



PURINA

Today's Breeder

A Nestlé Purina Publication Dedicated to the Needs of Canine Enthusiasts

Issue 79

BREEDER PROFILES

Rush Hill Golden Retrievers

Oahe English Cocker Spaniels

Choosing Puppy Buyers

Canine Genomics & Nordic Breeds

Standard Poodle Makes History

The READERS' PAGE



Professional handler Holley Eldred poses CH StarZ Sky Jewel V Gamegard, who at 7 months and 3 days old became the youngest Rottweiler champion in history. *Pro Club* member Doreen Zimmerman owns "Juju."

Thank you, Purina, for Fortiflora. I have a 10-month-old Rottweiler daughter of GCH Gamegards Cherokee Star, V2, AOM, TT, named "Juju," who Holley Eldred showed to become the youngest Rottweiler Champion ever at 7 months and 3 days old. CH StarZ Sky Jewel V Gamegard had loose bowel problems since she was a puppy, and I tried everything under the sun multiple times.

Nothing worked until I remembered learning about Fortiflora. I sprinkled it on her food, and her stools improved. I was amazed. Juju also has put on weight and has more muscle. I love Fortiflora and tell everyone about it.

Doreen Zimmerman
StarZ Rottweilers
Harrisburg, PA

Editor's Note: *Purina Veterinary Diets* Fortiflora brand canine nutritional supplement contains *Enterococcus faecium* SF68, a live beneficial probiotic or bacteria, for the dietary management of dogs with diarrhea. *E. faecium* SF68 increases the

number of beneficial bacteria and helps promote intestinal health and restore intestinal balance in dogs. Fortiflora is available exclusively from veterinarians.

I have been a member of *Purina Pro Club* since 1983, and I look forward to the articles, interviews and advice in each issue of *Today's Breeder*. The Breeder Profiles have been especially interesting to me as I have a small kennel. The interviews with the breeders and the pictures of the kennel designs have helped me set up my kennel.

I raise German Shepherd Dogs and Chihuahuas. I have been breeding Shepherds for over 30 years and have always fed *Purina* dog foods. My dogs do great on *Purina*. They have

thick, shiny coats and are healthy and beautiful.

Thank you very much, Purina!

Beverly Schmidt
Whiskey Ridge German Shepherds
Townsend, WI



Mojave's Big Dawg Daddy V Schmidt, who is owned by *Pro Club* member and longtime German Shepherd Dog breeder Beverly Schmidt, was the Second Teenage Dog at the Midwest Region's Futurity in 2008 in Wisconsin. From left are judge Lee Parkhurst and handler Diane Brown.

We enjoy hearing from our Pro Club members about their dogs. Please send your letters and photos to: Today's Breeder, c/o Editor, Nestlé Purina PetCare Company, 27 Checkerboard Square, St. Louis, MO 63164 or via e-mail at today'sbreeder@purina.com. Today's Breeder retains the right to edit and publish letters, including names and addresses, and photos, to a worldwide audience.

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Rush Hill Golden Retriever breeder-owner-handler Tonya Struble believes that Golden Retrievers are an athletic breed that likes to work. Her latest "spark in the fire" is training some of her show Golden Retrievers for American Kennel Club retriever hunting tests. At her Rush Hill kennel in Arlington, Wash., she has produced many prominent Golden Retrievers.

12 MORE THAN PUPPY LOVE

Breeders take to heart finding the right homes for puppies they don't keep. Careful to match puppies with the qualities a puppy buyer seeks, breeders look for people who understand their breed and want lifelong companions.

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Professional trainer and breeder of Oahe English Cocker Spaniels Tom Ness enjoys every day. In the early 1990s, he acquired an English Cocker from Wales after surviving a near-fatal accident. The timing was right. The breed was making a comeback, and interest in field trials had piqued. Seven generations later, Tom has produced many Field Champions at his kennel and farm near Bismarck, N.D.

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Geneticists worldwide came to Visby, Sweden, in May to share the latest discoveries about many canine diseases. Some of their findings already are helping to improve the lives of dogs through genetic testing. A snapshot of the national breeds of Sweden provides a glimpse of some Nordic breeds recognized in the U.S.

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On Our Cover

Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CAN CH/AM GCH Rush Hill's River Road Payoff, JH, WC, SDHF ("Vegas"), a 6-year-old male Golden Retriever co-bred by Tonya Struble and Suzanne Rapier. Struble of Arlington, Wash., is the owner-handler. Cover photo by Anthony Leitão. See story on page 4.



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Rush Hill's *Spark in the Fire*

BY BARBARA FAWVER

A rush of wind sweeps by as a gust of Golden Retrievers bounds to retrieve a ball thrown by breeder-owner-handler Tonya Struble. As they race to be the first to capture the ball and make the retrieve, their tails shoot up and their ears fly out. Their intense, playful energy ripples across the yard.



All show dogs, these Rush Hill Golden Retrievers are conditioned for a purpose, part of Tonya's multitasking philosophy that this athletic breed does best when trained to work. "Goldens like the excitement of doing new things," Tonya says.

The same can be said for Tonya, who has taken part in most of the performance sports offered for Goldens. "I like the spark in the fire," she says.

Earlier in the day, Tonya and a small group of like-minded enthusiasts met at Pepper's Retriever Training Grounds in Carnation, Wash., to prepare for an upcoming American Kennel Club (AKC) retriever hunting test. The three-time-a-week ritual recently paid off when 6 ½-year-old CH Rush Hill's Rebel With A Cause, NA, RN, WC, VC, JH ("Lincoln") and 6-year-old Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CAN CH/AM GCH Rush Hill's River Road Payoff, JH, WC, SDHA ("Vegas"), the No. 1 Golden in 2010, earned their Junior Hunter titles. Now, they are training to become Senior Hunters.



Reaching back to throw a duck dummy into one of several technical ponds that dot the 200-acre training grounds, Tonya watches 2-year-old Rush Hill's Drama'geddon ("Willis") waiting eagerly on the bank.

Professional trainer Matt Nolan of Seattle stands nearby, offering suggestions. "Don't take your eyes off him," he says, calmly. "Make him know his game first."

A specialist in training show dogs for hunting tests, Nolan explains, "Goldens are softer and take more time to train than Labradors with their high drive. Goldens have to work through what you want them to do."

Though Tonya does the basic retriever training with her dogs, it is Nolan who will handle Willis in the Senior Hunter test, and potentially the Master Hunter test. Tonya will handle Lincoln and Vegas. "Willis responds well to Matt," Tonya says, throwing the dummy and simultaneously releasing Willis, who dives with gusto into the water.

"Atta boy!" Tonya shouts excitedly.

When Willis reaches the dummy, she blows the whistle hang-



Rush Hill's Drama'geddon ("Willis"), 2 years old, leaps to retrieve a duck dummy while training for the Senior Hunter test.

ing from a lanyard decorated with duck bands earned by other Rush Hill Golden Retrievers for completing various legs of retriever hunting tests. It signals Willis to return to the bank.

"Here, here, good boy," she yells.

"Everything is a work in progress," Tonya says.

That may be true for fieldwork, but Tonya's show-ring accomplishments are fine-tuned, particularly considering the fierce competition among the AKC's fourth most-registered breed. Rush Hill has produced more than 80 conformation champions, including many Best in Show and Best in Specialty Show winners, a daunting achievement earned through hard work and insightful breeding.



Tonya is shown with Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS AM/CAN CH Rush Hill's Haagen-Dazs in May 2000. The top-producing sire with 134 Champion offspring, "Kirby" set a breed record by winning 31 specialty shows.

The Once-in-a-Lifetime Dog

Early in her career, Tonya won 12 Bests in Show and five Bests in Specialty Show, including the 1989 Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) National Specialty, with "Rebel" (Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS AM/CAN CH Alderbrookes Rush Hill Rebel, AM/CAN TD, OS, SDHA).

"I thought I would never have another Best in Show winner," Tonya says, describing the Golden whose illustration appears on the side of her 25-foot box truck. "Rebel was my heart dog. I thought he was the once-in-a-lifetime dog."

Then came "Kirby," a Rebel grandson born in 1989. Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS AM/CAN CH Rush Hill's Haagen-Dazs, CDX, JH, AX, OAJ, WCX, VCS, OS, SDHA, CAN CD, WC, won 31 specialty shows, a record only recently surpassed. Kirby produced 134 Champions, making him

the top-producing sire in breed history.

"Kirby had beautiful structure, breed type and gait, and he also was my first Junior Hunter," says Tonya, recalling "The Big Man," a nickname for the Golden on the Rush Hill sign that hangs on her house. "He was a strong producer and was known worldwide. Pictures of him were used to help educate judges about the breed.

"He was dark golden, and when I first started showing Kirby, the lighter blond was favored. He broke the color barrier. By the time Kirby was a Veteran, it had turned around."

Then came "Pharley," a Kirby son and Rebel great-grandson born in 2002. Multi-BISS CH Rush Hill's Phar-Lap, SDHF, be-



"Lincoln" (CH Rush Hill's Rebel With A Cause) waits for Tonya to release him to make a marked retrieve.

came Tonya's second GRCA National Specialty winner in 2005. "All his points came from big specialty competitions," Tonya says. "Pharley had the same beautiful gait and breed type as his dad Kirby."

Then came "Chaos," a Kirby great-grandson on his sire's and dam's pedigrees born in 2003. Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Rush Hill Run'n Amuck at Abelard, OA, OAJ, AXP, AJP, NFP, WC, VCX, SDHA, OS, is a two-time GRCA National Specialty winner, having won in 2009 and 2010. In 2011, Chaos took Best



Above, from left: Tonya stacks "Pharley" (Multi-BISS CH Rush Hill's Phar-Lap) after he won Best of Breed at the 2005 Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) National Specialty; and Tonya poses with "Vegas" (Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CAN CH/AM GCH Rush Hill's River Road Payoff) after he won Best in Show in 2009 at the Couer d'lane (Idaho) Dog Fanciers Show.

of Opposite Sex to his daughter, BISS GCH Scion Hott Pants, RN, SDHF ("Groovy"), bred and owned by Kathy Whipple of Boise, Idaho, and handled by Clint Livingston of Brighton, Colo.

"I remember driving home with Pharley and Chaos after the 2009 National Specialty in Enid, Okla., where Chaos won his first National Specialty under Jeffrey Pepper," Tonya recalls. "I was so proud to have those males sitting at my side. When Chaos won again the following year under Swedish breeder-judge Henric Fryckstrand, it was really amazing."

The epitome of a perfect show dog, Chaos "possesses it all," she continues. "Chaos is a great mover, who has a very clean coming and going. His side gait is strong, and he covers the ground with long, powerful strides. He has an excellent front assembly and rock-solid topline. There is nothing better than being on the end of the lead of Chaos. He is a dog who truly loves the sport."

While Tonya was campaigning Chaos, the pair also competed in agility, often dashing from the conformation ring to agility, then to Group judging and finishing with fast agility. "He had such exuberant energy that I knew he needed a job," she says.

Then came Vegas, a Chaos son and Kirby great-grandson born in 2006. Tonya campaigned Vegas to the lofty

ranking of No. 1 Golden Retriever in the country in 2010. She and Vegas won Bred-By Exhibitor Best in Show in 2009 at the AKC National Championship and were chosen to represent the U.S. in the World Challenge the following year.

Throughout the year, Tonya and Vegas shared many show rings with two other Chaos children: the No. 2 Golden, GCH Gaia Of Yoshida Enterprise ("Gaia"), a male owned by Kazunari Oshima of Japan and handled by Laurie Jordan-Fenner of Elk Grove, Calif.; and the No. 3 Golden, GCH Dalane Doizaki Buckingham's Pride, SDHA ("Lexus"), a female owned by Hisato Doisaki of Los Angeles and Jane Jensen of Bellingham, Wash., and handled by Bruce Schultz of Bonita, Calif.

It was the first time Tonya had campaigned a No. 1 Golden. "I was home 12 days from August to October," she says. "At one show, my good friend and professional handler Larry Fenner said to me, 'Tonya, you're not meant to do this.'"

She agreed. "It's too important for me to stay at home and enjoy the dogs I have there," she says, smiling. "I've crossed it off my bucket list and moved on. I don't have to have the No. 1 Golden."

Not one to boast about her accomplishments, Tonya reflects humbly on her success. "I am lucky to have had the dogs I've had," she says.

No Idea Where It Would Lead

It was a Rough-Coated Collie — a "Lassie" dog — that Tonya dreamed of owning as a teenager in Anchorage, Alaska. Her stepfather was adamantly opposed to a big-coated, fluffy dog. When her father sent her money from the sale of her horse, her stepfather agreed she could buy a Golden Retriever since this was a sporting breed.

Eager to learn all she could, Tonya participated with "Sam," a curly coated Golden with four white feet and a splash of white on his chest, in Junior Showmanship. Next was "Sonny," a Golden she showed in



After winning Best of Breed at the 2010 GRCA National, "Chaos" (Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Rush Hill Run'n Amuck at Abelard) hugs Tonya.



