

NAFA BoD Candidate Chat December 2020

SteveCorona

Hi everyone! This is Steve Corona and I'm the current Chairman of the Board. I'll be co-moderating tonight's chat with our Elections Chair Kathy Haney.

We'd like to start by sending a special thanks to Nominating Committee Chair Terry McClean, as well as Kim Davis and Curtis Smith for all their behind the scenes work with this year's elections.

Thank you to our Board of Directors Candidates: Alex Le, Jayne McQuillen, Emma Mak, and Lynda Mantler for putting yourself out there and offering to serve on the NAFA Board.

To those joining us who wish to ask the candidates a question, a reminder that this is a moderated chat and that questions should be posed to the moderators in one of three ways:

1. Private message on Facebook Messenger to NAFA's page.
2. Private message on Facebook Messenger directly to moderators Steve Corona and Kathy Haney
3. Email to elections@flyball.org

The candidates and moderators will still be using the CBox software to post questions and responses live, and will be the only ones that need to login.

SteveCorona

We will first take opening remarks from the candidates.

LyndaMantler

Hello everyone, Thanks for being here to read the chat transcripts and thank you to those that have organized and are moderating this chat. It is an honor to be here with you and the fellow candidates tonight. I'd love to work for the NAFA board again, serve on committees, and work in whatever capacity is assigned to me. Thanks for considering me. I am ready to go!

EmmaMak

Hi there, and thank you to Kathy Haney and Steve Corona for hosting this chat. I'm running for a second term as a board member, and am currently Vice Chairman of the board. Thanks to those asking questions and joining us tonight, so close to Christmas.

AlexLe

Evening... Thank to Steve and Kathy and the board for hosting and putting this together. Its such an honor to be nominated and I look forward to talking about my experience and how I can help contribute and make NAFA an exciting place to play flyball.

JayneMcQuillen

Hi everyone, I am happy to throw my hat in the ring with such great candidates. Thank you to all those who work to make the elections and this chat happen. I am running for the first time for the BOD as a way to continue to give back to the sport I love playing. I already volunteer on several committees and appreciate how much NAFA BOD members care about the experience they are providing.

KathyHaney

Thanks everyone for joining us here tonight. Our first question is from Curtis Smith - What selling points would you use to help convince someone to participate in NAFA in addition to or instead of other dog sport organizations?

JayneMcQuillen

I would try to explain how vital it is to have a team of people who are invested in the success of your dog at tournaments. Your team often becomes a second family. In a world where we often feel disconnected to other people, it is a great way to build lasting friendships within your team and the broader community. Plus it is a super fun way to get exercise with your dog & the dogs LOVE it!

LyndaMantler

The team aspect of NAFA flyball racing is fantastic! It is so exciting and you will make many many wonderful friends. You can go as far as you want to go... Race on a team, get involved in organizing tournaments, training dogs, serve on board committees or run for the board. There is something for everyone in every age bracket and racing for all kinds of dogs. It's a great family sport. We are fortunate that flyball is a comparatively very reasonably priced sport.

AlexLe

Flyball is such an exciting sport that it should sell itself :-). But to those who are looking for a place to play flyball with their dog(s), NAFA can be such an amazing place to start... I see a lot of new flyballers come through our beginner flyball class and their most frequent question is about how to get started with a team and what does NAFA actually do in addition to the team they join. Participation in NAFA can be such a rewarding experience, NAFA helps keep your records, promotes the sport (i.e. the Board's work with AKC and exposing flyball to a larger community of dog sports), and most importantly, works to keep the tournaments that you go to safe and rewarding for all participants. The racing is exciting, the barking is loud... AND NAFA is there to keep the tournaments consistent, fair and constantly looking at ways to improve our sport through technology (new lights coming), and keeping rules aligned to reflect the changing sport, such as increasing jump width for safety this year. These are the selling points I would bring up to encourage flyball and participation in NAFA...

EmmaMak

Oh this is an easy one lol. Flyball is an exciting sport that is the only TEAM sport – and that sets it apart. You belong to a whole community when you get involved. NAFA is the original flyball league: while flyball has spread across the world, it all started with NAFA. It's the biggest league, the original, and it's a non-profit and a serious dog sport: you have a group of volunteers on the board from across North America deciding what's best for the sport.

KathyHaney

Our next 2 questions come from Merri Scott - Her first question is somewhat related to Curtis' question - We have had a tough year with little opportunity to compete. Many people have participated in other sports during the duration of our shutdown. Is there concern that there will be a loss of people to those other sports even when we get started again? And if so, how do we both retain those competitors and also bring in people new to the sport!

