

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2008



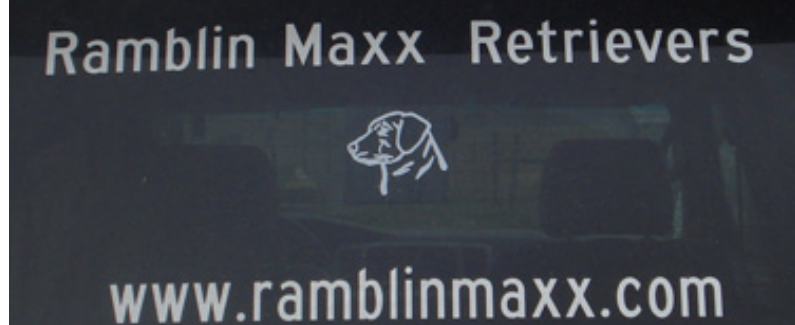
Temperatures this morning are again quite comfortable, in the high 60s. There is a slight breeze and a fairly consistent drizzle. It was a bit foggy this morning, but that has almost cleared up.



Hostess Committee Chairperson Ginger Cope and NRC President and Stake Chairman Mike Kammerer

Complete Test 4

The test dog team of Danny and Nike were called to the line at 7:03 am. They did a nice job on the test without any handles. At 7:21 am, the first running dog, #80 FC-AFC Tangata Manu with handler Kenny Trott, came to the line and the fourth day of testing was underway.



Just some of the kennels represented at this year's National Retriever Championship

Afternoon Update

The rain has not made an appearance stronger than the drizzles that occurred this morning. This made for a much more enjoyable time watching the testing, though the ground seemed to be made of mud and the air was a tad humid.

At 1:40 pm, the 4th Series came to an end when dog #39, FC-AFC Trumarc's Stormin Norman II, returned to the line and delivered his last bird to handler Danny Farmer. Callbacks were given at the site of the 5th Series, which was just behind the parking lot during the 4th Series. When announced, the callbacks revealed that the following 59 dogs were invited to the combined 5th/6th series: 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 35, 36, 39, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 63, 65, 66, 67, 70, 71, 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, and 105. This means that 23 dogs did not survive the 4th series.



Contestants and onlookers verify their callbacks with each other

Combined Test 5 - Water Blind and Test 6 - Land Mark

The 5th and 6th Series are combined. There is a Water Blind, which is considered the 5th Series, and a land mark (shot flyer), which is considered the 6th Series. The flyer is located to the left of the water and the blind and is thrown from right to left. As the flyer is shot, the handler and dog watch from a mat that is up on a paved road. They then move back about 10 yards to another mat that is down on the grass. From here, the handler sends the dog for the blind. This blind is about 200 yards from the sending mat on the shore of the pond. The line to the blind is across the road, into the water, up onto a small point, back into the water, up onto a larger point, then back into the water. Handlers may not move up to the road to handle their dogs until the dog has gone beyond a boat on the 1st land point. Once the dog has returned to the line, the handler receives the bird on the mat from which they watched the flyer. From this same mat, the handler sends the dog for the mark.



5th & 6th Series - view from mat on the road

At 2:12 pm, the first test dog team of Danny and Nike were called to the line to demonstrate the combined 5th/6th Series. The second test dog team of Ty and Jazz were on the line at 2:21 pm. At 2:43, the first running dog, #66 FC Two Rivers Lucky Willie with handler Dave Rorem, came up to the line and the series got underway.



Handlers fill the holding blinds for the start of the combined 5th/6th series

The skies have cleared to partly cloudy and the sun has made its appearance. Many competitors and onlookers have traded rain gear for sunglasses and sunscreen. It appears that the rain will stay away for at least today and hopefully the rest of the week.

Workers have the traditional Worker's Party to look forward to tonight. This will be held at Bill Berkley's Ranch in Montgomery Texas, just minutes from the trial grounds, and is slated to start at 6:30 pm.



Berkley Party Barn is prepped for the Worker's Party

We'll have more on the Worker's Party tomorrow morning.

"The Ingredients" - CHRIS LEDFORD

Skill, luck and having the right dog are the ingredients for top-level success in his profession, an abundance. "We had a good year. My clients and I won eleven Opens this year and ended up with six dogs qualified."

"This is supposed to be about the dog," however, Chris stresses, "not the handler." One of his pet peeves is when people talk about what a given trainer or handler has done instead of talking about the dog. "If you ask anybody, they'll say 'Chris' won. They never say 'Bogie' won." Still, Chris admits, "I'm just as guilty as anybody."

Chris is running Bogie (#19), Jake (#34), Chevy (#52), Buzz (#63) and Sunny (#84). Owner Kip Kemp is running Bogie (#37). "Handling multiple dogs, every dog's different," Chris notes. And, when it comes to judging, "Beauty's in the eye of the beholder." Plus, there isn't necessarily a direct correlation between who is looking best before the National and how well they do in it. Chris mentions, however, that Bogie won his last trial, got two 1st's and one 2nd out of his last four and had a good start at this National.

At the National, "You've got to have a dog really looking for the birds, and marking well to be able to compete." About blinds, Chris notes, "It doesn't matter how good a handler you are, the marking is so much more important than the blinds. You can't fail 'em; but, the marking is just so much more important, not handling on the marks. That's where you win it, when they get all the marks, don't have big hunts. That's where the cream comes to the top."

The element of "surprise" can be one of the luck factors, such as on the first day this year. Chris tells of how Jake had an extra long holding blind as even the judges themselves went into the field to hunt up a no-bird missed flier for the preceding team.

The year 1994 was an especially good one for Chris - he won the National with Candlewoods Rensa in 2004. There were finalists in some other years, such as 1992 and 1995. "One year, I lost one in the 7th, one in the 8th and one in the 9th," Chris laments. "Three years in a row, I went out in the 9th series. That was rough."

How does he handle that? "You just go on and keep training," he says. "You gotta let it go. There's nothing you can do about it. Just go home and go back to work and try to get another one qualified." Home is Buckhead, Georgia. He gets the dogs around age one-and-a-half to two, after their basics are done by Jim Van Engen of Right Start Kennels. Chris usually runs ten to twelve dogs in the Open out of an average of eighteen in training, with no assistant.

Joule Charney is a owner/trainer/handler of hunt test Labradors from Paradise, Calif. You can check out her website (www.tenacular.com). She can be reached via e-mail at TenacularDogs@aol.com or by phone at 530-570-1187.