Chaos, who is 9 years old, sits at home with Tonya. Explaining his name, Tonya says, "Chaos has lots of exuberant energy. At times, he is like a bull in a china closet, and at other times, he is the gentle giant."

Juniors and 4-H shows who she also handled to Companion Dog and Companion Dog Excellent titles.

"I had no idea at the time where this would take me," says Tonya.

When she and Mark Struble, an oil engineer, married in 1980 and bought a home in Anchorage, she started looking seriously for a show-quality Golden Retriever. She bought three Goldens from a local breeder and realized later they were average-quality dogs. "From those dogs, I learned what I wanted," Tonya says.

One of them, a bitch, had "Rush Hill" as part of her name, from which Tonya adopted Rush Hill for her kennel prefix. Though not original, "it has been unique," she says.

Tonya embraced all the Alaskan dog community had to offer, enrolling in obedience classes and taking part in Alaska Kennel Club conformation classes and fun matches. Dog shows were held eight times a year. "I learned as much about dog structure, movement and handling from Basset, setter and spaniel people as anyone," she says. In time, Tonya taught conformation as a fundraiser for the kennel club.

In spring 1982, Tonya and Mark traveled to Washington to

attend their first dog show outside Alaska. Used to smaller shows, "I was amazed at the sea of motor homes," she recalls.

Impressed with the quality of Golden Retrievers entered in the show, Tonya reflects, "I had been working with what was in my backyard, and then I was able to put my hands on dogs that really were great."

Tonya met Carole Johnson Kvamme, who bred Alderbrooke Golden Retrievers. "I fell in love with her male, 'Doc' (AM/CAN CH Tri Valley's Doc Holiday, AM/CAN DCX, WC, OS)," she says. "I loved his charming personality and darker golden coat. I also liked his pedigree. Doc was of East Coast breeding. His sire, 'True Bear' (CH Goldwing True Bear, OS, SDHF), was owned by Leslie Dove of Virginia.

"A couple of years later, I saw True Bear in California at the Nationals. It was the last time he was there. I waited my turn to talk to Leslie. She was respected by so many people, and they all had questions for her."

Tonya got a Doc son — a True Bear grandson — in 1982. It was Rebel. "He was the first dog I put points on," she says. "I loved Rebel's sweet personality and his desire to please. He started our foundation."

Tonya began loosely linebreeding on True Bear. "I took Rebel's grandkids and would breed a True Bear daughter to a True Bear

great-grandson," she says. "I put things together by visualizing them in my head. I'm a common-sense breeder. For me, it's the vision and knowing what I want. It is not always something that can be taught in a book."

In 1990, the Strubles moved to Arlington, Wash., one hour north-east of Seattle. They bought a five-acre property in the foothills of the Cascades, transforming it into their home and Rush Hill kennel.

A sign in the foyer of their home says it all: "Some people dream of success while others wake up and work hard at it."

Tonya picked up where she left off in Alaska: breeding and showing dogs, training in performance sports, and handling a few dogs professionally for clients. She handled the No. 1 Labrador



Featured prominently on the side of the 25-foot box truck that Tonya takes to dog shows is an illustration of "Rebel" (Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS AM/CAN CH Alderbrookes Rush Hill Rebel), the first dog she put points on and Rush Hill's foundation sire.

An American Favorite

Though the Golden Retriever originated in Scotland in the 1830s, the breed is an American favorite ranked No. 4 in American Kennel Club registrations. The Golden's cheerful, friendly disposition makes him a cherished companion. His biddable temperament suits him well for a variety of sports, including field trials, hunting tests, obedience, agility, and rally obedience.

Rush Hill Golden Retriever breeder Tonya Struble adores the breed's playful nature and loving personality. "My Goldens hug with their paws wrapped around my waist," she says. "It is a trait they pass on to their children."



CH Rush Hill's Murder Mystery ("Watson")

Retriever in 2006, GCH Sharay's Nicholas of Whidbey, owned by Ron Perry of Seattle and Sharon Edwards of Clinton, Wash.

Mark, who now is with MI Swaco in Bakersfield, Calif., works two weeks and is off two weeks. While Mark adores the dogs — going to shows when he can — the Rush Hill Goldens are Tonya's passion.

Tonya counts many friends as important to her success. One is Suzanne Rapier of Snohomish, Wash., co-breeder of Vegas, with whom she frequently travels to shows, including the 2011 World Dog Show in Paris. Others are professional handlers Laurie Jordan-Fenner and Bruce and Tara Schultz. "All my really good friends I have met through dogs," Tonya says.

When the Strubles moved to Washington, Tonya was showing Kirby. "I wanted to improve our working relationship, so I signed up for obedience class two times a week," she says. "I also did agility with him."

By the mid-1990s, Tonya had resumed teaching conformation classes. She teaches three classes each Wednesday at the Country Classic Dog Training Facility in Arlington. "We work through scenarios that happen at dog shows," she says. "I teach owners things like how to work with their dogs and bring about their best features."

I enjoy watching people learn to handle their own dogs. This is not a 'show 'n' go' class. It's a hands-on learning experience."

Tonya breeds about two litters a year. Her sires and dams are a minimum of 2 years old, the age when they become eligible to receive the Golden Retriever health clearances and certification for healthy hips, elbows, eyes and heart.

Puppies spend the first four weeks in a whelping box in the house decorated with colorful mobiles. Music and household sounds help acclimate them. When they move to the kennel, they enjoy spacious 10-by-10 foot indoor and 25-by-30 foot outdoor areas that include a jungle gym and tunnel for climbing.

Training starts when puppies are 5 weeks old. "I put them on a table and start stacking them so they get used to standing," says Tonya.

"Every line develops differently," she says. "At 3 to 5 months, puppies go through the 'uglies.' They lose their baby teeth, and their calcium level is off. I don't worry about a sloping topline because it will level out. If there is no bend in the stifle, it will come later."

Tonya enjoys 4-month-old puppies, "Towner," left, and "Allegra."





"Drama" and Lincoln wait to be fed in the kennel. Tonya feeds her Rush Hill Golden Retrievers either *Pro Plan Performance* or *Pro Plan Chicken & Rice Shredded Blend*, which are mixed with *Pro Plan Sensitive Skin & Stomach Formula*.

Stacked high in the kennel are two pallets of *Purina Pro Plan* dog food. "I feed Performance and Chicken & Rice Shredded Blend formulas, both of which are mixed with Sensitive Skin & Stomach Formula," she says. "Before I fed *Pro Plan*, I tried lots of brands. I didn't like how they looked.



Willis works out on the dog treadmill in the kennel. Tonya uses the treadmill regularly in the winter months to help keep her Golden Retrievers in top condition.

Next to the puppy kennel is space for four adult dogs in two 5-by-6-foot indoor kennels that open to a 100-by-85-foot outdoor exercise area. The kennel has an exercise treadmill that is used regularly in the winter and two grooming tables. Across from the kennel building are two shady, covered outdoor kennels, which are 15-by-20 feet and 20-by-22 feet. Shaved cedar provides a soft ground and helps repel fleas. Several Golden Retrievers enjoy romping and playing with balls and toys in these paddocks.

Tonya's belief that the Golden Retriever is an athletic breed carries over to her grooming practices. "I don't use powders or chalk," she says. "My dogs have plenty of bone. I also don't blow their coats excessively or do much trimming."



Grooming Willis, Tonya explains that a Golden Retriever should have a "solid, rock-hard topline, tight cat feet with plenty of bone, a strong head with level planes, and ample featherings."

"One of my Golden Retrievers from the East came here. The dog was fed *Pro Plan Sensitive Skin & Stomach Formula* and looked great. I talked to Laurie Fenner, Bruce Schultz and Lynn Heidinger from Purina. Lynn sent me some food to try. I've been a *Pro Plan* believer ever since. I really like the fish oil in Sensitive Skin & Stomach for their coats."

Tonya feeds her Golden Retrievers two times a day. High-energy, young dogs like Willis, who is training for the Senior Hunter test, are fed eight cups of food a day. Most receive six cups, and older dogs receive four cups.

As she looks around the kennel, Tonya sees two puppies playing together. "Allegra," a 4-month-old female from a frozen semen breeding of Kirby out of Lexus, already is training for hunting tests. "Liam" is a male from a repeat litter sired by Chaos out of CH Rush Hill's Ruffles Have Ridges, a breeding done for dear friends who longed for Chaos offspring. Tonya realizes the importance of giving back to the breed by sharing her dogs and the qualities she has worked so hard to develop through breeding.

Not one to linger on achievements, Tonya's bucket list is short. "I'd like to win the breed at Westminster and see one of my dogs get an MH (Master Hunter)," she says. "I also eventually want to judge dog shows."

Meanwhile, getting Lincoln, Vegas and Willis ready to perform the blind retrieves and double marks needed to pass the Senior Hunter test is Rush Hill's latest spark in the fire. ■

Proving the Underdog

BY SARAH MEYER

The first Standard Poodle in history to earn Master Hunter titles in three registries, UH HRCH MHR Southern Standards Red Creole, MH, WCX, has proved more than his hunting expertise. The accomplished 6-year-old red male, called "Cooper," has helped shatter the long-standing perception that Poodles cannot hunt.

Though the Standard Poodle originally was bred as a retriever for the duck marshes in Germany, the American Kennel Club (AKC) assigned the breed to the Non-Sporting Group in 1938. It was not until 1998 that the Standard Poodle became eligible to participate in AKC hunting tests. Despite his credentials, the Standard Poodle largely has been considered an outcast by serious hunters.

"Poodles have this 'frou-frou' image that couldn't be further from the truth," says Angie Louter, who owns Cooper with her husband, Rich. "In reality, they are incredibly intelligent dogs that excel as hunting companions."

The Louters breed, raise and train Louter Creek Standard Poodles on their 15-acre farm in Moreland, Ga. They are dedicated to changing misconceptions about the breed.

"The bottom line for us is proving the naysayers wrong," says Rich, who trains the Louters' Standards plus clients' dogs of various breeds in waterfowl and upland game hunting.

Handled by Rich, Cooper has made great strides in proving the Standard's capabilities. Each of his Master Hunter titles represents numerous exceptional performances in that registry's most challenging hunt tests. Dogs pass or fail hunt tests based on how their performance compares to a standard.

"I've never seen another dog with the drive and worth ethic Cooper has," Rich says.

Cooper topped off his trio of Master Hunter titles last January with the Master Hunting Retriever (MHR) title from the North American Hunting Retriever Association (NAHRA). He is the only Standard Poodle to hold the title, which is awarded after a dog achieves 100 points in NAHRA field tests. Eighty points, or four passes, must be achieved in

Rich Louter releases "Cooper," a 6-year-old Standard Poodle, who recently made history as the first of his breed to earn Master Hunter titles in three registries.

Senior-level tests, consisting of triple-marked land and water retrieves, blind land and water retrieves, and upland hunting and trailing challenges.

Also adorning Cooper's registered name are the Master Hunter (MH) title from the AKC, earned in June 2011, and the Hunting Retriever Champion (HRCH) title from the United Kennel Club (UKC), earned in May 2010. The MH title requires a dog to pass six Master level hunts, and the HRCH title requires a dog to earn 100 points, with 60 points, or four passes, achieved in finished level hunts. Both titles require a dog to consistently retrieve difficult marks.

Cooper's accomplishments, which include the Poodle Club of America's Working Certificate Excellent (WCX) and the UKC's Upland Hunter (UH) title, led to a reserved spot for his portrait at the Bird Dog Foundation's National Bird Dog Museum in Grand Junction, Tenn. After Cooper earned his third Master Hunter title, the Louters began receiving media calls. Cooper's photo and articles about his achievements have appeared in publications worldwide.



Cooper retrieves a duck dummy from a pond on the Louters' farm.

Bred by Mary Weil of Helen, Ga., Cooper was sired by Majestic Southern Standards Boudreaux out of Southern Standards Ms Ruby. Angie fell in love with Standard Poodles in 2003 when she bought her first Standard, Garlins Summer Romrance ("Enya"), for her daughter, Lexie, whose asthma and allergies necessitated a hypoallergenic family pet.

Married in 2004, Rich and Angie bought Cooper two years later for Lexie, who is now 13, to show in AKC Junior Showmanship. Cooper never made it to the show ring. Rich, a leisure hunter, fell for the puppy after discovering his enthusiasm for hunting and his desire to retrieve birds.

The Louters entered Cooper in his first hunting test in 2007. "That was a bad one," Rich says. "It would have been easy to quit at that point. Instead, we decided if we were going to do this, we were going to do this right."

"We knew we had a lot to learn," Angie adds.

The Louters and Cooper also had to overcome widespread doubt from those who didn't believe Poodles could hunt. "For years, we got a lot of comments and snickering behind our backs," says Angie. "As we've educated judges and people in the sport about Standard Poodles and as our dogs have accomplished more and more, that has begun to subside."

