

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2008



It is a beautiful morning for the start of what is sure to be an exciting National! The skies are without a trace of clouds, the temps are around 65 degrees (rising from the 50s earlier this morning), and the wind is hardly noticeable.

There is only one scratch from the event - the defending champion, #33 2007 NFC-AFC Candlewood's Something Royal - she did not pass the bitch check.



The Hostess Wagon

Test 1 - Land Double

The 1st test is a Land Double on the property of Chairman Mike Kammerer. The right guns shoot and throw a dead hen pheasant first from right to left down a small hill. The distance to this bird is approximately 225 yards. Next, the left guns throw and shoot a live flyer hen pheasant (the go bird) from right to left. The distance to this bird is approximately 365 yards. After the dog is sent, the right hand throwers retire on the other side of the hill. The test is facing to the North. In the morning, the sun was positioned such that the left gun was lit up, but the right throwers were completely shaded. As the sun moves to the West, the field will illuminate.



Test 1 - Land Double

The first test dog, FC-AFC Freeridin Smooth Operator, LF, handled by Ty Rorem, came to the line shortly after 7:00 am. She had a tough time on the right hand bird (which would prove to be troublesome for many handlers) and had to be called in. The next test dog was FC Just Do It, LM, handled by owner Danny Martin. He was able to complete the test, but helped the handlers show just how difficult the first series would be.



The trial gets underway

At 7:40, the handlers began to fill the holding blinds. At 7:45 am, the first dog, #93 CK's Blue Velvet, came to the line with handler Mark Mosher. The field trial gods didn't appear to be on Mark's side, as the left hand flyer was called a no-bird. After coming directly back, there was another no bird on the left flyer. Mark was ultimately sent back 6 dogs, as the no bird policy states. At 7:50 am, dog # 94 FC Pike of Castlebay with handler Bill Sargenti came to the line, and after both birds were down, he was given the signal to send Pike and officially begin the path to determining a winner of this year's National Retriever Championship.

Thus far there have been some very large hunts on the left hand bird, and quite a few handles on the right bird. Handles on the right bird include 94, 95, and 96. Number 97, FC-CFC-CAFC Seaside's One To Many handled by Ray Voigt did a very good job and provided hope to the rest of the handlers.



Burt Peterson and FC Y Two Kate wait in the holding blind while Steve O'Connell and Bull run the 1st Series

Evening Update

It has been quite a busy day today, and quite frankly a bit brutal! By noon, the winds had picked up and were coming from the Southeast, essentially at the handlers' back. The temps also rose to the mid 70s and were very comfortable when one was not in direct sunlight. Of the 82 dogs that ran today, 32 have handled and 5 were picked-up, much to the dismay of their handlers. The handles included dogs 94, 95, 96, 102, 103, 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 30, 35, 37, 43, 44, 46, 47, 50, 52, 55, 60, and 68. Pick-ups were dog #s 26, 42, 51, 62, and 69.

Testing ended for the day at 5:40 pm with dog #70, FC-AFC Weezer Retreezer, due to the setting sun and an unfair reduced visibility. It was announced that the test dog would run tomorrow morning at 6:45 am, and the first running dog is expected on line at 7:00 am. The first running dog will be #71, Silvertip's I Hope So with handler Alan Pleasant.

Once the remaining field, consisting of 22 dogs, has run the 1st series, we will move on to the 2nd series, which is rumored to be a blind of some sort. This should be sometime in the late morning.

We'll see everyone in the morning!

"Saber Surprise" PART II - CHRIS HATCH & SABER

..... Continued from Part I, which was posted on this site yesterday.

Owner-handler Chris Hatch wasn't quite expecting to be here and, now that he is, he has no intentions of a repeat performance. Not of the 2008 National Amateur, that is.

"I was just really nervous and too tight," says Chris of this year's previous National. Chris qualified both Saber and Ty, Saber's dam, for the 2008 Amateur. Despite this incredible and rare accomplishment, the Amateur itself did not go well. "I guess the newbie was there. Not enough experience at a National."

So, what happened? "I just wasn't working well with him (Saber) at the line. Not thinking through the birds well enough. It was pretty much handler error. I didn't get them relaxed and settled on the line before calling for the birds." In summary, "A good word for it would be stage fright," Chris muses.

Momma Ty went out in the 1st. Saber went out in the 3rd, due to "mainly nerves of the handler. Oh, man. It was butterflies. It was really nerve-wracking."

This wasn't Chris' first year of National qualifying, however. Ty qualified for both the National Open and the National Amateur in 2006. "She did that by winning two Opens. She more than qualified by having the wins." Chris says he actually "didn't feel the pressure" and was "more relaxed" in '06 than this past June. The northern California resident feels that the distance to Stowe, VT had something to do with it. "I didn't get there early enough to acclimate and train well."

Plus, Chris says he was better prepared in '06 thanks to the pro who ran both of the pre-National training groups he was in. "Jerry Patopea was the difference. He told us what to expect, and told us what would happen." By contrast, Chris was in more of an amateur group in 2008. "So, we didn't have that kind of insight and coaching," he explains. "His (Jerry's) experience working with amateurs was an easier experience than I had in 2008."

Chris never has trained under a pro, except for two 2006 pre-National stints with Jerry and under the tutelage of Warren Grimsby of Warcon Kennels, a retired pro who lives in nearby Oroville, Calif. Chris went to Warren's group on and off for a year but says he never was a "weekly disciple." He did his shored-up training in sessions shared with two other handlers. "Warren presides twice monthly over a very devoted group of handlers who train together every Friday.

Chris had an extra week of pre-National training in 2006 which helped him acquire that vital "mental preparedness for the run." He admits he wasn't as confident in 2008 as he was in 2006. "I just didn't feel like I was really ready to run, psychologically." But, "I wasn't saying that to myself," he adds. "You can't really rush it. It's hard to explain. You do things different for the National than you do for a trial. You start to get into a National mindset after a week and a half of training. You can't do it in three to four days."

Chris believes he's learned from his earlier 2008 National experience. He says the week spent at the Lost Hills, Calif. trial grounds after judging "really helped." Further, "concentrating on one dog again, for me that's different. I don't know how these pros do it." Chris elaborates, "I can concentrate on him (Saber), working with his nuances, things he needs. I don't have to worry about another dog."

Momma Ty is home with a housesitter. After Texas, Chris plans to get Ty back in shape to run. She will be almost ten by the time trial season begins in February 2009 and he hopes to run her another year. Also home is Jazzie, his eight year old dog who had a "short career" because she "couldn't count." He refers to her as his "interim trial dog." After retirement, "she was relegated to being a house pet."

Chris says the three-month old pup he has with him isn't a distraction. On the contrary, Chris seems utterly delighted to have Riser here. "She's going to her first National," he says like a proud papa. Incidentally, Riser's sire, Quasi, Dog #102, is nearby.

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