SteveCorona

There are 4 questions in the queue.

LyndaMantler

Getting competitors back to flyball is definitely a concern. Dogs are getting older and new ones have had limited availability to train due to restrictions on gatherings. We've had some good ideas brought forward, such as awarding bonus NAFA points for a limited time when racing resumes. I expect this would have to be for a certain number of tournaments where a dog races when we resume as opposed to a time frame on that. Consider offering singles and pairs racing on a trial basis. This allows some extra income for host clubs, and can be used for dogs that can complete the course but are not ready to race on a team. I mentioned the last round of questions to the candidates. It is key to get new people involved in the sport. Demos at schools and community events could be a good way to attract new players.

EmmaMak

Flyball is the toughest sport to adapt during covid times. NAFA made the difficult decision to shutdown during the worst of the pandemic, because hosting events this year (usually there are 300+) would have been irresponsible. Competitors have appreciated that stance NAFA has taken, and many will remain loyal. We will recover because flyball is unique. The team aspect of the sport, and the affordability of the sport sets us apart. There are a lot of people getting dogs during covid times, because everyone's been at home and has the time to devote to a pet. NAFA needs to take advantage of that surge in dog ownership and leverage the publicity we get from such things as the exposure from AKC livestreaming of tournaments. I've been involved in projects that aim to draw people into the sport, such as featuring clubs that are offering lessons on the NAFAblog. We need more of those initiatives, and to look for as many opportunities to get exposure as possible to get flyball back stronger than ever, once it's safe. We're also looking into bonus points for when flyball is safe again, so that NAFA people are incentivized to return.

AlexLe

I love this question because I thought about this during our stay at home requirements here in California and was so distressed of how we would move forward after all this time off. BUT what I love about dog sports and the competitors in flyball is their tenacity. We are a special group of dog sports fanatics and we will find a way to move forward. I don't see a loss of people who have been using this time to explore dock diving or agility or, in our club's case, actually grow our training classes and increase membership. The main flyball folks will take this time to train and re-work those puppies and improve those dogs they have running. I know for our team we've taken the time to work foundational skills and clean up striding, etc. As the vaccines start to roll out and the cities and states open back up, I think we can bring our competitors back through offering safe, thoughtful tournaments that will engage both current and new competitor. As a new board member, I have a strong background in building engagement and participation, through social media campaigns and outreach programs. I can put this to work for NAFA and help offer ways to roll out a plan that will engage our participants and encourage immediate feedback that will keep folks coming back through improvements in the way

we keep them safe while, at the same time, offer a place for them to re start that excitement they missed so much in the lanes. To bring in new members, we must continue to offer a space that allows participation and viewpoints to be reflected. The new flyballers I've met and the people I've talked to as I spent the past few months going to various flyball seminars in different parts of the U.S. have echoed the same sentiment: will my views and perspective be reflected in NAFA if I participate and spend my money there. I believe I can help NAFA address this through transparency and improving the comms and how we reflect our current members and their sport.

JayneMcQuillen

I think that is a very valid concern. Even for myself as a club owner, many of my teammates tried new sports or did more of ones they already participated in during 2020. I think one of the things that did was remind many people of how much they miss flyball. I also think it's important to come back with all pieces in place to deal with uncertainty as we move forward in this pandemic. I am not a fan of the finding out 1 month at a time if NAFA will be reopening. I understand why they have done that, this is a very fluid situation. However, I'd like to see steps taken make NAFA racing open on a longer timeline and then deal with only country/state/federal issues closing down racing opportunities. That would enable everyone to make longer term plans and be able to do more advertising for tournaments. It also gives teams more time to return to training and have concrete goals to plan towards. Given how many non-flyball (& flyball) people got pandemic puppies, this also could be a great opportunity to introduce the sport to new dog owners. I think the exposure thru the AKC TV/ESPN is a fantastic way to advertise the sport to a broader community. Individual teams should be looking to capitalize on people newly interested in the sport too. That could be just being willing to take on new members or to consider offering flyball classes. It's not just up to NAFA to keep this sport alive, flyballers need to be willing to share their knowledge and help new people have the opportunities when they find out about it. I could see NAFA offering a mentorship program that would connect willing trainers with people new to the sport, so even if a team isn't around they can use new tools like Zoom to teach newcomers the basics of the sport.

KathyHaney

Merri's second question - What do you see as being the first, most important topic requiring action from this new board?

