OGD, AGD, OLGD, ALGD, GOLGD, and GALGD). This data included all regional Brittany club gun dog stakes run in 2015 except those run by the parent club (ABC classics and championships) which were considered national rather than regional.

Quality Supporting Data - Figure 3:

Similarly, Magnum Masked Man standings for the last three years indicate that the most competitive gundogs are spread more or less equally among all regions of ABC.



Source: Data from ABC and fieldtrialplacements.com. In some cases a dog will compete in multiple regions. In those cases, the region where the dog ran the most was considered its origin.

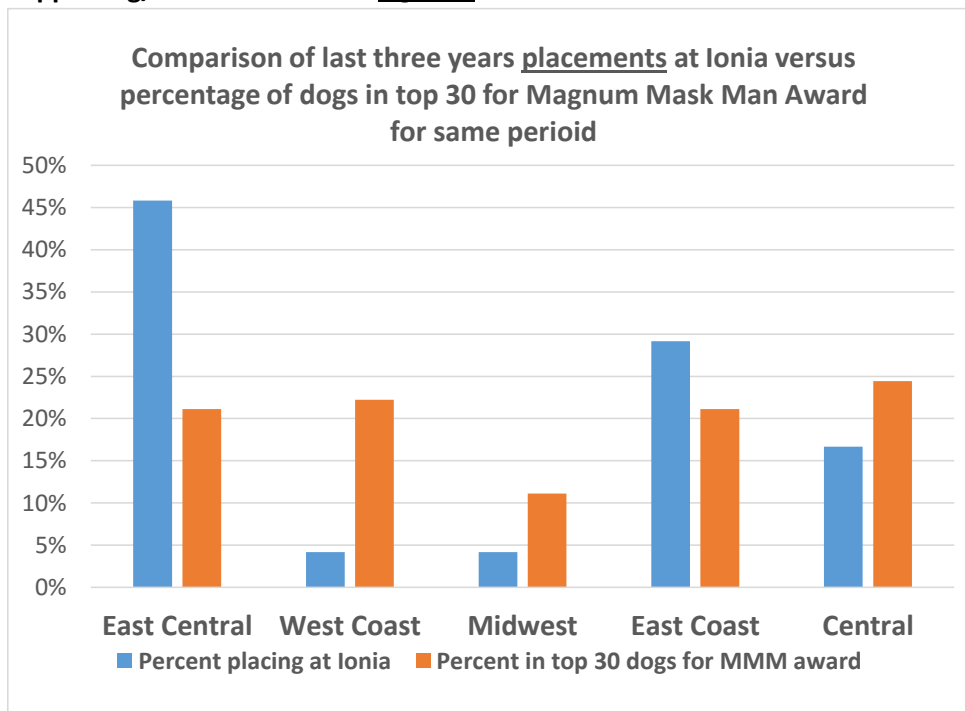
Committee Finding 3. Ionia grounds are not neutral. A significant number of regional Brittany trials and other trials are regularly run on Ionia’s grounds.

Supporting/Associated Data:

Three Brittany clubs use Ionia for their regular regional trials: Michigan, Michigan-Saginaw Valley, and Western Michigan. As a result, gun dogs attending these trials become accustomed to and familiar with Ionia’s grounds. Other breed clubs run at Ionia too, and Brittany gun dogs from that area run at some of those trials as well. In 2015, a total of 350 gun dog starts occurred at Brittany club trials at Ionia (data from Skip Wonnell). This amounted to more than 1/3 of all gundog starts in East Central Regional trials last year (2015).

Committee Finding 4. Past placements at Ionia seem to reflect the above findings (findings 1, 2, 3).

Supporting/Associated Data – Figure 4:



Source: ABC website and data from Skip Wonnell. In some cases a dog will run in multiple regions. In those cases, the region where the dog appeared to run the most was considered its origin. (The MMM data on this chart differs slightly from that in Figure 3 because different three-year periods were used for each chart).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee, based on the above survey and data, recommends to the American Brittany Club Board of Directors the following:

1. Move the gun dog nationals to a location that is both neutral and more centrally located to all ABC members. The committee has done an initial cursory review of potential grounds and believes that suitable grounds can be found that meet these criteria.