"Their intelligence makes training Standards to hunt more



Rich and Angie pose with Cooper, whose ribbons earned from hunt tests are displayed in the background.

difficult than training other breeds," Rich explains. "That has contributed to the misperception that they're incapable. Rather than acting on their instincts, they're more cautious, always thinking about things first.

"Poodles don't take correction very well," he continues. "You must have a lot of patience and make sure they know what you're asking before you do any correcting."

Learning from experience, Rich has developed a training program for Standard Poodles that has helped him put 45 hunt test titles on Standards. "Cooper taught me so much about training Standards," he says. "We have several up-and-coming dogs that will probably be better than he is because we know more about the breed and the sport now."

They include: SHR Louter Creek's She's My Little Whiskey Girl, JH, WC ("Whiskey"); UH HRCH Webster's Red High Heels, SH ("Layla"); and SHR Redlines Radiant Red Reba, JH, WC ("Reba").

The Louters feed their Standard Poodles *Purina Pro Plan Performance Formula*. "It gives them the energy they need to sustain a rigorous training schedule," Rich says.

Rich and Angie breed a litter a year, with most puppies going to hunting families. Cooper has sired eight Louter Creek litters, which include seven AKC Junior Hunters.

"Many of our puppies come back for training," Rich says. "It is a joy to see a Standard puppy we bred transform into a skilled hunter and do what the breed was bred to do." ■

MORE THAN Puppy Love

Finding the right homes for puppies is an essential part of breeding dogs. While not every dog in a litter will become a show champion or the next great field champion, each has the potential to be a loving companion and live a wonderful life. *Today's Breeder* recently interviewed these breeders to learn how they select puppy buyers.

A daredevil with tremendous self-will, the Irish Terrier is not the right breed for everyone. R.C. Carusi of Oxford, Mass., was undeterred by the quick-witted, highly intelligent terrier.

A professional handler who has specialized in terriers for 30 years, Carusi has been breeding the spunky Irish Terriers under the Fleet St. prefix for 20 years. His kennel once belonged to his uncle, Robert Fisher, a professional handler who handled CH Tralee's Rowdy Red, the winningest male Irish Terrier in history, from 1982 to 1984 for owner Edward Jenner. Carusi got his start in the breed helping Fisher with "Rowdy."

Carusi and his wife, Shari Boyd-Carusi, a well-known breeder of Aran Soft-Coated Wheaten Terriers, have consistently bred Irish Terriers that are Top 10 Terriers as well as half a dozen National Specialty Best of Breed winners. Their male, CH Fleet St. Fadeway, was the No. 1 Irish Terrier in England in 2011. As a handler, R.C. won the prestigious all-terrier Montgomery County Kennel Club Dog Show in 1994 with CH Rough N Ready's Wild Irishman, a male Irish Terrier owned by Stan Wojewodski Jr., and in 2002 with AM/CAN CH Tartan Scottshire Ultra Glide, a male Airedale Terrier owned by Linda Buonauro, June and Rod Mara, Carol Scott, and Forbes Gordon.

R.C. and Shari breed about one litter of Irish Terriers a year. With an average of six puppies per litter, they try to keep at least one puppy. Identifying dogs best-suited to be pets begins at 8 weeks of age, with one or two being selected, although puppies do not go to homes until they are 12 weeks old. When they are 4 months old, another one or two are identified as a pet. A decision about the remaining show prospects is not made until the pups are at least 8 months old.



A Fleet St. Irish Terrier puppy

R.C. and Shari Carusi hold 5-week-old Irish Terrier puppies sired by Fleet St. Firethorn out of Fleet St. Rapid Belief.





Placing puppies in pet homes starts with “people telling me what they are looking for, and I match the dog to them,” says R.C.

“The process begins with a phone interview, followed by their visiting our home, followed by me visiting their home,” Shari says. “Names go on a list only after we’ve met them. The hardest part is turning the product of our labor over to someone else in hopes they live happily ever after.”

With a focus on form, function, health and temperament, the Carusis devote years to developing pedigrees and planning breedings. “The real work begins when the puppies arrive. It takes dedication and commitment. We handle each one, and they experience new stimuli every day,” Shari continues.

Expecting puppy buyers to have researched the breed, R.C. and Shari look for people who have realistic expectations about living with an Irish Terrier and are ready to make a lifetime commitment. “They need to understand you should not give this breed an upper hand,” R.C. says. “It’s important to develop a relationship in which puppies know you are in charge.

“Irish Terriers need lots of exercise,” he continues. “A fenced yard is mandatory. While we welcome families with children, they must be mature enough to understand boundaries.”

Along with teaching new owners about veterinary care, grooming and training, the Carusis tell about their favorite dog food, *Purina Pro Plan Selects*.

“We feed *Selects* Natural Turkey & Barley and Natural Chicken & Brown Rice formulas,” says R.C. “Most importantly, the dogs love the palatability.”

Reflecting on why she is smitten with Irish Terriers, Shari says, “It is their companionship that I love. They make us smile each and every day, and that is what we want for our new puppy owners as well.”

Beeline’s Natural Bird Dogs

A foundation sire who stamped his prowess as a bird dog king into his offspring, 32XNSTRA CH/3XGR NTL CH/6X AM FD CH Nolan’s Last Bullet (“Buddy”) also solidified the expertise of his owner-handler Nolan Huffman as a trainer. A Brittany with amazing drive, heart, bird sense and brains, Buddy was the Purina Dog of the Year and the Trial of Champions winner in 2003. His incredible talent earned him a place in the American Brittany Club Hall of Fame.

Nolan and his wife, Danelle, have built their Beeline Brittanys breeding program around Buddy, producing “natural bird dogs” for hunters and field trial enthusiasts. Four litters a year — two in spring and two in fall — help to fulfill a six-month to one-year waiting list for puppies. Since professional training is a big part of their program, the Huffmans travel between Lewistown, Mont., in the summer and fall, and Valdese, N.C., in the winter and spring.

“Our focus is producing stylish, tireless hunters

Ten-week-old Beeline Brittany puppies bred by Nolan and Danelle Huffman explore the outdoors.

Danelle and Nolan are pictured with Beeline Bullet's Oxidation ("Rusty") and a Beeline puppy that he sired.



with high intelligence," Nolan says. "Pups can have all the drive in the world with a keen nose but without knowing where to stick that nose, they aren't going to be true bird finders."

"Most of our puppy buyers today are repeat customers or people who have hunted over one of our dogs owned by someone else," Danelle says.

Such was the case for Marc Calijan of Louisville, Ky. "I used to live in Denver, and one of my hunting buddies had a son out of Buddy," Calijan says. "I always wanted an upland hunting dog. When I moved to Kentucky, I knew it was time to get one."

"I talked to Nolan because I liked his line. Nolan wanted to know whether I wanted a field trial dog or a personal hunting dog and where I would hunt, in the prairies out West or in the Southeast. I let him know I was looking for a dog that was versatile enough to run out a little, not as close-ranging as a grouse dog. I wanted something middle of the road."

When Nolan called Calijan with news he had "the perfect dog" for him, Calijan couldn't have been happier. Though he originally wanted a male Brittany,

he is pleased with "Abby," his 1-year-old female. "She has the rusty red color I like and is high energy," says Calijan. "She has been in training with Nolan since she was a few months old. I am looking forward to getting her home this fall."

Beeline Brittanys are registered and compete in three registries, the American Kennel Club, the United Kennel Club and the American Field. Honing the skills to win field trials and national championships involves exposure to lots of birds. "All dogs are different, and we believe a pup should advance at his or her own pace," says Nolan. "Wild birds are invaluable teachers, and all exposure to them is beneficial. We strongly believe there is no better trainer than wild birds."

When new owners come to take puppies home, Nolan and Danelle make sure to review vaccination and worming records and emphasize the importance of exercise. "We encourage as much exercise as possible," Danelle says. "This is because it makes dogs easier to handle and introduces the puppy to situations likely to be encountered in the field."

"We always try to impress on buyers the importance of superior nutrition," adds Nolan. "We recommend *Purina Pro Plan* Puppy Formula or an all life-stages food like *Pro Plan* Performance or *Pro Plan* Chicken & Rice Formula."

The purpose of their breeding is realized in "these wonderful, little dogs," Nolan says. "Watching them go from being a field trial winner to ranging across the short-grass prairie and curling up in a ball on the couch, they never cease to amaze us."

Following Pop's Lead

Kimberly Pastella Calvacca's grandfather, Chic Ceccarini, gets credit for turning the professional handler and third-generation Boxer breeder onto Miniature Pinschers. When Ceccarini died in 1997 at the age of 92, he left behind his treasured companion, CH SunSprite Absolutely Sable, a Best in Show-winning Min Pin.

"The next year, I showed 'Abbey' at the Garden and won the breed," says Kimberly, of Westbury, N.Y. "The first litter out of Abbey produced a male, 'Rocky' (CH Kimro's Rocket Man), who took a Best in Show on Pop's birthday. I definitely felt Pop's presence that day."

Kimberly Pastella Cavacca cradles 5-week-old Miniature Pinscher puppies sired by CH Kimro's N Spivas Super Trooper out of CH Viktres Just Ain't Whistling Dixie.



Seventeen years later, Kimberly and co-breeder Robin Green Slade of Mims, Fla., have bred seven generations of Kimro Miniature Pinschers — five generations of Best in Show winners — and four No. 1 Min Pins. When their red male, GCH Kimro's Soldier Boy ("Major"), won Bred-By Exhibitor Best in Show at the 2010 AKC National Championship, it was a shining moment.

Major, the grandsire of a recent litter, potentially will stamp his attributes into the next generation of Kimro Best in Show winners.

"We breed no more than one or two litters a year, but not all years, and we typically keep the two best puppies from each litter," Kimberly says.

Like other toy breeds, the 8- to 10-pound Miniature Pinscher can be "delicate and fragile," explains Kimberly. "I work hard to make strong temperaments by raising them like little Boxers. I expose them to lots of people and all sorts of stimuli."

As the handler of two Boxers that were No. 1 in the Working Group and No. 4 in all-breed competition, CH Hi-Tech's Arbitrage ("Biff") in 1994 and CH Hi-Tech's Johnny J of Boxerton ("Johnny") in 1999, both owned by Dr. Bill and Tina Truesdale of Seekonk, Mass., Kimberly realizes the importance of socializing for proper temperament. She also has handled nine Boxer Club of America National Specialty winners.

She draws upon the linebreeding she uses in Boxers when breeding Miniature Pinschers. "You want to hold on to your attributes and improve on your weaknesses," she says. "I breed as close to the standard as possible. It is important that Min Pins have a hackney gait in which the foot bends at the wrist. They also cannot be more than 12 ½ inches tall at the withers."

Size can determine which puppies go to pet homes. "I follow a growth chart starting when puppies are 6 weeks of age," says Kimberly. "Those that are 5 ½ inches or less are likely to be undersized as adults, and those that are over 7 ½ inches probably will be oversized."



An 8-week-old Kimro Miniature Pinscher puppy

Right: Clyde and Marilyn Vetter pose with 5-month-old Sharp Shooters I'll Make You Famous ("Billy"), who was sired by INT CH Sharp Shooters Ladies Man, UT PZI, NA PZI, out of INT CH/VC Roughneck Shockwave, MH, UT PZI, NA PZI.

Puppies going to pet homes are placed around 5 months old. "I look for the serious buyer who wants a companion for life," she says. "It's a slow process. I visit their homes, and they come here a couple of times. I like to see how they interact with the dogs."

When she is screening potential buyers, Kimberly tells them that Miniature Pinschers do well with children. Fenced yards are not necessary, although exercise from walks or steps helps build muscles and keeps dogs conditioned.

Kimberly goes over house-training and teaches grooming basics. "I encourage obedience and puppy training," she says. "I believe in crate training and that a dog earns the right to be free in the house. I advocate regular baths — weekly in the summer and monthly in winter — partly because it helps with shedding. Nails should be trimmed regularly. Some owners bring their dogs to me to trim nails."



A 6-week-old German Shorthaired Pointer puppy, INT CH/VC Sharp Shooters Hot Rod, MH, UT PZI, NA PZI, out of INT CH/VC Sharp Shooters Fast as You, UT PZI, NA PZI.



Nutrition basics focus on teaching about *Purina Pro Plan Performance Formula*. "I love Performance, and how it makes coats look," says Kimberly. "My dogs have solid stools and beautiful teeth, and their muscles and weight are great."

Kimberly and her dogs eventually moved into Pop's house and kennel, where she spent so much time as a girl. Ceccarini would be proud to know that his granddaughter not only has continued breeding Boxers but also added Min Pins that started with his beloved Sadie.

Sharp Shooters' Versatile Shorthairs

Generation after generation of German Shorthaired Pointers produced at Clyde and Marilyn Vetter's Sharp Shooters Kennel in New Richmond, Wis., turn out to have the skills of elite versatile hunting dogs that bring puppy buyers back again and again.

The Vettters' 18- to 24-month waiting list for puppies contains the names of many repeat buyers. "Some people put down a deposit for a litter four or five years into the future so they are assured of getting a puppy," says Clyde, a professional who trains and handles dogs in North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association (NAVHDA) and American Kennel Club (AKC) hunting tests.