EmmaMak

Well, I'm going to cheat and say there are two lol. The very first is how to return to flyball when we can do it safely. The board has been building a list of recommendations for hosts and we're constantly monitoring how states and provinces are doing during the pandemic, and having frequent board meetings, to try to figure out how we can hold on during these tough times, and when we can get back to this sport we're dying to return to. We have to do it safely. Our population is full of vulnerable people, and we don't want to lose anyone. The second one is, we need a new robust, fair, simple measuring system. People want to put measuring issues behind them. I'm co-chairing a committee that is working hard on getting that system right, based very much on ongoing feedback from judges and RDs, and planning how to roll it out so that people can be excited that, when they return to flyball, there will be an end in sight to the turmoil this issue has created over the years.

LyndaMantler

The new board must finalize and implement new rules for mandatory measuring. This involves training judges, working with RDs to understand the new process and communicating to competitors exactly what the new measuring method looks like. It is a big job to procure the necessary equipment, make training videos, amend the rulebook, make changes to the database and ensure checks and balances are in place to ensure fairness and equality for everyone.

JayneMcQuillen

Measuring. Measuring. Measuring. This has been such a hot button for years now. It has been a long standing issue in various forms for all of the 20+ years I have participated. I don't mind the switch to mandatory measuring, I dislike that we do not know the particulars of what that will involve. People can be resistant to big changes, but not knowing what will be expected is really frustrating. NAFA needs to get this info out and let people digest that info & then be responsive to concerns from competitors. I realize that the NAFA BOD can not please everyone, but this long wait to find out information does not make anyone happy.

AlexLe

I think NAFA has done a fantastic job at keeping things moving with height measurement, addressing participant safety by addressing jump width and increasing box dimensions and improving our technology through new lights. I do see that the day to day management of the board at the execution level is being addressed. There could be more transparency and communication to help members feel more engaged and I think this is one item that I do improvement on. However, a board is not just an operational management structure. A Board should also provide Governance. I would love to see NAFA address this perspective.. At a high level, NAFA should also provide strategy, oversight, and accountability in addition to day-to-day operations. I would love to see the the Board address membership growth, how to retain members, and provide accountability on key hard issues that have been brought up by members across the U.S. and Canada - such as Height Measurement. Ideally, a governance team would provide high level

direction and strategy and gather feedback and then execute a plan. Its been such a long wait for us to address these items that it starts to fade into no action. The board of directors, as a governing body, should focus on the organization's mission, strategy, and goals and I would love to see us close the loop on these two key issues...

KathyHaney

Our next question is from Steve Corona - The Board requires a fair amount of personal time investment from it's volunteers. How will you balance this additional workload on top of your professional and personal life?

SteveCorona

There is 1 question in the queue.

JayneMcQuillen

Fortunately I work part time with a flexible schedule. That gives me the ability to shift responsibilities and hours as needed. I also have a very supportive family, who also participates in the sport & understands this potential new obligation.

LyndaMantler

I am eager to serve on the board and participate at every board meeting. It is important for board members to attend the meetings. I will make the time to do this and this past year I attended every board meeting. Yes, I am busy in my work and home life but because I am passionate about flyball, so this is fun work for me. I need to set aside some time each day to see what has transpired with board business. Sometimes it is a few minutes and sometimes it is a few hours.

AlexLe

I think everyone on this chat is here because we want to be an active participant with NAFA. Life and work balance is so important to all of us and we have to prioritize and make tough decisions to keep everything moving. I come into this with full understanding that it is a time commitment. I've never backed out of a challenge and am always there to see things through. I've dedicated a large part of my time to flyball and don't see that changing any time soon. Having gone from just a participant with a small JRT to 6 flyball dogs, I've gone from a playing flyball as hobby and, as someone once told me, flyball has now become a lifestyle... I look forward to contributing wherever I can and I come with so much experience that can be of great value to NAFA.

EmmaMak

It can be difficult to do this. But NAFA is a huge part of my family's life, so I do make it a priority. It's important, as a board member, to be a great team player and have respect and empathy for each other, because the board members and additional volunteers all have other commitments. We have to work together to keep this organization humming along and moving forward. The saying is - if you want something done - give it to a busy person lol. All the board members and ED have a lot of things going on in our lives but by nature, we're all people that step up to work together and get things done.

KathyHaney

Okay. Our last question comes from the Election Committee - What ideas might you have to help make our premier event, CanAm even better than it is now?

EmmaMak

I was actually very excited about a CanAm social committee that I'd put together with a couple of great volunteers for CanAm 2020. We had to put those plans on hold, obviously. But the thought was, it would be great to organize some social events to make the event even better. It was so hard for us all to miss it this year. It looks like (fingers crossed) we will be in good shape for next year, so I'm looking forward to getting that committee together again to brainstorm ideas.

