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with Horse and Hound

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BLAIR HARPER PHOTO

Beaver Meadow Fox Hounds (ON)

March Madness Joint Meet with Bull Run and Farmington

Hunt Reports

By R. Reynolds Cowles, DVM and Elizabeth Sutton



Retired Bull Run huntsman Greg Schwartz leads the second flight. / Beth Sutton photo

Farmington Hunt's participation in March Madness Week at Bull Run Hunt started with a lot of questions. Hounds had not hunted in a week. Would they be up to the task of more open country and multiple game—fox *and* coyote? Did they have what it takes to give the sporting Bull Run field and their March Madness visitors a good day's hunting? Would renegades riot?

These questions nagged at some of the Farmington Hunt members and staff as we assembled at Horseshoe Farm in Rapidan, Virginia with twelve-and-a-half couple and a good gang of members. Three huntsmen and former huntsmen from further north said to me, "Well, you all will have to up your game today," as we kidded about the lack of action that had been experienced on the three previous days due primarily to the weather.



R. Reynolds Cowles and fieldmembers / Beth Sutton photo

The runoff from melting snow filled the ditches at the base of the hills running across the open fields, full of gurgling springtime sounds and peeping frogs. Perfect habitat and plenty of cover, big open country for expansive views, and nicely maintained wooded trails and farm roads allowed for access. Coops were everywhere.

For the first two-and-a-half hours, however, our questions remained unanswered. Huntsman Matthew Cook had hounds hunting well. A red fox was found that gave a good chase over the mountain heading toward Route 15, but vanished after it scooted through a wire fence and then a snow bank. Hounds sounded good for a few minutes, but couldn't recover the line.



(l-r) Mac Dent, Carter McNeely, Pippa and Julie Cook, Karen Bull / Beth Sutton photo

Then Bull Run huntsman Charles Montgomery took us to the pine thickets and the swamp. A fox was viewed out of the pines and hounds were brought to the view. A short run ensued, then that line was lost. A coyote rolled out and a path into the blackjack swamp was found. The thickets were a struggle, and hounds were brought back out to the road and put on a line where a coyote was viewed twenty minutes earlier.

I don't think there were many in the field confident that the coyote would still be in the vicinity, but hounds started working the old line and shortly were in hot pursuit. The next hour dispelled all doubters. Farmington's game was surely upped and the cry was fabulous! Even Bull Run Field Master Greg Schwartz and staff member Charlie Brown were impressed. Those of us who followed into the swamp and then back out had a view, then we were back in the swamp again.

Charlotte Delany, one of the "eight muddy souls" who struggled back from the swamp / Beth Sutton photo

I knew better, but my blood was up, so back we went, right behind Charlotte Delany and her great little mare, Boxy, behind Bull Run Master Rosie Campbell. Boxy is a fabulous field hunter and very handy in water and mud, a much-needed talent on this run. Matthew described it best: "We went from impenetrable to absolutely impenetrable!" Hounds took that huge



coyote all the way to the rock quarry and back again to the swamp. The field was down to eight muddy souls before we wandered out.

Matthew collected hounds which were, by then, widely spread, but in the end all were back on. Farmington could hold their heads up proudly, and Matthew in particular. All questions were answered in a muddy, Yes!

Farmington members thanked Bull Run MFH Mike Long and family for allowing us to hunt over their beautiful property. Boo Montgomery piloted the lead Bull Run vehicle, followed by our Farmington road whips, Grady Collier, Ken Chapman, and Chris Cuthbert. These staff members kept close tabs on our hounds with radios in the truck. Mike Long and first-flight leader Rosie Campbell, MFH kept up with huntsmen Matthew Cook and Charles Montgomery, followed by Charlotte

Delany and the rest of us. Honorary whipper-in Barbara Smith rode with Farmington whippers-in Carolyn and Jamie Altman and John Elliot.

Best of all, Matthew was highly pleased with the performance of his hounds and the chance to hunt in a completely different country. Matthew has been breeding for voice, and hounds really poured it on.

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Carolyn Chapman and Liz King also contributed to this article.

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