Over the past 22 years, Clyde and Marilyn have produced 37 NAVHDA Versatile Champions (VC), the top achievement in rigorous upland and water tests in which dogs are judged individually against a standard. Four of the five top Shorthair sires in NAVHDA are from their kennel. Of their own 13 Versatile Champions, 10 are AKC Master Hunters. The Vettters' success is reflected in the 45 NAVHDA Breeder Awards they have received and their recognition as AKC Breeders of Merit in 2011.

Clyde and Marilyn breed no more than three litters a year, and it's not uncommon for them to have multiple Versatile Champions in a single litter — one litter of 11 had a record six VCs. The Vettlers' puppy buyers nearly always are NAVHDA members, judges and/or breeders.

"Our sole effort is to produce puppies that have extraordinary abilities, stable temperaments and sound conformation," Clyde says. "If we do those things right, we will produce what we call an elite hunting dog."

Mark Whalen of Poolesville, Md., waited two years for his second Sharp Shooters Shorthair. In mid-May, he received his pup, Sharp Shooters Honky Tonk Man ("Hank"), who was whelped March 20. "My puppy is everything I hoped for and more," he says.



A 2-week-old Sharp Shooters Shorthair puppy

"I waited for this particular breeding after I saw the dam, 'Sonic' (VC Roughneck Shockwave), in 2009," says Whalen, a NAVHDA judge and member for 26 years. "Sonic backs with as much intensity as she points with. She absolutely glides effortlessly through the field with a calm, confident demeanor."

Whalen's first dog, 7 ½-year-old VC Sharp Shooters Super Charged ("Nitro"), is one of the six pups from the litter of 11 to earn a VC title. "I went back to Clyde and Marilyn because in my opinion they produce some of the finest German Shorthairs out there," he says. "Their breeding program is top-notch."

Since people come from across the country to buy a Sharp Shooters puppy, Marilyn takes time to be sure she understands the traits they are seeking. "We usually have several phone conversations," she says.

Purina Puppy Starter Kits Ideal for Puppy Owners

Breeders who are members of *Purina Pro Club* may order Purina Puppy Starter Kits to send home with new owners of puppies. The Starter Kits, which are available at no cost, contain a 76-page Puppy Care Guide, The First 48 Hours fact sheet on caring for new puppies, and space to add customized information. Breeders may include a puppy's pedigree and information about the breed.

The Puppy Starter Kits, which are available for *Purina Pro Plan*, *Purina ONE* and *Purina Puppy Chow*, come with a coupon for free puppy food that breeders can use to fill complimentary sample food bags for new puppy owners. A dollars-off coupon is provided so new owners may continue feeding *Purina* brand puppy foods.

To order Puppy Starter Kits, *Pro Club* members should visit www.purinaproclub.com, or call 1-877-PRO-CLUB (1-877-776-2582) from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central time Monday through Friday.



"Some owners want big-running, independent dogs, while others prefer a somewhat closer-working dog that might be more cooperative. We take pride in knowing our puppies and what we've produced. It's our job to ensure owners get the right puppy from the right litter."

When puppies leave the Sharp Shooters Kennel, new owners agree to run them in a NAVHDA Natural Ability test as a minimum. The testing, which provides an unbiased evaluation of hunting skills, allows the Vettlers to assess their breedings.

Owners take home samples of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula, the all life-stages dog food the Vettlers feed their Shorthairs. "Puppies are fed *Pro Plan* Performance from day one, especially considering we feed it to our pregnant bitches," Clyde says. "We teach owners about the quality of *Pro Plan*."

Some puppies return to Sharp Shooters Kennel for training. "The most rewarding part is hearing back from puppy owners, whether it's about their summer training and testing accomplishments or their many wonderful hunts," Clyde says. "Success is when they call 10 years later to say it is time for a new pup. That is the highest source of flattery." ■

The Mechanics of Starting SPO Pups

BY SAM & RITA BUTLER

Training a Beagle is different from dog to dog. There's also a big difference between owning and running dogs and training dogs. Getting a dog to run a rabbit is no big deal, but getting one to do it rulebook style while competing with six to eight unfamiliar dogs takes training.

You want to start with a well-bred 6- to 8-month-old pup. Do some research and buy a pup from a good breeder who has had success. Check out the sires and dams and the pups they have produced. The breeder should be able to give you the reason for making the cross.

Ground training should be introduced before starting a pup. You want to teach a pup not to pull or fight on a lead. This should be done gradually until a pup leads without a struggle. You also want to teach the down command to get the pup to lie down.



Rita Butler cuddles Beagle pups.

The next step is starting your pup. We have two starting pens. One is one-third acre, and the other is a full acre. We have a lot of cover — not brush piles that teach a pup to skirt — and few rabbits. We use the larger pen 90 percent of the time. One to three rabbits is all you need. Our starting pen has a self-feeder, a 15-gallon water tub and two dog houses. We put four to six pups in the pen at a time.

When pups start in groups of four to six, they come out of the pen packing and harking to other dogs.

Don't leave them in the pen more than a day after they start to open on a track, or they will learn bad habits.

We don't go into the pen unless we hear pups running. They have to hunt, jump and start on their own. Like people, they will adapt easily to hand outs. Jump their first three or four rabbits, and that might

FC Choptalk Ratchet Jaw Jane, left, and FC Choptalk Hoochie Coochie scent for the rabbit track.





be your job for the rest of their lives. We are often asked how long it takes for a pup to start. We have litters start in minutes, and some take six weeks. We see no difference after they start.

When we take pups out of the one-acre pen, we put them in our 32-acre running pen. You want to get them running as soon as possible. If you lay them up, you might have to restart them. Once they are running, we take them out in packs of three or four. We want them to learn to run with other dogs before they run solo.

Once we run the pups a few times, we try to match them with pups of about the same ability. We want every pup to get a chance to run the front, middle and back and to get checks. If you only have one pup, try to hook up with buddies with pups. There is a great advantage in having several pups to move from pack to pack. We are now looking not just for the pup that runs the fastest, but also the one that has the correct running style. We call it mechanics.

Watch their check work. Do they have a good system to find the rabbit? Pups should snap back to the last place they smelled the rabbit (point of loss) and then look forward, left, right and back. Most checks are due to a rabbit making a big jump forward, sometimes over nine feet. Eighty percent of rabbits in the wild circle left, so we like our pups to go forward first, then left. They should repeat this process and move farther away from the point each time until they find the rabbit.

Looking back first is something we dislike. It normally results from running a pup with older dogs that keep the pup on the back or with a stronger pup that overruns the line. A pup starts looking back because that is where the rabbit has always been. Some pups are left-handed or right-handed and only look that way. That is a disadvantage almost impossible to correct.

A good hunting dog or trial dog — they should be one in the same — must account for his game. Good check work will help them account for each rabbit they run.

We believe there are three hunting styles. First is the dog that keeps its head down and nose working as it scents for a track. Second is the dog that hunts like a bird dog, covering a lot of ground fast. Both styles will produce some rabbits. Third is the style we prefer. The true jump dog knows where the rabbit is and takes time to find where the rabbit could be hiding. You don't get true jump dogs through luck. It is bred into them.

Do they have good line flow? We want a straight pup that does not flop back and forth on a line like windshield wipers.

We are much more impressed with a pup that can carry the line 100 yards than one that gets five checks in 100 yards.

We now have the pups packing and are rotating them in and out so they get used to being run with different pack mates. All will have faults, but most can be cured. This is where the training really starts. Common faults are backtracking, having extra or not enough mouth, charging the front and causing losses, not firing off a check fast enough to get to the front, skirting, or just not having good mechanics. There are ways to deal with all except bad mechanics.



Sam and Rita lead a pack of Beagles to the field for training.

The main thing about any fault is to catch it early. Stop what you've been doing and train a different way. Close your tailgate when you turn your pups loose and follow them. Show me a trainer who has all the answers, and I will show you one who has not been asking many questions. ■

Sam and Rita Butler have raised 150 litters at their Choptalk Rabbit Dawgs kennel in Marysville, Ind. In 2004, they were honored as Breeders of the Year by the United Beagle Gundog Federation (UBGF). The Butlers, who are members of the SPO Beagling Hall of Fame, have owned 63 Field Champions. Over the past 25 years, their Choptalk Beagles have won National Championships in the American Kennel Club, UBGF and Mid-America Gundog Brace.

Oahe's RIGHT TIMING

BY KEITH SCHOPP

Tom Ness is chewing on a cigar and relaxing at the end of a long, hot July day training English Cocker Spaniels at Oahe Kennels near Bismarck, North Dakota.

The dog relaxing at Tom's side is not an English Cocker Spaniel. Not even close. She's a slender, curious, black-and-white dog of unknown origin.

"This is 'Slim,'" Tom says. "The greatest dog that ever lived."

The greatest dog that ever lived?

"Yep," Tom says, smiling from behind the stogie. "Greatest dog that ever lived."

That's high praise from Tom Ness, who has trained and handled a lot of great dogs, including seven generations of English Cockers and the 2010 English Cocker Spaniel National Champion. Slim, on the other hand, has won nothing but Tom's heart.

"I found Slim tied to my dumpster about 10 years ago," Tom says. "She wouldn't let anybody close to her for a year. She dug a hole next to my garage, dug it clear down to the basement foundation, and that's how she lived. That's how she survived the winter. After awhile, Slim began to trust us."

More than 10 years later, Slim is a favorite of Tom and his family.

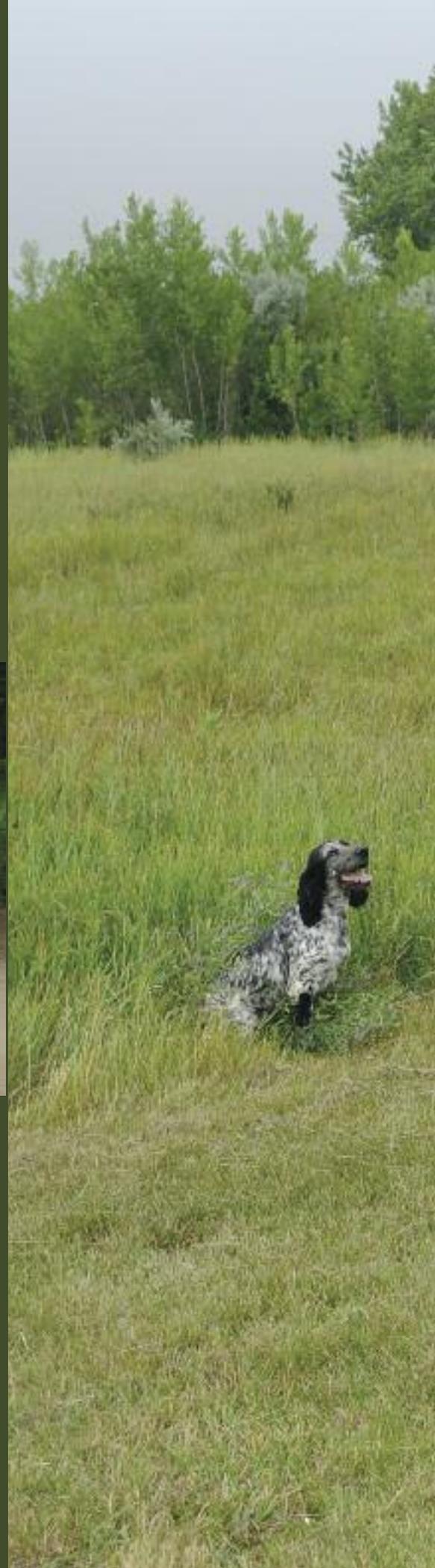
"She's incredibly intelligent," Tom says. "She's street smart. And she must have some Border Collie in her. Slim has taught me a lot."

So, this is more than a story about Tom Ness, Oahe Kennels and a stable of talented English Cocker Spaniels. It's also a story about the Greatest Dog that Ever Lived. All told, it is a story of Survival, Courage, Trust, Patience, and Having Fun.

It's a story about dogs.



Tom Ness cradles "Cameron," while "Slim" follows. Right: Tom trains "Molly," an English Cocker Spaniel, while Slim and "Fritz" watch.







Tom holds 4-week-old Cocker puppies at Oahe Kennels.

Survival

Tom Ness remembers the blast and a jolt from behind on the day he nearly died. He was seated in the driver's seat of a vehicle while guiding a group of hunters. A shotgun discharged accidentally inside the vehicle.

"There was no pain immediately," Tom says. "It felt like I'd been kicked in the behind. I didn't realize I'd been shot. Then, I saw the pool of blood on the floorboard."

In fact, Tom saw what seemed to be gallons of blood, gushing from a gaping hole in his backside. A hunter in the back seat had snagged his loaded shotgun, and both barrels went off. The first charge hit the floorboard, the second ripped through the driver's seat and into Tom.

"Fortunately, one of my clients that day was a retired emergency room physician," Tom says. "If he hadn't stuffed my shirt into the hole to stop some of the bleeding, I'd have probably died right there."

