

## For OLC February 2024 – David Moxon

### **Proposal - Eligibility for Beginners:**

This proposal was presented as a discussion item at the OLC meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> January and again on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023. During the discussion in January, two alternatives were provided, and the Council found in favour of the proposal drafted for the July meeting and is submitted below (Stage 1). Unfortunately, when the proposal came back before the Council in July a concern was raised about the position of this item on the agenda. This meant there was some confusion about whether representatives had reviewed this, with their areas, prior to the meeting. Consequently, it was agreed to take on board further comments from the July meeting and represent the proposal at the next meeting. The proposal is therefore as follows and is written in three stages.

The first part is the change for what would be the case from January 2025, if accepted. As written, it would not be retrospective, and any handler that had already won out of beginners as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 would still have to compete at Novice with any subsequent/new dog. This considers point 26, from the minutes of the 20 July 2023. The second point challenges the retrospective point, and the third point ensures there is no unintended consequence from this change that stops people, that have progressed to Novice, from judging.

### **Stage 1:**

#### **Regulation G(A)11**

**FROM:** *To compete in Beginners a handler or dog must not have won a total of two or more first places in Beginners class or one first place in any other Obedience class (Introductory class and Pre-Beginners excepted) and have not elected to progress on points from Beginners.*

**TO** To compete in Beginners a ~~handler or~~ dog must not have won a total of two or more first places in Beginners class or one first place in any other Obedience class (Introductory class and Pre-Beginners excepted) and have not elected to progress on points from Beginners; **plus, the handler must not have won a first place in any other Obedience class (Introductory class, Pre-Beginners and Beginners excepted) and have not elected to progress on points from Novice.**

Reminder on rationale: Competitors are finding they win out of Beginners and then find they are unable to progress and/or win out of Novice. In some cases, this is happening with their first dog and the jump from Beginners to Novice is then seen as a major hurdle to progress any further and disheartening. It also means with their next dog a handler must start at Novice, alongside more experienced handlers, and feel at a disadvantage. A request has been received to see whether a provision could be made to allow handlers that have not progressed in Novice can compete with subsequent dogs in Beginners, providing such dog(s) had/have not won out of Beginners. Please note that at the OLC meeting in January 2023 Council there was unanimous support for the objective and the majority supported the

option presented. (i.e. where a handler has not gained a first place in Novice or above, nor has elected to progress from Novice on points, such that Class A became their lowest eligible class, are still eligible to compete at Beginners with subsequent dogs). Interest for this has been found to be strong from “ABC” handlers especially where the numbers competing in obedience in that breed is low.

Please note as written it is not intended to be retrospective and it is suggested a note is applied to the effect – **Handlers that have progressed or won out of Beginners, prior to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, will continue to enter Novice as their lowest available class from January 2025.**

### **Stage 2:**

**Challenge to the retrospective issue:** There is no point addressing this issue unless Stage 1 is accepted.

A query on the proposal was raised by more than one region but this showed a split in handlers that have been stuck in Novice for some time. Some were content to remain in Novice whilst others felt inhibited and did want to go back into beginners. There is also an argument that this is it could attract back competitors that may have been away from the sport for some time, whereas jumping back into Novice may appear a stronger challenge, especially to those that may have a more challenging breed. The conundrum is we cannot win on this one. There is no reason why we should not challenge the retrospective issue as this has occurred within other disciplines and indeed when changing the Obedience Warrant points, that had to be retrospective to enable it to work. We have also provided the option availability with the Progression on Points.

Therefore, a solution is to clarify in G(A) 3 under exemptions from this regulation and to give handlers the Option, but like Progression on Points, once exercised, they cannot go back. This would replace the statement suggested at the end of Stage 1 of the proposal above to read as follows:

Please note this is intended to be retrospective but with an option for handlers that had progressed to Novice prior to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024. As such ***Handlers that have previously entered Novice as their lowest available class before 31st December 2024 may elect to continue to treat Novice as their lowest available class. Once they have elected to do so they will not be eligible for Beginners, thereafter.***

This should not be controversial as it gives current Novice handlers the option (where appropriate). Any new progression is based on the new rule. It covers the transition and may be beneficial at attracting people back to obedience that may previously had become stuck at Novice but could now return at Beginners, with a new dog.

### **Stage 3**

**Judges' qualification - Unintended consequence.** A question was raised in the run up to the July meeting re judges' qualification under the new proposal. There is an argument to tidying up the wording here, if not already done for 2024.

Approval of Judges, G32c(2) currently says **have won out of beginners, ..... as a handler.** The intent remains but allowing for points and to tidy up for this new proposal then it could read ***have progressed out of beginners ..... as a handler.*** Therefore, if they have progressed, with a dog, out of Beginners and into Novice then they meet the criteria. The fact they can still take their next dog into Beginners, under the new proposal, is not material and does not provide an additional requirement for new judges that would delay the ability to take on a judging appointment. As noted, that would have been an unintended consequence.