2. Avoid rotating the event each year to keep the National Gun Dog Championship a true national event rather than a series of regional ones.
3. Consider moving the date of the event to the spring, based on location chosen.
4. Continue to run the ABC Gun Dog Nationals at Ionia through autumn 2017, and target calendar year 2018 for the move.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ed Tillson, Committee Chair

Date submitted:

Appendix A

Questionnaire distributed to ABC members

1. Have you ever had a dog qualified for Gun Dog Nationals?
 - A. If yes, did you enter it?
 - B. If no, Why Not?

2. Have you ever attended Gun Dog Nationals in any capacity?
 - A. Trial Official, judge, owner, handler, scout, spectator, other?

3. Do you have any comments or thoughts on the current location (Ionia, MI) of the Gun Dog Nationals?

4. Do you have any comments or thoughts on the current schedule (October) for Gun Dog Nationals?

5. Do you have any comments of thoughts on the facilities at Gun Dog Nationals?

6. Do you have any comments or thoughts on the current grounds at Gun Dog Nationals?

7. In your opinion is the National Gun Dog Championship being run to a standard fitting of a National Championship?

8. Do you see the need for change of anything at Gun Dog Nationals?
 - A. If yes what would that be?
 - B. What would you suggest as improvement?

Appendix B

Summary by Region of Survey Results

East Coast Region

Survey Data (10 Responses)

- The majority expressed satisfaction with the people facilities at Ionia.
- Concerning the grounds, negative comments were about the parity of the courses used. Almost all felt it was an uneven playing field. They also expressed concern that dogs that run at this venue several times a year have an advantage. Whether this issue is real or perceived, it was expressed by almost all respondents.
- The majority of the responses indicate that they do not feel that this event is representative of a national championship but more like a regional event. -Almost all expressed concern that lack of professional handler participation detracted from the title of National Champion.
- The majority suggested running the event in the spring. Most felt the fall trial season had many other major events and it created problems with a crowded fall schedule for regional clubs.
- Bird planting was a concern as to who, how and when. This issue also would fall under the difference between actual and perceived. -The majority of respondents suggested moving to a more centrally located venue, if a move is contemplated.

Midwest Region

Survey Data (53 responses)

- Move to more central location.
- Move to a neutral location. Grounds mentioned: Booneville AR; Camp Robinson, AR; Bechtel Ranch, Eureka, KS; Christian Hills, Eureka, KS; Fort Roth, NE; Ionia, OK; Optima, KAW Reservoir, OK? OK; Paducah, KY
- It would make more sense to run it Back to Back with AA Nationals and National show - Make A Brittany National event with all national activities.
- Move to a Spring schedule
- Move to end of season schedule - Nov or Apr/May
- Diversify - committee members and judges from different regions to make more national
- Rotate grounds/Host Clubs

-Allow horseback in Amateur National since that is the way most dogs are qualified and some people can't walk for an hour

-If move ensure true GD grounds, not AA or SD grounds

-Mark courses better for newer participants

-ABC Step Up and Take Charge Like AA Nationals

East Central Region

Survey Data (20 Responses)

- Most felt that Ionia should remain the NGD location

- Well maintained groomed venue with numerous amenities available including the Staging area for participants. - The time of year should remain

- Facilities were addressed as good to excellent

- Most felt that the Championship is a true GD venue and is run like a Nationals

-Recommendations on changes:

+Courses need to be set and not changed from year to year, unless conditions warrant - Judges should be hired and published much earlier

+Gun Dog Standard needs to be followed, and not allow it to be a Shooting Dog stake - Improvements can always be recommended and some can be put into action

+Make sure that other events are not taking place during the NGD event, so as not to restrict entries

Central Region

Survey Data (6 Responses)

-Opinions mixed about moving to a more central location

-Grounds are not neutral

-Concern expressed about how the trial is run to favor regional dogs (bird planting, judges selected, etc)

-Diversify - committee members and judges from different regions to make more national

-Individual putting on the trial should not have a dog in the stake

-Facilities are Ionia are nice/adequate

West Coast Region

Survey Data (19 Responses)

-No one that responded believes it should remain at Ionia.

-Majority think it should either be moved to a central and “neutral” location or rotated around the US.

-Most think the amateur stake should be a horseback stake.

-Most believe the event schedule should be moved to the spring. May was the most mentioned month.

-Bechtel Ranch was mentioned by 4 separate individuals as a potential venue

Previous Survey Data Supplied by John Perry

Gun Dog Committee:

Attached are the results of a similar survey that I did a couple years ago. Here are a couple themes that I noticed.

The grounds are not centrally located.

The Nationals are run as a regional event.

The judges are given specific instructions on how to judge.

The courses do not provide an equal opportunity to showcase your dog.

Not all the courses are equally maintained.

Pace of the horses during the competition.