

FANTASY COURT

SYLLABUS

CALVIN v. LEAGUE

Petition for a ruling on the proper party to bear a zero-point shotgun penalty following a formally announced coaching change

No. 26-1535-2. Heard and decided October 7, 2026

The Ringer Fantasy Football Show, “Quarter-Season Awards: Power Ranking the Best and Worst Fantasy Draft Picks, ‘MNF’ Recap, and the World’s Biggest Imagine Dragons Fan,” at 1:16:45–1:21:35

Petitioner Calvin, whose team began the season 0-3 and who describes himself as a “big vibes guy,” formally announced in his league chat that he was making a coaching change and appointing his dog, a nine-pound Chihuahua, as head coach of his fantasy team. The following week, Ladd McConkey started in Petitioner’s lineup and scored zero points. Under the league’s zero-point shotgun rule, the manager responsible must shotgun a beer, and Petitioner duly submitted video of himself doing so. The league rejected the video, contending that because the shotgun obligation attaches to the team’s head coach, and Petitioner had formally announced the dog as head coach, the dog—not Petitioner—must perform the penalty. The Court noted that dogs cannot safely consume beer and found the question of what constitutes the canine equivalent of shotgunning a beer to be potentially unanswerable, taking the matter under advisement pending further research and input from listeners.

Held: A manager who formally appoints his dog head coach has transferred the zero-point shotgun obligation to the dog. Because a dog cannot drink beer, the canine equivalent is taken under advisement pending supplemental briefing.

We held that a coaching change formally announced to the league is effective against the manager who announced it, and that under a rule assigning the shotgun to the head coach, the obligation runs with the office rather than the person. Applying *Chris v. League* and *In re Negative Points Penalty Rule*, we rejected the conclusion that impossibility of

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performance discharges the penalty, since a punishment system that can be escaped by appointing a Chihuahua is no system at all. Drawing on *In re Hard Seltzer Waiver Claim*, we held that the dog owes a functional equivalent that serves the rule's purposes of ordeal and entertainment, and, finding the record inadequate to identify one, we ordered supplemental briefing from the public.

JUSTICE HORLBECK delivered the opinion of the Court, in which CHIEF JUSTICE HEIFETZ and JUSTICE KELLY joined. JUSTICE KELLY filed a concurring opinion.

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Petitioner Calvin began the season 0-3. Describing himself as “a big vibes guy,” he diagnosed the problem as coaching, and he announced in his league chat that he was making a change: his dog, a nine-pound Chihuahua, would serve as head coach of his fantasy team. Justice Kelly likened the move at argument to wheeling the ping-pong table out of the facility. We are all business now. The following week, under new management, Ladd McConkey started in Calvin’s lineup and scored zero points. Calvin’s league is a zero-point shotgun league. Calvin shot-gunned a beer on video and sent it in.

The league refused it. Not because the beer was wrong, and not because the video was deficient, but because Calvin was the wrong defendant. The shotgun, the league explained, attaches to the manager of the team, the head coach. And Calvin had announced, formally and in writing, that the head coach was the dog. Calvin asks whether that is right, and if so, what a Chihuahua is supposed to do about it.

We hold that the league is right. The appointment was effective, the obligation runs with the office, and the dog owes the league a shotgun. Because a dog cannot drink beer, what the dog owes instead is a question the present record does not let us answer. We take it under advisement and open the docket to supplemental briefing.

I

This Court’s zero-point cases have one theme, and it is enforcement. “Don’t let your league mates be cowards. All zeros count.” *Chris v. League*, 25-0705-1 (2025). A starter who scores negative two has scored zero, because “the floor is the floor, and everything beneath it is inside the rule.” *In re Negative Points Penalty Rule*, 24-0826-3 (2024). There, managers wanted out and we kept them in. Here the posture is inverted. Calvin is the first petitioner in our zero-point jurisprudence who tried to drink and was told he may not. His league has not offered the clever reading we condemned in *Negative Points*; it has offered a strict one, against its own interest in seeing a beer consumed. The reading is correct, and Calvin’s own conduct is the reason.

Start with the appointment. Calvin did not mutter something to the dog on the couch. He made an announcement to the league, in the chat: a coaching change, effective immediately, with the new coach named. In this Court, the league chat is the league’s Federal Register. What is published there binds the publisher. The league accepted the announcement, Calvin’s team played a week under it, and McConkey’s zero occurred on the dog’s watch. The dog’s record as head coach is 0-1. The appointment was a bit, of course. Calvin is bound by it anyway, because the league took him at his word, and a manager who takes a formal position to reset his vibes may not abandon it when the invoice arrives.

