



Flyball – A Beginner's Guide

For More Information:

NAFA
1400 West Devon Ave #512
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www.flyball.org

Flyball is a timed four K9 member team race where each K9, in relay succession, runs a lane with four hurdles, retrieves a ball out of a spring loaded box, and returns to the start line over the four hurdles. The first team to have all four K9's successfully complete a run, with a faster time over their opposing team, wins the heat. Many teams run all 4 K9s in 20 seconds error free.

Flyball was started in the 1970's when Californian Herbert Wagner developed the first tennis ball launcher. The first official Flyball Tournament was held in 1983. To standardize the rules, the North American Flyball Association, Inc. (NAFA), was formed in 1985 by a group representing 12 teams from Michigan and Ontario. In 2005, NAFA had over 700 registered teams and more than 16,000 registered dogs!

Flyball is not for those who like it quiet. If a Flyball K9 is barking at or towards the action, it is considered cheering and there is plenty of cheering at Flyball!

The K9s:

- Any breed or mixed breed
- At least 1 year old
- Any size (must jump minimum 8 inches)
- Wears a flat / slip collar, or harness

The Humans:

The humans are members of Flyball Clubs. In addition to handling their K9's, Club members have important supporting roles on the Club's Flyball Team(s).

- Box Loader
- Ball Shagger
- Pass Caller
- Captain
- Scribe
- Judge (Box and Line)

The Equipment:

- The Lane - A Flyball Lane has a minimum of 29' runback, 6' from the start line to the first jump, 10' between jumps, and 15' from the last jump to the box. The two Lanes in the competition ring are 12'-17' feet apart.
- The Hurdle - The Flyball hurdle is white. They have an inside width of 24", with colored uprights being between 24"-36". The overall hurdle jump height is between 8"-16".
- The Box - The Flyball box has a mechanical mechanism that is triggered by the K9. The ball, when released by the trigger, must have an unobstructed straight line flight of not less than 24"

The Classes:

NAFA recognizes four classes. K9s can be in multiple classes, but not in multiple clubs or on multiple teams within the same class.

- Regular - team of any breed(s) or mixed breed(s) of K9s.
- Multibreed - team of 4 different K9 breed(s) or K9s of mixed breeding.
- Veteran's - Each K9 team member must be at least 8 years old.
- Non-Regular - Any class other than NAFA Regular, Multibreed, or Veteran's.

The Line-Up:

Since the Jump Heights in Regular and Multibreed classes have to be four inches lower than the height at the withers of the smallest dog on the team, the smallest dog is called the "Height Dog". Teams generally consist of one "Height Dog" and three larger dogs with longer or faster strides.

Seed Time Divisions & Break Out Times:

- A seed time for each team is determined by the Captain of the team based on the individual average K9 team members run times. Tournament divisions are created by the submitted seed times for each team. For fair racing, seed times help keep teams in like bracket divisions. There is a penalty for racing faster than the team's submitted seed time
- A "break out" time is set for each Division. Except in Division 1, the "break out" time is set at 1 second faster than the fastest seed team. Any team that "breaks out" 3 times in a tournament is ineligible for tournament placement.

The Race:

Electronic "racing" lights beginning the countdown to the release of the "Start Dog". If the "Start Dog" crosses the line early, it's called a "false start". All is reset and the race starts over. Each team is allowed one "false start" without flag (fault) for each heat. If the "Start Dog" crosses the line a second time early it is then a flag and the race continues. The "Start Dog" has to rerun at the end of the lineup again. All K9s who don't complete the sequence error free have to rerun in the team's original lineup order.

The Flags (faults):

Each time a K9 or human causes an infraction to the race, a flag is raised. Such flagged faults include...

- Early Start/Finish line pass
- Missed Jump(s)
- Dropped Ball
- K9 didn't trigger the Box
- Handler intervention
- Elimination in the Ring
- Box Loader Conduct
- Handler crosses the Start/Finish line
- Inside Interference
- Distractions
- Safety Hazards / Outside Interference
- Poor Sportsmanship

The Awards

There are tournament points awarded for each heat and each race a team wins. Teams compete for tournament placements within their divisions. In addition, each K9 on the team is awarded individual NAFA points for each heat their team finishes within a designated time:

- 25 points are awarded to each K9 for each time the team finishes under 24 seconds.
- 5 points for under 28 seconds
- 1 point for under 32 seconds

The Titles

NAFA Flyball Titles are earned based on the lifetime accumulative point level achieved by each registered K9:

- Flyball Dog (FD) - 20 points
- Flyball Dog Excellent (FDX) - 100 points
- Flyball Dog Champion (FDch) - 500 points
- Flyball Dog Champion Silver (FDch-S) - 1,000 points.
- Flyball Dog Champion Gold (FDch-G) - 2,500 points.
- Flyball Master (FM) - 5,000 points
- Flyball Master Excellent (FMX) -10,000 points.
- Flyball Master Champion (FMch) -15,000 points.
- Onyx (ONYX) - 20,000 points.
- Flyball Grand Champion (FGDch) - 30,000 points.
- NAFA awards a commemorative pin and plaque for any K9 receiving 40,000 points and a plate for that plaque at 10,000 point increments up to 90,000 points.
- Hobbes Award - 100,000 points.