

Teaching Surf Instructors to Teach



National Surf Schools and Instructors Association Instructors and Coaches Training Manual



Surf Dog Contest Judging

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Contest Judging

Judging surfdog contests requires a basic understanding of surf contests in general, and the criteria by which the contestants are judged. The contest judge is the person who decides which surfdog performs the closest to the established judging criteria in any heat. Judges require both experience and knowledge with surfdogs to allow them to make objective calls.

Judging Criteria

Judging criteria has not been formalized for surfdogs. This section covers some very general criteria. A few simple-judging procedures to observe will save much dissatisfaction from those who have entered their dogs at a meet. The most important of these is not to miss any wave ridden or parts of rides, as well as looking for interferences. Additionally, under no circumstances should a spectator or dog handler speak with a judge or in any way cause a distraction that could result in a missed ride. Contest officials should only be spoken to during lulls when no dogs are taking off. Spotters or recorders should be the only ones talking to judges in larger or very consistent surf. The judge should also never talk to another judge about a ride until after the score has been recorded.

The score should not be awarded until the surfdog has completely finished the ride. Never give a score for just the outside ride, and then watch another dog outside while the first dog gets a good ride on a re-formed shore break inside. This might require watching two rides simultaneously by the judge, but is still preferable to missing part of a ride where points could accumulate.

It is difficult to judge when multiple surf dogs are riding waves at the same time in a large heat. This situation can occur during a set when waves roll through in quick succession, or while some dogs are staying inside and others are outside catching the bigger waves. If the waves are breaking outside and stay formed clear into the shore break, chances are good that most contestants in the heat will take off during the set.

The best procedure in consistent conditions is to keep the heats small. If you are judging a larger heat, let your eyes follow each dog, moving back and forth in quick succession, trying not to miss when important maneuvers might be performed. Yell out the color and score to your recorder immediately when a ride is completed while still following the remaining surfers.

Judging Scale

A judging scale similar to traditional surfing of 1 to 10 points, with 2/10 point increments, is preferred for surf dog contests. Additional flexibility may be necessary to prevent ties, especially when conditions are poor.

The judge's first responsibility after deciding on the scoring system is determining the score for the average ride on an average contest wave. This could vary from 4 points in poor conditions to 6 points in excellent conditions. In large surf the average wave could be 8 points.

For most surfdog contests an average ride is taking off on a normal whitewater mid to inside wave and then continuing straight to the shore.

Once the average score for an average wave has been established, the point spread can be determined for the level of performance on better or worse than average waves. The surfdog that takes off on a closed out wall and then gets tubed before being bombed on a very short ride should not get more than 5 points. Sometimes judges get carried away by the crowd and may score more than deserved on a little shorebreak tube that closes out. A shorebreak should almost never be scored higher than an average wave on an outside set.

Things to Look For When Judging

Judgment is in reality an opinion based on considering conditions, ability of contestants, and experience. Finer techniques displayed by the dog are easily spotted once the judge knows what to look for, but placing a figure of merit on these techniques is not so simple. This section will present a brief summary of important areas to consider when judging an event.

Wave Judgment

The right wave choice is essential for maximum performance. Position also plays an important role. Look for the surfdog that takes off on the largest and most challenging MAKEABLE wave in the most critical position.



Takeoff and Turns

The way a wave is entered by the surfdog/handler team should fit the type of surfing conditions. The direction the handler pushes the surfdog off is extremely important. If the surfdog follows through with that same line and continues to the next section or to the shore, it deserves a higher score than would be awarded if the surfdog positioned itself to just ride straight in.

A late takeoff from way back on a steep wall necessitates pushing paddling towards the shoulder with only a slight twist downward the top of the wave. The reason for the late takeoff should be to obtain maximum speed and critical positioning.

In slow, mushy waves, board slanting after takeoff, by either the dog or the handler, are very critical. The loss of momentum on a bottom turn will cause the surf dog's board to stall slightly and allow the wave to catch up. The best scores are given for the surfdog that can be positioned well under the peak and then moving into a critical wave position with no loss of speed.

Evaluating Maneuvers by a Surfdog That Give "A Little Extra"

A surfdog that can reposition itself during a wave in order to maintain a comfortable ride is preferable to one that stays flat to the board or moves on the board in a nervous looking manner. Nervousness can look like the dog wants to jump off the board or looks back for the handler.



Inside The Tube

One of the classical positions in surfing is the tube ride. This sometimes occurs when the surfdog gets underneath the breaking lip and well back into the wave. Judges have traditionally scored a tube ride higher than virtually any other positioning maneuver in surfing. Even a short shorebreak tube can usually earn an extra point or so during a competition.

Length of Ride

At least one or two point should always be reserved for rides where the surfdog exhibits many different abilities. The surf dog that can maintain control from outside clear into the shorebreak should be able to score higher. However, simply riding a long wave in a

squat with no maneuvers does not score as high as a dog that performs an additional maneuver. No matter what tricks are accomplished on an inside wave, the surfdog on a shorebreak wave only should never be able to score as high as the average ride on the outside wave. When outside waves are present, a trick on an inside wave can't possibly be scored as high as a much longer ride on an outside breaking wave, even if it is a slightly slow wave.

Style

Since style is developed by striving for the ultimate attainment of perfection, at least one point could be reserved for surfdogs that look comfortable, particularly on quality breaking days.

Interference

Interference is a determination of which surfdog has the Right of Way when a situation arises, or a dog that is interfered with by another handler or inside helper. It is up to the individual judge to determine whether the surfdog has possibly been hindered in its scoring potential. The key word in these criteria is “possibly”. Each judge must decide for him or herself.

What a judge considers:

1. Which surfdog has the right of way?
2. Was there interference or not? Did the surfdog with the right of way have its scoring potential possibly hindered?
3. Just like in traditional human surf contests, did the opponent get pushed to drop in, snaking, or going out, causing interference with a dog on a wave or a section to breakdown a section, excessive hassling.
4. Helpers and/or handlers should never be allowed to interfere with other competitors.

Interference can take place while a surfdog is riding a wave from a handler, helper, or another surfdog. If *a majority* of judges agree on a handler or helper interference, the judge will mark the scoring sheet with a triangle around the interfering surfdog, even if it is the surfdogs handler or helper. An arrow will be drawn on the score sheet to a circle around the surfdog that has been interfered with. Two points will be deducted from the interfering surfdog's highest scored wave and that ride will be counted as one of the waves for the surfdog's score in the heat.

Use of a Leash in Contests

While surfdogs need to wear a life preserver, leashes are NOT recommended in contests.

Summary

This is a summary of maneuvers used in traditional surfing technique. Judges should make themselves aware of these maneuvers and classic surfing in general by studying suitable reference material in the form of magazines or movies from that era.