Next, the office. Calvin’s rule sends the shotgun to the head coach, and the burdens of an office travel with its honors. The coach who gets the press conference gets the hot seat. Calvin wanted the clean slate a coaching change provides. He also got the part of the job where the coach answers for the lineup. We have said that managers must live with the consequences of their own choices, and that this Court “should not run a discount counter.” *Kristen v. Vince*, 26-1531-2 (2026) (Horlbeck, J., concurring). A delegation of the office is a delegation of its penalties. Calvin may not install a figurehead who collects the credit while the general manager quietly drinks for him. To hold otherwise would be to

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hold that the coaching change was cosmetic, and Calvin, of all people, would be the first to object.

That disposes of Calvin's video. It was prompt and, we assume, well executed. It was also performance by the wrong party, and performance by the wrong party is not performance. A roommate's shotgun would not satisfy the rule; neither does an owner's. We note the video with approval as evidence of good faith. It is not a credit against the dog's account. As the Chief Justice put it at argument, if the dog is the coach, the dog has to do something.

II

What, then, must the dog do? The rule says shotgun a beer, and the Court's research, conducted live and with some alarm, establishes that it cannot. Alcohol is toxic to dogs. A nine-pound Chihuahua that shotguns a twelve-ounce beer does not become a league legend; it becomes a veterinary emergency, and the record mentions pancreatitis. Whatever the dog owes, it is not that.

In ordinary contract law, impossibility discharges the duty. We decline to import that rule here. That doctrine was built for commerce, and this Court has not let its cousins excuse a punishment: force majeure, we said last week, "excuses delay, not performance." *Kristen*, 26-1531-2. "The threat to a punishment system is rarely open defiance. It is the clever reading." *Negative Points*, 24-0826-3. A rule under which appointing a dog eliminates the penalty would be the cleverest reading yet, and every 0-3 manager in America would have a Chihuahua by Thursday. Taken to its end, the league's position produces a week in which McConkey scored zero and nobody drank. That is the collapse our cases exist to prevent. Something must be performed.

Equity has a tool for this. When a trust's purpose becomes impossible, courts do not let the trust fail; they direct performance as near as possible to what was intended. *In re Hard Seltzer Waiver Claim*, 20-1357-1 (2020), supplies the measure. There we held that a White Claw satisfied a rule demanding "a full beer," and we explained why: "The rule aims to test managers' dedication and create entertaining content, not to

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enforce beverage taxonomy.” The canine equivalent must do the same work: a brief, public, mildly undignified ordeal, captured on video, that a nine-pound animal can survive. Justice Kelly’s observation that dogs “just swallow everything whole anyway” suggests the technique is not the obstacle. A dog is a natural shotgunner. The obstacle is the beverage.

Candidates were floated at argument. Justice Kelly proposed a puppucino and, in the alternative, something he called peanut butter catnip. The author of this opinion raised and withdrew two pancakes, which are not healthy for a Chihuahua either; the rule exists to embarrass the coach, not to injure him. We are not prepared to choose on this record. We have no evidence of what a Chihuahua experiences as an ordeal, no veterinary submissions, and no account of the dog’s own preferences, which under *Hard Seltzer* are relevant. The author suggested at argument that the question may be unanswerable. We are not yet willing to say so.

This Court has sought outside briefing before. See *In re Jury Service During NFL Season*, 24-0830-2 (2024) (supplemental briefing from the Second Gentleman proved dispositive). We do so again. The Clerk shall receive submissions from the public on what constitutes the canine equivalent of shotgunning a beer, with particular attention to safety, to brevity, and to the dignity of the dog, which should be impaired but not destroyed. We will rule when the record is complete.

* * *

Until then, the obligation is tolled, not discharged. The dog remains head coach and the debt remains on its books. Calvin’s league was right to reject his video, and wrong only if it believed the matter ended there. All zeros count, and this one counts against the dog.

Taken under advisement. Supplemental briefing ordered.

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JUSTICE KELLY, concurring.

I join the Court's opinion in full. I write separately because the zero-point shotgun rule is, in its original form, mine, *Negative Points*, 24-0826-3 (Kelly, J., concurring), and I have a standing interest in how it propagates. Calvin's league did not say where it got the rule. I would like to know. If Calvin is in fact in a league with my son, I ask only that he keep the microwaved tortillas to himself.

On the merits, I would go one step further than the Court and name the equivalent now. The puppuccino is a small cup of whipped cream, dispensed at a drive-through window, that a dog consumes in a single uninterrupted motion without instruction, coaching, or the puncturing implement my league mates favor. It is fast. It is on camera. It is slightly disgraceful. And it is, in the dog's own social circle, exactly what beer is in ours: the thing you are handed at a gathering and expected to finish. That is the *Hard Seltzer* inquiry, and it is satisfied. The Court prefers a record, and it is entitled to one. I note only that the record will arrive at the same place.

One further observation. Calvin went 0-3. The dog went 0-1. On a per-game basis the two coaches are indistinguishable, and the dog has the smaller sample. Calvin should not be hasty about a second coaching change. The Court holds today that the shotgun follows the office, and the next coach inherits the seat, the debt, and McConkey.