

1993

1977 National Field Champion
Field Champion and Amateur Field Champion
Euroclydon



In 1972 Don Strait visited a local field trial near his Georgia home. The sport intrigued him. After reading the Retriever Field Trial News article about Super Chief -- the 1972 Thomas Merritt Trophy winner, Don decided that his next pup would be Soupy sired. Don selected a pup from a June 1973 Super Chief litter and seven weeks later she arrived at Don's home. He chose as a name the Greek word for a tempest wind, 'Euroclydon', pronounced u-roc-li-don.

Rocky spent the next seven months at Don's South Georgia farm. She slept under the house, freely explored the countryside, ate table scraps, and received love and socialization from Jim and Myrtle Williams. After this somewhat unconventional puppyhood-- Clarence Pfaffenberger might grimace over the absence of early training --she returned, at eight months of age, to Don. Together they began their training program, for Don was as much a novice as Rocky. Once a week this duo drove 80 miles down to Joe Riser's in Madison, Georgia. Riser quickly recognized the pup's potential, offered Don constant encouragement, and provided valuable training suggestions. For instance, Joe told Don to deal with problems encountered in training indirectly rather than confronting them head on as one would with a tough, hard-headed dog. Rocky proved to have remarkable natural ability, an eagerness to please, and an uncanny willingness to learn without pressure. "Tractable" seems to be a currently over-used word, but in this case, accurately describes her personality.

Rocky's training progressed so rapidly that Don felt she was ready for trials by the time she reached her first birthday. He sent her to California to run trial summer circuit under the capable wings of Beth and Ed Minoggie. On August 24, 1974, she placed and two weeks later, in McCall, Idaho, won her first licensed derby. Rocky went on to accumulate 70 derby points and finished in second place on the 1975 Top Derby List.

With this record of success behind her, Don launched into advanced training. He took advantage of Rocky's natural abilities and her omnivorous appetite to teach her the fundamentals of handling. Food tidbits served as her reward for handling drills and good lines. In fact, a bowl of food awaited her on the final line of the day. This technique proved successful. Don entered her in a Wisconsin amateur just two months after she concluded her derby campaign, and she placed. She won an open in Mobile that October before she was 2 1/2. She earned her AFC in the spring of 1976, before her third birthday, and her FC in August 1976. One month later she won a double-header at South Jersey. She and Don competed in the 1976 National at Socorro, New Mexico and completed the trial as one of the eight finalists. Following a time out for a maternity stint, Rocky continued her winning ways so that as of November 30, 1977 she had accumulated 46 1/2 open points and 45 1/2 amateur points for a grand total of 92 all-age points.

While Rocky is basically an amateur trained dog, Don is eager to offer thanks to the professional trainers who have helped him along the way. Joe Riser provided encouragement plus training advice and assistance; the Minoggies launched her remarkable trial career. Billy and Diane Voigt kept her tuned up and Billy has run her in a number of trials. Don, in his quiet way, acknowledges that winning the National certainly was the most exciting moment of his field trial career. And what future plans does Don have for Rocky? About this he is modestly silent. But I am sure that everyone who watched this team at the National predicts a brilliant future for this outstanding young dog -- a dog who truly deserves the most prestigious title of all, National Field Champion.

The judges reached an unanimous decision, virtually without consultation. The spectators all agreed on which dog would be the new National Open Champion. Nevertheless a wave of anticipation swept through the crowd as Randy Winburn stepped in front of the winner's table to report the results. After thanking the judges for their distinguished services, he announced that FC-AFC Euroclydon, owned and handled by Don Strait, was indeed the new National Champion. As cheering, and applause burst from the crowd, Don Strait walked to the trophy-laden table to shake Randy's hand and "Rocky" darted from between someone's legs to greet her owner. Brilliant and flashy in the field, she sat demurely amidst the trophies while photographers took her picture and well-wishers congratulated Don. The high drama of this scene underscores a story of remarkable talent, hard work, and perhaps a bit of luck. Don and Rocky's four and a half years together have produced a Cinderella tale.

Rocky was a finalist in 1976 and 1979 in addition to winning the 1977 National Championship trial. She qualified for seven consecutive Nationals, 1976-82 and eight consecutive National Amateurs, 1976-83. She ended her trial career with 289 all-age points, 143 open points and 146 amateur points.

*Contributed to The Retriever News.com by Richard Halstead, Lino Lakes, Minnesota
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