Tom was driven to the nearest hospital, then airlifted to a hospital with a trauma center in Bismarck. It took more than a year to recover from the 1992 accident, with some complications to this day. He produces a photo of the wound taken shortly after the accident. It's hard to look at.

"Every day is bonus for me now," Tom says. "Life is short. Death could be long."

'Mave' to the Rescue

Always a sportsman and lover of the North Dakota outdoors, Tom trained sporting dogs and guided hunters as a hobby. His degree in geology from North Dakota State resulted in a mining industry career that took him to Colorado and Wyoming. Tom developed an interest in flushing dogs and competed in Springer Spaniel field trials before returning to his home state of North Dakota in 1984, where he continued to guide and train dogs part time.

Just after the 1992 accident, Tom acquired FCH Parkbreck Elm of Bishwell ("Mave"), an exceptional English Cocker Spaniel from Wales.

"Mave played a big part in my recovery from the accident," Tom says. "I told myself, 'This is such a good dog. The world needs to see this dog.' It motivated me to get going, get up and

get moving. She was talented. I knew I had to train this dog.”

Tom worked hard to get back on his feet and to train the little English Cocker. He made Mave a Field Champion — at that time only the second English Cocker to earn a FC title since the revival of the breed in the early 1990s. English Cockers had declined in numbers in the U.S. to the point where field trials were suspended in 1966. It took nearly three decades and a group of dedicated breeders and handlers importing proven British bloodlines to expand the gene pool before English Cocker Spaniel field trials resumed in 1993.



Exceptional Cockers include, from left, “Cassie,” “Nellie,” “Clyde,” and “Oscar.”

The timing was right for Tom, English Cockers and Oahe Kennels. Oahe, a Lakota Sioux word, means a place to stand and look. Cocker enthusiasts began to look for Tom to train their dogs. Success with Mave, who became the foundation bitch of Oahe Kennels, ultimately led Tom to a career change.

“One day I figured out I might be making more money on my hobby than my real job,” Tom says. “English Cockers were becoming popular again, and I really liked the breed. I thought maybe I could make a difference. I decided, this is what I want to do.”

He bought a 320-acre farm south of Menoken, N.D., in 1994, where he began training dogs and guiding full time. He also met a client, Robin Putnam, who he eventually married.

“It’s funny how things work out,” Tom says. “It was a bit of luck really. It’s a good life.”

Patience

English Cockers are a merry bunch. They can be funny and quirky at times. According to Tom, Oahe Penelope (“Penny”) had just about every quirk in the book.

“Penny was hilarious, the way Cockers can be, but she had all these little quirks, and I just about gave up on her,” Tom says.

The problem was, Penny was owned by relatively new clients at the time — Hobson (“Hob”) and Lisa Brown of New York City. Tom had the dubious task of telling Hob Brown his little Cocker might not have what it takes to be competitive in the field trial game — at least not on Tom’s schedule.

“When Hob and Lisa Brown buy a dog, they buy it for life,” Tom says. “Hob told me, ‘Tom, if you want to keep getting that paycheck, you’d better figure it out.’”

It was a good lesson. Tom figured it out. Penny went on to be FC Oahe Penelope, MH, and the 2005 High Point Open Dog.

“Penny taught me more than any other dog,” Tom says. “She taught me about being patient. We took our time. Here’s a problem. OK, let’s figure it out and solve it. Then, we’d work on the next thing. I was ready to give up on her, and she went on to be High Point dog in the country and place in a National. She had so much heart and tenacity, she proved me wrong.”

Hob and Lisa Brown went on to be Tom’s biggest clients and eventually his North Dakota neighbors, moving from Manhattan and buying a 320-acre property across the road from Oahe Kennels.

The Browns are “All In” when it comes to English Cockers, with 19 dogs, a custom 10-hole chassis-mount dog truck and a wall of ribbons earned by their talented stable of Tom Ness-inspired Cockers.

“The dogs brought us here, pure and simple,” says Hob, a retired executive. “We had violated all the dog ordinances in New York City. This farm became available, and we bought it in 2004.”



"Paul," an English Springer Spaniel, rushes to find birds during a training session.

Now, most days, Hob and Lisa simply cross the road to train with Tom.

And Tom simply walks out the door of his home to enjoy an abundance of ideal dog training grounds.

"You can get a lot done 100 yards from the house," Tom says, pointing to a field of prairie grasses and brome. "And on the other side of the driveway, we can train in the thick stuff, too, with Johnny houses for quail."

A grove of cottonwood trees and brush piles with thick vegetation creates an ideal course for the little English Cocker Spaniels to penetrate.

"In Cocker trials, we try to vary the cover from series to series," Tom says. "It's not just open fields of grass. That seems to keep the dogs a little more useful to everybody in hunting situations. We say the best trial dogs are also the best hunting dogs. So I think we've succeeded in that."

To illustrate his point, Tom gathers three finished English Cockers and heads for the thick stuff.

"Get on," he says to "Cassie" (FC/AFC/CFC Ballymena's Lucky Shamrock), while the other two dogs stay at heel. The little Cocker darts back and forth, digging into the brush, under a log, then catches scent and hones in on the bird. A liberated quail flushes and Cassie instinctively sits and watches the bird fly away.

"GOOD GIRL," Tom says, and the process repeats itself.



Tom sits with "Penny," the 2005 Hi Point Open Cocker Spaniel.

After several minutes, Tom heels Cassie and releases another Cocker. The rotation keeps the hard-driving dogs fresh and reinforces the fundamentals and obedience Tom puts at a premium.

"I'm real old school," Tom says. "Years ago in Wyoming I came across an old training book — *The Koehler Method of Dog Training*. Koehler trained dogs for the military. It was all about obedience and building that foundation. If the

foundation is weak, the house falls down."

Tom plays with puppies until they're 5 or 6 months old, throwing bumpers to entice the youngsters. He values yard work and basic obedience drills, including walking at heel, that build the foundation for greater things.

"We teach three basic commands," Tom says. "Change directions. Come back. And Stop. Once we get the mechanics of hunting down, we go to birds."

As the dogs advance, tasks become more complex to the point of blind retrieves and handling. The Cockers can do it all — flushing, performing steady to wing and shot, marking, and retrieving on land or water.

Some Great English Cockers

Three of Tom's favorite English Cockers are currently on board Hob and Lisa Brown's truck, including NFC/FC/CFC/CAFC Ballymena's Irish Rose ("Nellie"), a 5-year-old that Tom handled to win the 2010 National Championship.

"Nellie is a phenomenal dog with tremendous eyesight," Tom says. "She notices everything, and that's why she's better at marking and retrieving than anybody else. She has 11 wins, and she's won against all the big Springer Spaniels up in Canada."

Ironically, it's 8-year-old Cassie, a full sister to Nellie who Tom regards as perhaps his all-time favorite Cocker.

"She's the best," Tom says of Cassie, who placed second in the 2007 Cocker National Championship and third in the 2008 Cocker National Championship. "She just finished up her championship in Canada competing against about 40 Springers. In terms of talent and being easy to work with, she's the best."

Both Nellie and Cassie are out of FC/AFC/CFC/CAFC Warrener's Black Scoter, MH, NA, NAJ ("Oscar"), an 11-year old

patriarch owned by Hob and the first spaniel of any kind to own an Open and Amateur title in the both the U.S. and Canada. Oscar also is the only Field Champion of any breed who also holds an agility title.

"Oscar finished second behind Penny as the 2005 High Point Open Dog," Tom says. "He came out of retirement in 2009 and flourished with Lisa Brown as his handler. In fact, he was the 2009 High Point North American Cocker. Oscar just seems to shine with Lisa. They make quite a team."



Tom is pictured with his daughter, Jenifer Ness, a veterinary student at Washington State University, who is holding Cameron.

Lisa Brown returns the compliment. "Tom's not only good with the dogs, he's good with people," Lisa says. "He had the patience to teach me to run dogs at a trial. It's very intimidating, so you need a good coach."

Tom makes it a point not to campaign his own dogs. "I don't ever want to call Hob, or any client, and tell them, 'I won and your dog got second,'" Tom says.

About 16 client dogs currently reside at Oahe Kennels, which also is a boarding facility. Tom keeps six brood bitches and raises eight to 10 litters each year. Four of the brood bitches are from linebreedings that go back to Mave.

Tom feeds his entire kennel, including Slim, *Purina Pro Plan Performance Formula*. "I am a good salesman when I believe in

the product, and I believe in *Pro Plan Performance*," Tom says.

Tom's daughter, Jenifer, helps with the kennel chores. "Jen is keen on the dogs," Tom says. "And I tend to keep a little bit of everything here for myself. Three Pointers, a couple of Labradors, a couple of Cockers, two German Shepherds, and, of course, Slim."

The Greatest Dog that Ever Lived

Nowhere in North Dakota — or North America for that matter — will you find a mixed-breed dog like Slim in the bird field, engaged in an English Cocker Spaniel training session with a handler like Tom, accompanied by a German Shepherd Dog sidekick named "Fritz."

"She's in the field every day when we train," Tom says of

Slim. "But she's never in the way. She's just with us. And actually, when you run a brace at a trial, sometimes the other dog is not always where it's supposed to be. So the Cockers learn to ignore Slim and Fritz and do their job."

Slim's other job is showing the Cockers any birds they missed.

"We'll look back and Slim will be standing right where the bird is," Tom says. "That's Slim."

The old dog seems to be everywhere, watching, seeking order. She's the perfect watch dog and the undisputed matriarch and alpha female of Oahe Kennels.

"No dog here will challenge Slim," Tom says. "The big German Shepherds roll over. If another female walked into the whelping area, there would likely be a fight. Not with Slim."

Slim inspects every visitor, and enjoys a pat on the head. She knows when to bark, and when to stay quiet. Tom marvels at Slim's stamina and condition.

"If we drive to another training area, she runs the ditches and keeps up. She has to be 12 or 13 now since she was at least a year when she came to us. She's slowing down a little, but she's still in great shape."

The greatest dog that ever lived?

"Yep, that's Slim" Tom says.

Having Fun

Tom Ness ends nearly every training session the same way.

He scoops the little English Cocker Spaniel up and cradles her in his arms. It's a bonding moment, a recognition and reward after a successful session. It also signals that Tom is in control, the pack leader, but it's clear he enjoys the moment.

"Good girl," Tom says, evoking a tail-wagging frenzy and often a smooch from a happy student.

It's a scene that impresses Hob Brown.

"It's what I like to see in a dog trainer," Hob says. "When you go to the field trial and Tom brings a dog to the line, that dog's tail is wagging. That means a lot. Tom has a good sense of humor and sees the light side and the bright side of every situation. He knows that every dog is different, and he seems to adapt his style to fit the dog."

And Tom ends nearly every long, hot, training day with a cigar, and Slim at his side.

"I look around, and I have it made," he says. "Oh, I've had some adversity, and I survived a terrible accident. But I have a wonderful family and some good dogs. I just enjoy every day. It's hard to beat that." ■



Slim sits shotgun in Tom's truck.

Timing

Is Everything

BY SUE VROOM

Dedicated dog people will tell you that nothing makes their heart pump faster than those 10 or 20 minutes in the show ring battling it out for a ribbon. As a regular observer of show ring activity, I notice everything from a judge's proficiency to the quality and behavior of canine athletes and the techniques of their exhibitor or handler.

It is fair to say that sometimes judges make wrong choices. Other times dogs make mistakes, which may be facilitated by their handlers' poor use of space and time in the ring. In most athletic contests, success depends on devising a strategic plan and then being flexible to alter the plan should it become necessary.

Multiple elements contribute to an effective show ring presentation. Professional handlers have an

advantage of being familiar with many judges' ring procedures. They have a reasonable expectation of how judges handle their ring and what they are looking for in a breed as well as how they go about finding it.

The owner-handler can develop this advantage by studying judges who may be coming up for them at a later show. They may observe a judge's ring procedure and breed type and performance preferences.

When does a judge look at the dogs and what is a judge looking for? Does a judge allow second chances? Some judges do not.

Some judges peek back at previously examined dogs to decide which ones are the keepers. Knowing this, a skilled handler has the option of placing himself out of viewing range so that a dog may rest and not get caught in an unattractive stance, or he may elect to seize the opportunity to showcase a dog that is an "energy laster." This is done by standing within the judge's view from across the ring and placing the dog in a natural stance.

This should be an option only if there is adequate ring space. A handler should keep a dog off the pattern of the gaing dog. It is important to know whether your dog is up to the rigors of continuous showing without a few seconds of rest. If not, this tactic is counterproductive. Keep in mind that until a judge points his finger, there still is time to affect the choice.

Body language is exactly what it implies. It is nonverbal communication that sends a powerful message to the receiver. A handler's body carriage and demeanor are indicators of one's level of confidence and ability. Deliberate moves, an open body frame, quiet hands and eye contact are signals of an able competitor. A slight hesitation before executing the requested pattern followed by brief eye contact and then a slight pause before returning to the judge communicates that the moment belongs to you and your dog.