JayneMcQuillen

Oh wow, that might be the toughest question of the night! CanAm is already an amazing event. I would love to see NAFA do more to encourage flyballers outside of North America attend. This could be a special International Class of racing or just making it easy for them to connect with help from existing teams. I would love to have closer to real time standings posted online. I also think it would be interesting to have a Open Racing Championship, possibly on Friday or Saturday. I would love to see food trucks in the evening, as competitors are often tired and figuring out what is for dinner can be a challenge.

LyndaMantler

I think we could implement some activities to encourage more social time where competitors can meet each other outside of racing time. For clubs that are new to CanAm, we could have an ambassador to greet them and give them a explanation of how everything runs. It can be overwhelming for people who have never been there before to see up to 7 rings racing and one schedule to cover all

of them. Also, have that person be the go to person for any competitor inquiries. Definitely, need to make all competitors feel valued and welcome. I would love to attend CanAm 2021!

AlexLe

I love CanAm.... Its the highlight of our competition season for my team and I never want to miss it. Its been tough this year, but I know NAFA will coming back in full swing for our next CanAm in 2021. I know everyone works so hard to keep the event running smoothly and I come into it every year with full amazement at how well it all comes together. Some things are really well done and I think some things can be taken to the next level. There are ways to level up on CanAm and I would love to be part of that as a new Board Member. As an example, I love the basket gift exchange every year, but I think we can encourage more engagement via a larger social event. Perhaps a meet and greet session Friday night so the teams that are competing can spend time getting to know each other. We can also engage our vendors and have them participate in an event that show case their products and offer up door prizes. Additionally, I think we can engage larger sponsors to help us cover things that we do really well. Streaming, for example, is such a large expense that can be sorted through procuring larger sponsorships. Its nice for us to have committees and talk about how to do things, its another to translate that into actionable execution that would build engagement with our NAFA members. I would love to help NAFA bringing these into realities.

SteveCorona

Thank you to all our candidates for participating in tonight's chat.

Candidates please prepare your closing remarks.

NAFA 2020/2021 Election ballots should have been delivered to your email inbox if you are a Club Owner, Regional Director, Approved/Supervising Judge or Board Member. If you have not received the ballot email, or if you have any questions about the election, please contact elections@flyball.org. Polls opened December 1, 2020 and close Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at Midnight CST. Results will be announced during the Virtual NAFA AGM on January 16, 2021.

LyndaMantler

Thank you for your interest in the chat today and to Kathy Haney and Steve Corona for moderating. I am certainly willing and up to the challenge to serve on the NAFA board of directors. If I am chosen, I will work hard on your behalf. I have a sense of responsibility for making things happen. Thank you for considering me.

Good luck to all the candidates!

Wishing you all a fantastic holiday season and flyball racing for all in 2021!

EmmaMak

As chair of the rules committee, I just want to clarify something that was mentioned in this chat - NAFA did look at widening jumps, but after careful consideration of potential problems caused for host clubs and impacts on safety for dogs, decided not to move in that direction.

Thanks Kathy and Steve and everyone for coming on the chat, and those showing interest and reading the transcript after the fact. Please remember to cast your ballots in the election! Hoping to see you soon in the lanes when it's safe to return. Merry Christmas to all!

AlexLe

Thank you again to Kathy and Steve and NAFA for putting this together. I am appreciative of everyone's participation and hope that we've all been able to provide the teams, RD and the rest of NAFA an opportunity to get to know us. We've all had such a long and scary few months this year, but I am so excited to see how NAFA will move forward from here on. I know its going to be a tough decision for everyone and I hope that you'll vote for the candidate that will reflect the view and changes you want to see in the board. I can't wait to see everyone again in the racing lanes!!

JayneMcQuillen

I appreciate everyone taking the time to get to know the candidates better, whether by watching this live or reading the chat transcript later. Thank you to Steve, Kathy, Terry, Kim and Curtis for their help making this chat happen. I think communication is a very important aspect of this job, and this very open election process is unique to NAFA. Participants get to choose who shapes the future of NAFA. I hope that this chat gave people more insight into how I would like to help NAFA moving forward. It's wonderful to see so many great ideas from each of the candidates. Don't forget to exercise your voting power in January! Hopefully we will all be back in the lanes soon. Happy Holidays!

SteveCorona

Kathy and I, along with the members of the Election Committee would like to thank all the candidates and the members of the NAFA community for their participation this evening and throughout the election process.

This concludes tonight's chat.

Good night and we wish you a safe and happy holiday season!