



THE RAPP SHEET



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A Junior's Perspective

By Barney Riley



Fox hunting always brings so much excitement to me. Riding a horse on beautiful Virginia lands with close friends is an experience that cannot be replaced. Three years ago I went foxhunting with the Rappahannock Hunt for the first time and I have loved it ever since.

I remember spending the day before cleaning my tack and bathing my pony, having no idea what to expect for the following day. I was nervous. Although, I had absolutely nothing to worry about, as I was immediately engulfed into the welcoming community of the Rappahannock Hunt. Yet my heart was still racing right before we went off. Maybe because of the amount of chocolate I had eaten in the car ride on the way to the fixture! I started in third field, walking and trotting with other Rappahannock members, learning about the logistics of fox hunting. Three years later, I still learn something new every time I go, as there is so much to learn about this interesting sport.

Not only is the community so nice to ride with, but the fixtures that we ride on are in my opinion the best part about fox hunting. Being able to ride a horse on some of the most beautiful farms of Virginia is something that not every teenager can experience. The views, the wildlife and the nature is something I will never forget. And of course another one of my favorite parts about fox hunting is the breakfast afterwards. There is something special about eating prepared meals or baked goods after spending hours riding up and down hills, through rivers, over jumps and occasional hopping off to open a gate and hopping back on.

I feel so lucky and privileged to be a member of the Rappahannock Hunt and I am very excited for the season to start again soon.



The answer to the Fixture location in the July issue was Meadow Grove.

Thank you Jim and Deb and family for sharing such beautiful country with the Rappahannock Hunt.

We appreciate your kindness

On whom does our pleasure as foxhunters depend? Landowners, masters, huntsman, whippers-in, hounds, horses, foxes, good company, and amenable weather.... And perhaps, in some measure, to a decent and (by necessity) humble field master.

Here are some observations from my experience in that last capacity.

“Don’t pass the master.”

The title field master is kind of misleading—even oxymoronic. In that role, I am constantly aware of my duty to the huntsman to keep the field in order so that we can have good hunting. Simultaneously, I want to be sure that members of the field can be close enough to observe the hounds work and, when we get on a run, to participate in a good chase. So the field master, in a real sense, is actually



beholden both to the huntsman before him and the field behind him. Master? Sort of.

“If the huntsman isn’t happy, no one is happy.”

As mentioned above, the field master’s job is to ensure that members of the field are close enough at hand to observe good sport. But even before that can be considered, I must ensure that the field doesn’t conduct itself in a way that hinders the hounds, or huntsman, or staff, in

their hunting. To keep the huntsman happy, we let him do his job. To that end, we stay out of his way and keep relatively quiet.

“Take stock of your field.”

Another responsibility of the field master is to be aware of the nature and abilities of the riders and horses that follow. It is polite to try not to overface anyone in the field, and it is considerate to start out easy—before the chase begins in earnest—and give everyone a bit of a warm up over a solid yet inviting jump.

One time, I was following our huntsman, now master, Michael Brown, on a hack to our first covert on a trail we hadn’t used for a while. To enter the covert, Michael jumped a coop with a short cedar tree sticking straight out of the middle of it. Thinking it would be better not to test our riders and their horses so early, I steered my own horse, Miles, toward a 5-ft. aluminum gate. Misunderstanding my intention to open the gate first, Miles took two gigantic strides to set himself up for take-off. When I promptly pulled him back, he showed his displeasure by stamping and shaking his head—Michael, after all, had disappeared at a canter after taking the cedar coop.

“Be humble.”

Miles knew his job was to keep up with Michael...but at a distance.

Another time, we were traversing a steep trail on the side of Red Oak Mountain when the hounds picked up a chorus in the valley below. We lit out down the mountain, Michael in the lead by about 25 yards, with the field behind Miles and me. At the base of this trail, Michael jumped a coop and steered left, just avoiding a jagged spear of a fallen tree trunk. Having had time to calculate the consequences for my field, I opted to take the coop and steer right on what appeared a surer and safer route around this obstacle. It hadn't occurred to me—although it should have—that Miles would have already made his own calculation that he was going to follow Michael. Which he did.

Catching the right leg of my breeches at the knee on the tip of the “spear” and tearing them cleanly up to my waist without so much as putting a scratch on me or Miles, I led the rest of that run with my pants flapping and underwear in plain view.

“Stuff happens, so be patient.”

As field master I make mistakes from time to time. Most of us do. I try, however, not to compound them by ignoring or pretending (at least not for too long) that they didn't happen. Instead, say, if I get turned around in the cedar maze below the Boxley's house on Devil's Run and reach a dead end, I acknowledge it. I own it. And we try another path.

I hope to find many of you out hunting this fall. Until then, stay well. Get fit. And start legging up those horses!



Congratulations

Downton had 10 puppies in July. 5 males and 5 females

Mom and kids are doing well. Can't wait to see this group out in the hunt field