A common mistake is constant fidgeting in the structural area where the dog is not so good. This



Bill McFadden, a professional handler, stacks a Bichon Frise for judging.

may involve setting and resetting the legs, tail, head, etc. A judge told me once that he never wasted time looking for the weak spot on a dog because a handler's nervous hands pointed out the fault to all. Every dog has structural flaws. Leading the trained eye directly to each of them doesn't earn ribbons.

A judge can only see one angle at a time. If he's walking down the line looking at heads, expressions and fronts, you shouldn't worry about the rear. Make whatever he's assessing at the moment perfect. If your dog's topline is not his fortune, depending on the breed, cock the left rear leg forward a bit and the right leg back slightly. The dog will drop the croup on the off-show side and level it. A square breed that

carries too much back length should be stacked ever so slightly at an angle on the line — the optical illusion gives the impression of a square frame.

It is essential to recognize your window of opportunity with a judge. The only one-on-one time a handler has is when a dog is individually examined and gaited. Make it count. The impression one makes in this moment is often the one that carries a dog to the end of the class. Moves such as the correct speed for the dog on the down and back and the triangle pattern need to be determined and practiced. A super stop/stance pose using the dog's most advantageous angle should be choreographed in advance.

Time management is important. Consider how much time to allow for table or ground stacking and for coat brushing. When the judge is walking down the line, how much time before the dog breaks the stack? All dogs are different in this respect. You should know your dog's time and patience limitations.

A common mistake is misjudging the time and having a dog ready too early. By the time the judge gets to that dog, the attentive expression and the perfectly placed front feet are history. What the judge sees is a bored dog with his ears pinned back and front legs and feet facing opposite directions. This



is an example of a blown opportunity and poor time management.

Professional handlers may not know a dog well enough to be familiar with his or her time tolerance, but they are experienced to compensate with a fast-acting fix. Owner-handlers have the distinct advantage of being familiar with the length of a dog's focus and attention span. For both professionals and owner-handlers, working on a show ring strategy and presentation to minimize mistakes, playing up a dog's positive features and hiding his weak points will help provide a distinct advantage.

By American Kennel Club rules, judges have two and a half minutes per dog in the ring to figure out the best one. A handler definitely has the edge, providing you know your dog's strengths and weaknesses and take time to practice for perfection. ■

A professional all-breed handler for 32 years, Sue Vroom and her late husband, Corky Vroom, won hundreds of Bests in Show during their career. Vroom, of Denton, Texas, works as an Executive Field Representative for the American Kennel Club. For information, contact Vroom at 940-497-4500 or by email at suevroom@centurytel.com.

Handlers pose their Basset Hounds as the judge goes down the line looking at fronts.

GENOMICS

NETWORKING

The sixth biennial International Conference on Advances in Canine and Feline Genomics and Inherited Diseases, held in May in Visby, Sweden, and sponsored by Purina, was a reunion of geneticists from around the world. The five-day program was chock full of scientific presentations. Highlights of dog genetics research presented include the following.

Alaskan Malamutes have long suffered from polyneuropathy, a neurological disorder causing muscle atrophy and leading to paralysis. Affected at 3 to 9 months of age, Malamutes are often crippled for life. Dr. Merete Fredholm of the University of Copenhagen in Denmark reported on the discovery of the autosomal recessive mutation in the N-myc downstream-regulated gene 1 (NDRG1), which led to development of a genetic test to help eradicate the disease.

Researchers at the University of Rennes in France are conducting genetic analysis to understand insensitivity to pain in some hunting breeds. The condition is similar to human hereditary sensory neuropathies in which only a few genes have been identified. Seeking a dog model for the human neuropathies, the researchers looked for candidate genes in German Shorthaired Pointers, English Springer Spaniels, Pointers, and French Spaniels. The research continues, but it is believed to be a recessive inherited disease in French Spaniels and German Shorthaired Pointers.

Compulsive disorders affect people and dogs. Researchers at The Broad Institute in Cambridge, Mass., are comparing Dobermans that suffer from flank-sucking compulsion with humans who have obsessive compulsive disorder. The initial research in Dobermans showed a novel candidate gene with additional genes potentially linked. Defects in the corticostriatal-thalamocortical circuitry are believed to play a role in these stereotypical behaviors.

Diabetes is another disease that dogs and people

share. Researchers at the University of Manchester in the U.K. conducted a genomewide association study of insulin-deficient diabetes in Labrador Retrievers, Samoyeds and West Highland White Terriers. Though the cause of insulin deficiency is not known in most dogs, it likely results from beta cell destruction. The study identified several regions of association in these breeds that have increased understanding of canine diabetes and will be studied in humans as well.

Protein-losing neuropathy is a fatal disease in Soft-Coated Wheaten Terriers that occurs when dogs are around 6 years of age. The disease has a 5 to 15 percent incidence rate. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine sequenced candidate genes and found single nucleotide changes in two closely linked genes. Though the inheritance appears complex — the risk is highest in dogs that are homozygous for both mutations — it is possibly due to additional predisposing genes and/or environmental triggers.

Among the cancer research presented was a study of soft-tissue sarcomas in Labrador and Golden Retrievers. At Utrecht University in The Netherlands, researchers found that soft-tissue sarcomas form a group of tumors that may share a relationship with other malignancies, such as histiocytic sarcoma and hemangiosarcoma. Genomewide association studies showed two chromosomal regions in Golden Retrievers, but the results in Labrador Retrievers did not overlap. Different genetic backgrounds are likely for all three cancers and for both breeds.

Purina has sponsored the international genomics conference since the first one in 2002. Genomics research helps to improve the health and well-being of dogs through development of genetic testing and better understanding of therapeutic treatments. Research in genomics is fundamental to Purina's work in nutrigenomics and molecular nutrition. ■

A Snapshot of Swedish Breeds

Probably the best known Swedish breed in the U.S. is the Swedish Vallhund, which was recognized by the American Kennel Club (AKC) in 2007. This low-legged spitz originated 1,000 years ago at the time of the Vikings.

The Swedish Vallhund is one of 11 national breeds of Sweden, with a 12th breed, the Danish-Swedish Farmdog, shared with Denmark. Developed to suit the culture and region from which they came, these Nordic breeds had important roles as hunters and herders, many which continue today.

Three Swedish breeds are part of the AKC's Foundation Stock Service, working their way toward recognition, and are recognized by the American Rare Breed Association. Originating in the far North in Lapland, where he was used to herd reindeer, the Swedish Lapphund was the first breed recognized by the Swedish Kennel Club in 1893. First known as the Swedish hound, the Hamiltonstövare was renamed to honor Adolf Patrik Hamilton, founder of the Swedish Kennel Club. The Hamiltonstövare is a scent hound used to trail hare and fox at high speed. The Danish-Swedish Farmdog is a Pinscher-Fox Terrier type used to rid farms of vermin and as watch dogs.

The American Rare Breed Association also recognizes the Jämthund, Schillerstövare and Smålandsstövare. The Jämthund is a large hunting spitz and excellent elk-hound that hypnotizes elk with his powerful barking. The Schillerstövare is a keen tracking hound named after Per Schiller, a farmer who established a strain to chase fox.



Swedish Vallhund



Drever

Another hound, the Smålandsstövare is an all-around hunting dog used to hunt several game.

Swedish breeds not as familiar in this country include: the Swedish White Elkhound, used for hunting elk; the Hälleforslund, another elkhound known for his hardiness; the Gotlandsstövare, a yellow variety hound used to hunt hare; the Drever, a favorite among Swedish hunters due to his exceptional ability; and the Norbottenspets, a little spitz that excels at hunting forest birds.

Source: *Swedish Breeds of Dogs*, Swedish Kennel Club



Jämthund



Hamiltonstövare

Purina Courts *the* Hounds

Ninety-eight dogs representing 26 states competed in March at the inaugural Purina National Championship, where a 3-year-old Treeing Walker Coonhound, called "Roxy," and a 6-year-old Treeing Walker Coonhound, called "Clean," took top honors as the Bench Show Champion and Nite Hunt Champion, respectively.

The prestigious two-day event in Flora, Ill., brought together the 2011 state championship winners for a one-of-a-kind competition. The 26 state championships are part of the Purina Point Series

competition, which decides the Nite Hunt and Bench Show winners of the annual Purina Outstanding Coonhound Awards program.

The first Purina National Bench Show Champion, UKC GRCH/AKC GCH 'PR' Midnight Troubles Back In Town, is owner-handled by Melinda Hicks of Camden, W.Va. The Nite Hunt Champion, WLDNITECH NGRNITECH GRNITECH 'PR' House's Mr. Clean, is owner-handled by Bryan Whitted of Huntington, Ind. The Purina National Championship was developed by Purina representatives, the Purina Coonhound Awards Committee and the United Kennel Club (UKC).

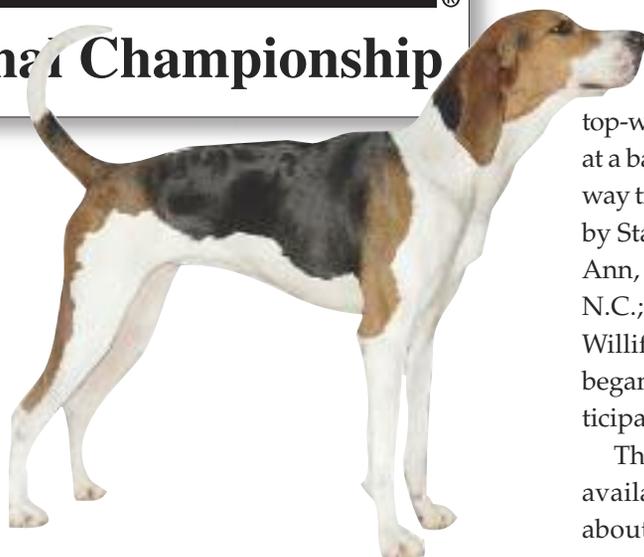
"By using the Purina Point Series events as qualifiers, the Purina National takes the Purina Outstanding Coonhound Awards program to the next level," says Purina Area Manager Rod Carter. "This event gives more of the nation's elite coonhounds a chance to compete and earn recognition."

Another new hound program is the "Test of the Best" award presented by Purina in partnership with *The Chase* magazine to a top-winning Foxhound. The first award, presented at a banquet in April in Lexington, Ky., was a three-way tie. The winners were Tynch's Cerry Pie, owned by Stan Tynch of Edenton, N.C.; Fireball Ebony J-Ann, owned by Michael Locklear of Jacksonville, N.C.; and Williford's Flame, owned by Jeremy Williford of Benson, N.C. Purina and *The Chase* began co-sponsoring the award in 2011, with participation increasing significantly this year.

The program encourages competitors whose availability is limited to weekends by offering about 100 one-day events throughout the year.



"Roxy," the Bench Show Champion at the inaugural Purina National Championship



Several events occur on the same day, usually on Saturdays, in various locations. Enthusiasts can compete in two categories — Puppy and All-Age — with minimal travel required.

“We always are looking to establish new opportunities to honor the hard work and accomplishments of hound enthusiasts,” Carter says. “The Purina National Championship and Test of the Best created for Foxhound enthusiasts are exciting programs. The feedback we’ve received has been wonderful.”

Purina Sponsors Prestigious Cluster

Purina recently began sponsoring the North Branch Cluster that brings together the Tuxedo Park, Somerset Hills and Westchester kennel clubs for a four-day event the first week of September.

“The three all-breed clubs in the cluster have long individual histories as some of the top shows on the East Coast,” says North Branch Cluster Director Kuno Spies of Mendham, N.J. “We believe having all three together makes this a premier weekend of dog shows in the East. The shows have many specialties and supported entries as well.”

The first day of competition is comprised of Group shows held by the Big Apple Sporting Society, Central Jersey Hound Association and the Non-Sporting Group of the Garden State. The Tuxedo Park Kennel Club Dog Show is held the next day, followed by the Somerset Hills Kennel Club and the Westchester Kennel Club.

The cluster of shows is held at North Branch Park in Bridgewater, N.J., where Somerset Hills has held its shows for more than 30 years. The cluster was canceled last year for the first time, due to flooding caused by Hurricane Irene.

“We are excited about partnering with Purina,” Spies says. “It’s the beginning of a relationship we feel will be positive for the cluster and the fancy.”

Purina Pro Plan Launches Training Treats

Recognizing the value of motivating dogs to perform through the use of food rewards, Purina Pro Plan has launched Pro Plan brand Training Treats, a bite-sized, soft treat to help dog trainers and handlers achieve top performance.

“I use a reward system as part of training in the



field and kennel,” says professional bird dog trainer Butch Tewell of Nashua, Mont. “The dogs love these treats unlike anything I’ve used for rewards on my own. The size and how they are scored to easily tear make it simple to give proper portions, too.”

Pro Plan Training Treats are made with 80 percent chicken breast and are highly palatable to help a dog stay focused on performance. Each treat is about 3 calories to help owners reward their dogs without overloading them with excess calories. Uniquely designed for training, Training Treats are easy to tear for quick rewards.

Pro Plan Training Treats are formulated without corn, wheat, artificial colors or flavors. The treats are available through pet specialty and farm supply stores. For information, visit www.proplan.com, or to talk to a pet nutrition consultant, call 800-PRO-PLAN or 800-776-7526 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Central time Monday through Friday. ■



American Coonhounds & Versatile Belgian Breeds

American English Coonhound

A balanced, powerful dog, the American English Coonhound evolved when a descendant of the English Foxhound, known as the Virginia hound, was bred to adapt to rougher terrain. Renowned for his speed and endurance, the American English Coonhound was originally used to hunt fox by day and raccoons by night.

This wide-ranging hound has an excellent voice, making the breed ideally suited for competition hunting. The American English Coonhound is social and pleasant to be around. His hard, protective



medium-length coat may be red-and-white ticked, blue-and-white ticked, tri-colored with ticking, red and white, or white and black. Males are 24 to 26 inches at the withers, and females are 23 to 25 inches.

Plott Hound

The Plott Hound is named after Johannes George Plott, a 16-year-old German immigrant who eventually settled in North Carolina in 1750 with five German brindle-and-buckskin colored



Plott Hound

hunting dogs known as Hanover Hounds. The true founder of the breed was Johannes' son, Henry, who established the highly successful big-game hound that fought and treed bears and mountain lions and bayed at wild boar. Small-game hunters used the Plott Hound to trail and tree raccoons and bobcats.

Loyal and eager to please, the Plott Hound is noted

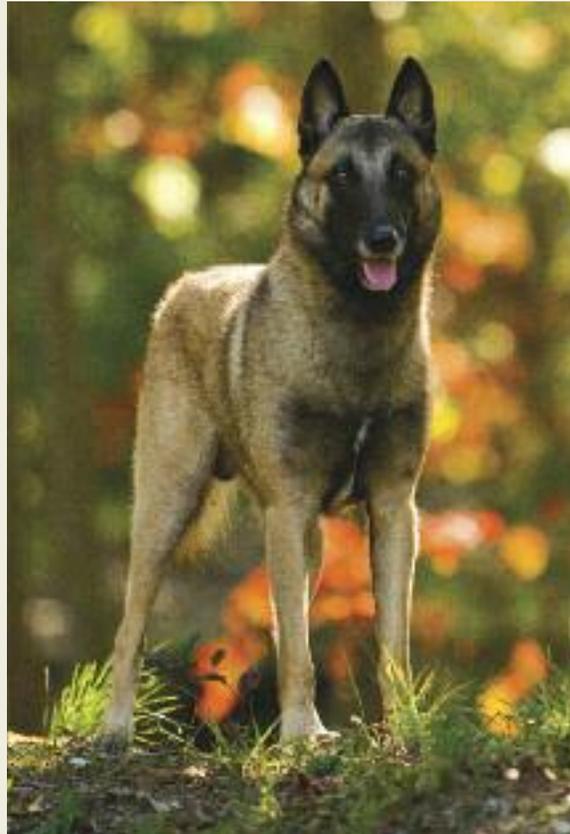
for his stamina, endurance and determination. The breed is distinguished by a brindle coat that appears streaked or striped with dark hair on a lighter background. Males are 20 to 25 inches tall at the withers, and females are 20 to 23 inches.

Bouvier des Flandres

A strong-willed, powerfully built cattle driver, the Bouvier des Flandres comes from southwest Flanders in Belgium and the northern plain of France. His early owners were farmers, butchers and cattle merchants. Following World War I, the Bouvier was nearly lost. A Belgian champion with ideal breed type, CH Nic de Sottegem, helped to revive the breed, and his descendants appear in almost every pedigree.

A steady, fearless breed, the Bouvier des Flandres has a heavy, cylindrical body and a rough, dark gray coat. His impressively large head features a thick beard and mustache. This versatile breed needs a job and excels in tracking and as a guide dog. Males are 24 ½ to 27 inches at the withers, and females are 23 ½ to 26 ½ inches.

Bouvier des Flandres



Belgian Malinois

Belgian Malinois

One of four types of Belgian shepherders, the Belgian Malinois shares a foundation with Belgian Sheepdogs and Belgian Tervuren. Bred mainly around the city of Malines, for which he is named, the Malinois was developed by trainers and working competitors.

A well-balanced, square, elegant breed, the Malinois is a distinguished police, military and service dog. He also participates in conformation, obedience, schutzhund, herding, sledding, agility, therapy, and tracking. Though reserved with strangers, the Belgian Malinois is affectionate with his family. Males are 24 to 26 inches tall, and females are 22 to 24 inches.

Sources: *The Complete Dog Book*, Official Publication of the American Kennel Club (New York: Ballentine Books, 2006), and the website of the American Kennel Club (www.akc.org).


CIRCLE OF CHAMPIONS

No. 1 Staffordshire Bull Terrier Is a Record-Breaking Bitch Called 'Daphne'

Outstanding conformation, a sparkling personality and bold determination have helped a 5-year-old called "Daphne" become the No. 1 Staffordshire Bull Terrier in the country.

Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Homebrewed Page Three Girl, RN, BN, CGC, TDI, TT, is handled by professional handler Holley Eldred of Steger, Ill. The first black brindle bitch to win a Best in Show, Daphne recently captured her fifth Best in Show at the Coulee Kennel Club Dog Show in Winona, Minn.

"The trademark of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier is balance between bull and terrier," says owner Lorelei Craig of Penn Valley, Calif. "Daphne exemplifies that balance. She also is strong, fit and powerful though extremely feminine."

Sired by CH Bowtman's Homebrewed Celler Keep out of CH Carnig Dot Com, Daphne was bred by co-



GCH Homebrewed Page Three Girl is the winner of five Bests in Show.

owner Jason Nicolai of Ashville, N.C.

Craig, an owner-handler of Miniature Bull Terriers from 1997 to 2007, handled Daphne, her first Staffie, to a No. 5 breed ranking in 2009. After a year off to have puppies, Daphne returned to the ring in 2011, earning six Bests of Breed and two Bests of Opposite

Sex in eight shows with Craig before continuing her Specials campaign with Eldred. Daphne finished 2011 as the first female to be No. 1 in breed rankings.

"The Staffordshire Bull Terrier is a heavy, masculine breed," Eldred says. "Males have impressive heads and thick muscles that draw attention, making it harder for females to compete. Daphne combines beautiful breed type with an incredible attitude and stands out despite this challenge."

In other honors, Daphne captured Bests of Breed at the 2011 AKC National Championship and the 2012 Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. She also won the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club of America National Specialty in April.

Eldred has shown the breed since 2004, including CH Cornerstone Soliloquy, who won seven Bests in Show and set a breed

record. "Staffies are so intelligent and thrive on new challenges," Eldred says. "Daphne has done everything I've asked her to do and looked for more. I plan to pursue a herding instinct title with her next, and Lorelei wants to do agility when Daphne gets home."

Eldred is motivated to educate people about Staffordshire Bull Terriers, which she considers the "best kept secret in the dog world."

"I do everything I can with Daphne to help spread the word about this breed," Eldred says. "They are healthy, trustworthy, affectionate, and well-socialized dogs that love people. A Staffie will never miss an opportunity to give a child a kiss or snuggle with someone."

Daphne is fueled by *Purina Pro Plan Performance and Sensitive Skin & Stomach* formulas.

GCH SkyScot's Texas Hold 'Em Wins Norwich Terrier National Specialty

The winner of the 2012 Norwich Terrier Club of America (NTCA) National Specialty is Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH SkyScot's Texas Hold' Em, a 4-year-old black-and-tan male sired by the 2009 NTCA National Specialty winner.

"Decker," the No. 1 Norwich and No. 5 Terrier in the country, outperformed more than 100 dogs to win the National in June at the Purina Event Center in Gray Summit, Mo.

"Decker stand outs with his beautiful breed type," says professional handler Brenda Combs of Sapulpa, Okla., who also handled

Decker's sire, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH SkyScot's Poker Chip, the No. 1 Norwich from 2008 to 2010. "He has a great head, a short back, lots of bone and a handsome coat. He also is a model show dog — independent, lively and competitive."

Decker, whose dam is SkyScot's Pen Pal, was bred by Leslie Becker of SkyScot Kennels in New Braunfels, Texas. Becker has bred more than 60 Champion Norwich Terriers since 1978, including seven Best in Show winners.

Dr. Sharon Esposito, of Athens, Ga., bought Decker as a 4-month-old puppy in 2008. Her first show

dog, Decker has given Esposito a thrilling introduction to the sport. In addition to the NTCA National Specialty, Decker's has won two Regional Specialty Bests of Breed and nine Bests in Show. He recently captured three of four Bests in Show at the Tulsa (Okla.) Roundup Cluster, topping more than 1,000 dogs at each show.

"I have been blessed to begin my dog show journey with a beautiful, competitive show dog," Esposito says. "Decker has a huge heart for showing and is extremely focused."

Decker is fed *Purina Pro Plan Chicken & Rice Formula*.



"Decker," the No. 1 Norwich Terrier in the U.S., stands out with his showy attitude and excellent breed type.

Our Big Bully Is Purina Top Shooting Dog

A 5-year-old white-and-liver male Pointer, Our Big Bully, owned by Erwin and Karen Saniga of Nottingham, Pa., and handled by Mike Tracy of Summerhill Kennels in Glenville, Pa., rallied from 32 points behind the leader going into the final trial of the 2011-2012 season to win the Purina Top Shooting Dog Award.

With six bird finds in the Canadian Open Shooting Dog Championship in May in Ontario, Big scored 240 points and finished the season with 2,718 points.

"Big finds a lot of birds," Tracy says. "He seldom makes a mistake. He is incredibly loyal and willing to please. In Canada, he only had to be scouted twice and mostly won the trial on his own."

Big was sired by Bull Town, a three-time

Champion, out of Impressive Lady Sue. Roger Dvorak of Elkton, Md., bred Big.

Tracy also handled Big to win the National Pheasant Shooting Dog Championship in Baldwin, N.Y., and to Runner-Up Champion in the Georgia, Michigan and Northeastern shooting dog championships.

"Winning this first Top Shooting Dog Award means so much," says Tracy. "The owners are like family. They have had dogs with my father, George Tracy, and grandfather, Gerald Tracy."

As the owners of the 20th annual Purina Award winner, the Sanigas received an original oil painting of Big by Ross Young and a silk banner. They also received the traditional green blazer given to owners and handlers of the Purina Top Shooting Dog. Tracy received



Mike Tracy presents "Big" with Erwin and Karen Saniga, right, and members of the Purina Award Committee.

a \$2,500 cash prize that was doubled because he is an active member of *Purina Pro Club*, a blazer and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog.

'Pepper' Is Purina Top Amateur Shooting Dog

Through consistent performances, a 5-year-old white-and-black female Pointer named Neely's Hot Pepper accumulated 10 placements and 2,155 points to capture the Purina Top Amateur Shooting Dog Award.

The Purina Award is the first for John Neely of Leesburg, Ga., who raised and trained "Pepper." He bred Pepper's litter, which includes the 2010 Purina Award winner, Heard Hill's Queen Mary, owned by Buck and Lynn Heard of Moultrie, Ga. Pepper and "Queen" are the first littermates to become Purina Award winners. The bitches were sired by Erin's Bad River, owned by Sean Derrig of Tiskilwa, Ill., out of Twin Lakes Wishbone, owned by Neely.



"Pepper" is pictured with, from left, Buck Heard, John Neely and Lynn Heard.

Along the way to winning the Purina Award, Neely handled Pepper to win the Region 14

Shooting Dog Championship in Saskatchewan, Canada, the one-hour Tail Feathers Field Trial in Leesburg, the Amateur Southern Field Trial in Albany, Ga., and the Henry Banks Field Trial in Thomasville, Ga.

"Pepper has a lot of natural pointing ability," says Neely. "She also is a front-running dog. If I turn around in the field, she will cross whatever is in her path to get back in front."

As the owner of the ninth annual Purina Amateur Award winner, Neely received an oil painting of Pepper by Ross Young, a silk banner and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog. He also received the traditional green blazer given to owners and handlers of the Purina Top Amateur Shooting Dog.

Mike Tracy Wins Seventh Purina Top Shooting Dog Handler Award

Professional handler Mike Tracy of Glenville, Pa., captured his seventh Purina Top Shooting Dog Handler Award. With a string of 13 dogs, Tracy won a personal best 13 championships and totaled 5,545 points.

Among Tracy's top-winning dogs was Our Big Bully, the 2011-2012 Purina Top Shooting Dog Award winner. Tracy also handled six derbies, winning three futurities.

Though Tracy already had won the Purina Handler Award six times, he says it is just as exciting to win his seventh. "It always feels awesome to win," he says. "My dad, George Tracy, won the award a record 11 times.

That's my goal. He set high standards."

Among the open shooting dog championship wins that contributed to Tracy winning the Purina Award are the National Pheasant, South Carolina, Gulf Coast, Eastern, and Canadian.

A professional handler since 1993, Tracy is the grandson of another well-known Purina Award winner, Gerald Tracy, who handled the first Purina Top Shooting Dog Award in 1983.

As the winner, Tracy received a \$2,000 cash prize that was doubled because he is an active member of *Purina Pro Club*, a second Purina Handler of the Year ring because he filled his first with the previous six award



Mike Tracy, the Purina Top Shooting Dog Handler, poses with family, friends and supporters.

diamonds, and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog.

Connor's EZ Button Wins Purina Top Field Trial Bird Dog Award

The 5-year-old white-and-orange male Pointer, Connor's EZ Button, called "Button," is the winner of the Purina Top Field Trial Bird Dog Award. A stylish, big-running dog, Button tallied 2,515 points. He won five open championships, two of which were three-hour stakes.

"I think Button's winning those two endurance trials — the Quail Championship Invitational and the National Championship — speaks the loudest," says owner David O'Connor of Bullard, Texas.

Handled by Steve Hurdle of Hickory Flat, Miss., Button was particularly resilient when he endured extreme changes in weather that included snow, ice and wind for six finds at the Quail Championship Invitational in Paducah, Ky.

"Button is consistent," O'Connor says. "He is a true all-age dog with style to burn on point and when running."



Steve Hurdle, center, David O'Connor and Lindsey O'Connor pose "Button," the Purina Top Field Trial Bird Dog.

Hurdle also handled Button to win the Saskatchewan Open Chicken Championship and to Runner-Up Champion at the Sunflower Open All-Age Championship in Yates Center,

Kan., and the Hawthorne Open All-Age Championship in Columbus, N.D.

Sired by McRee's Rhett out of McRee's Breeze, Button was bred by Pat McPhearson of Monroeville, Ala.

"Button is special," Hurdle says. "Everything he does comes naturally."

This is Hurdle's fourth Purina Award, including earning the Handler Award for the 2007-2008 and 2009-2010 seasons, as well as the 2007-2008 Top Field Trial Bird Dog Award.

As owner of the 49th annual Purina Award winner, O'Connor received an oil painting of Button by Ross Young, a silk banner, belt buckles with the Top Field Trial Bird Dog Award emblem and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog. As the handler, Hurdle received a \$2,500 cash prize.

Gary Winall Wins Third Purina Amateur Top Bird Dog Award

Mohawk Mill Pirate, a 5-year-old white-and-liver male Pointer, adapted well to differences in terrain to win championships from the Midwest to the East Coast and claim the Purina Amateur Top Field Trial Bird Dog Award with 1,761 points.

Breeder-owner-handled by Gary Winall of Powhatan, Va., "Pirate" is Winall's third dog to win the Purina Amateur Award in its five-year history. A partner in that success, Ellen Clements scouts at the field trials and is an integral part of Winall's program at his Mohawk Mill Kennel.

"It's still tough to win, no matter that we've won the Purina Award before," says Winall.

"Pirate tries to win, works with me, is beautiful on birds, and is polished. The way he adapted to the different conditions everywhere we competed was impressive."

Winall handled Pirate, who was sired by Mohawk Mill Viking out of Burning Edge Silver, to win at the Region 2 and North Carolina open all-age championships, plus a Runner-Up at the Region 3 All-Age Championship.

As the owner of the fifth annual Purina Amateur Award winner, Winall received an original oil painting of Pirate by Ross Young, a silk banner and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog.



"Pirate," The Purina Amateur Award Winner is presented by Gary Winall and Ellen Clements.

Eisenhart Is Purina Top All-Age Handler Award

In his first year since converting to all-age field trials from shooting dog competition, professional handler Luke Eisenhart of Tiskilwa, Ill., won the Purina Top All-Age Handler Award with 3,656 points. He captured 22 field trial wins with 11 dogs.

A grandson of the late Gerald Tracy, who handled the first Purina Top Shooting Dog Award in 1983, a nephew of George Tracy, who won the Purina Top Shooting Dog Handler Award a record 11 times, and a cousin of Mike Tracy, who won that award his seventh time this year, Eisenhart is the only handler in history



The Purina Top All-Age Handler, Luke Eisenhart, center, is pictured surrounded by family, friends and supporters.

to win the Purina Award in the shooting dog and all-age segments. A professional handler for 17 years, Eisenhart has won the Purina Top Shooting Dog Handler Award twice.

In his acceptance speech, Eisenhart credited Sean Derrig of Erin Kennels in Tiskilwa, Ill., as his mentor in all-age competition. He also praised the support of his family.

As the winner of this year's All-Age Handler of the Year Award, Eisenhart received a \$2,000 cash prize that was doubled because he is an active member of *Purina Pro Club*, a Purina All-Age Handler of the Year ring and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog.

GCH Bayshore's Giorgio Armani Leads the Way for Xoloitzcuintli Breed

With four Bests in Show and 27 Group Firsts since the Xoloitzcuintli joined the American Kennel Club's Non-Sporting Group in January 2011, GCH Bayshore's Giorgio Armani is blazing a trail for one of the world's rarest breeds.

"Armani," a 2-year-old male handled by professional handlers Gwen DeMilta and Carissa DeMilta Shimpeno, both of Downingtown, Pa., is the first Best in Show-winning and first Group-winning Xolo in history. This past February, he also was the first breed winner at the prestigious Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

Known as the Mexican hairless dog, the Xoloitzcuintli (pronounced show-low-queen-tee) originated in Mexico more than 3,000 years ago. The Xolo was a healer used to ward off and cure ailments such as asthma, toothache and insomnia. The breed also was believed to safeguard the home from evil spirits and intruders. Xolo come

in three sizes – Toy, Miniature and Standard – and two varieties – hairless and coated.

"Armani is an extraordinary ambassador for the breed," says Lynda Hylton of Salisbury, Md., who owns the Standard hairless Xolo with breeder J. Frank Bayliss of Tomsbrook, Va., and Traci Johnson of Cape May Courthouse, N.J. "His muscle structure, side gait and topline are phenomenal."

A professional handler for more than 25 years, Hylton bought her first Xolo, a bronze Standard hairless bitch named Bayshore's Ouida, from Bayliss in July 2009 and handled her to become the first conformation champion female Xolo. She bought Armani from Bayliss as an 8-month-old puppy in April 2010. Armani's sire, Moctecuzoma Rivera-Cortes II, and dam, Iztacihuatl Arcangel Arena, are from Mexico.

Hylton finished Armani's conformation championship in six



"Armani" is the first Best in Show- and Group-winning Xoloitzcuintli in history.

shows and made him the breed's first Group winner in February 2011 with back-to-back Group Firsts at the Sand and Sea Kennel Club dog shows in Atlantic City, N.J. In April 2011, Hylton handed the lead to the DeMiltas, newcomers to the breed. Four months later, Gwen DeMilta captured the breed's first Best in Show with Armani at the Berrien Kennel Club Dog Show in Marshall, Mich.

"Armani is a sound, striking dog extremely close to the breed standard," says Gwen DeMilta, a professional handler for more than 40 years and breeder of 150 Champion Alisaton Doberman Pinschers. "He is well-built and looks like a bronze statue. Judges often say he is close to the top-winning Xolo from Mexico if not the best they've seen."

Most recently, Armani won his fourth Best in Show at the Riverhead Kennel Club Dog Show in Yaphank, N.Y. Armani and his male littermate, two-time Best in Show winner Bayshore's Mole, are the only Xolo to be awarded Best in Show.

Armani lives with Gwen DeMilta, who describes him as a gentle, mischievous dog who gets along with every dog and person he meets.

Armani is fed *Purina Pro Plan Performance Formula*.

Japanese Chin Named 'Mimi' Wins 13 Bests in Show, Ties Breed Record

Multi-BIS GCH Pem We-Syng Lucky Mi, a 3-year-old Japanese Chin who began her Specials campaign last January, has tied the breed record as the winner of 13 Bests in Show.

"Mimi" is only the fourth Best in Show-winning Chin bitch in history. The three Chin before her earned a single Best in Show. The No. 1 Chin and No. 5 Toy dog in the country, "Mimi" is handled by professional handler Nancy Martin of Libertyville, Ill. Martin also handled the Chin whose record Mimi tied, Multi-BIS CH Chindales Outback Jack.

"Mimi has a combination never before seen in a female Chin," Martin says. "Japanese Chin, especially females, are a challenge to campaign because they are sensitive, delicate dogs that tire easily and adapt poorly to new situations. On top of her exceptionally sound body, wonder-



Nancy Martin presents GCH Pem We-Syng Lucky Mi after the Japanese Chin tied the breed Best in Show record at the Timberland Valley Dog Fancier Association Dog Show.

ful coat and beautiful movement, Mimi has a stronger work ethic and drive to please than most Japanese Chin. She has won over judges who might otherwise overlook the breed."

Sired by CH Kelaury's Good Luck From We-Syng out of CH Kelaury Frolic From Mar Pem, Mimi was bred by the late Patricia Mushrush of Dayton, Ohio. She is owned by James Dalton and Dr. John Turjoman of Portsmouth, Ohio, Marsha Ballard of Phoenix, and Nanette Wright of Columbus, Ohio.

Dalton handled Mimi, his first Chin, to her conformation championship as well as Best of Breed at the 2011 Japanese Chin Club of America Regional Specialty before Nancy started the dog's Specials campaign.

"Mimi packs a big personality into a 6 1/2 pound package," Dalton says. "She is independent, fun-loving and gregarious. She knows she's a star."

Mimi captured her first Best in Show in March and tied the record less than four months later with back-to-back wins at Timberland Valley Dog Fanciers Association dog shows in Chehalis, Wash.

"I have had a lot of Best in Show winners, but I've been surprised how quickly Mimi has set herself apart," says Dalton, who began showing and breeding dogs as a child in his native Ireland. "She is a once-in-a-lifetime dog."

Mimi lives with Martin, who began her career in dogs in 1967, breeding and showing Doberman Pinschers and Pointers. She fell in love with Japanese Chin in the 1970s when she met renowned Chin breeder Mary Sanford Brewster while working as an assistant for Brewster's daughter, Joy Brewster, of Newtown, Conn.

Mimi is fueled by *Purina Pro Plan Toy Breed Formula*.

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Greg Dixon Wins Three National Championships with Different Breeds

Professional trainer and handler Greg Dixon of Backwoods Kennels in Spring Valley, Wis., capped his best year of field trialing in March at Ames Plantation in Grand Junction, Tenn., when he won the American Kennel Club (AKC) Pointing Breed Gundog National Champion-



"Bella," a Pointer, wins the Pointing Breed Gundog National Championship.

ship with a 5-year-old black-and-white female Pointer, NFC/FC Old School Attitude. The win with "Bella" was Dixon's third National Championship of the season.

"It was an amazing experience to win at Ames Plantation," says

Dixon, whose wife, Liz Dixon, scouted during the trials. "The two-week event consisted of 120 dogs running in one-hour stakes. Six braces ran every day, and one dog was selected for the second series. It was an honor to compete in the first Pointing Breed National to be held there. Winning the trial hasn't fully sunk in yet, even though it was months ago."

Bred by Dixon, Bella, who is owned by Justin Martin of Hutchinson, Minn., was sired by Front 'N' Center out of Attitude's Tornado.

Handling a 3-year-old female Weimaraner, NFC/FC Cherrystone La Reine De Pearls ("Marie"),

Dixon won the AKC Weimaraner National Championship last December in Ardmore, Okla. Thirty-two Weimaraners competed in the one-hour stake.

"Marie had three bird finds," Dixon says. "The Weim National is a retrieving stake, so Marie was called back to perform a retrieve, which she handled well."



"Marie" captures the Weimaraner National Championship.

Judith Goldman of Flat Rock, N.C., and Pam Cherry of Charleston, S.C., co-own Marie. Bred by Cherry, Marie was sired by NFC/NAFC/DC/AFC Snake Breaks Saga V Reiteralm, MH, out of CH Cherrystone Perl of Sagenhaft, MH. Dixon started training Marie when she was 4 months old.

Dixon won the AKC Gordon Setter National Championship last November in Eureka, Kan., with 8-year-old 2XNFC/NAFC/FC Cobb's Golden Kernal, who outperformed 27 dogs to win the one-hour stake.

Co-owned by Paul Jaeger of

Hudson, Wis., and Linda Sanders of Las Vegas, "Kernal," who was bred by Dixon, was sired by 2XNAFC/FC/AFC Ice Hot's Cobb out of Chaparral Bangz Rip Roarin'.

A professional since 1993, Dixon handles most bird dog breeds and has won national championships with four German Wirehaired Pointers and two Vizslas. "I like to call it being 'diversified,'" Dixon says. "It's a challenge I enjoy to train and handle the various breeds. They are similar, though, in that a good dog is a good dog."

Dixon feeds all the dogs in his Backwoods Kennels *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula.



"Kernal" wins the Gordon Setter National Championship.