

MID-STATES WALKING SHOOTING DOG CHAMPIONSHIP
(Taz named Champion, Thunderbird Punch Buggy Runner-up)
BY MIKE HUSENITS

The Mid-States Walking Shooting Dog Championship commenced on April 17 and was concluded Sunday April 20. The championship drew 40 starters, the companion derby classic 17.

The event took place at the Virginia Farms section of the Conemaugh River Dam flood control area near Blairsville, Pa. The grounds are in the guardianship of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, who maintains the property for use as a public hunting area and cooperate amicably with several field trial clubs that have sponsored trials here since 1955. The terrain offers a variety of cover, long edges and turns with all the elements that test the ability of a dog to adapt to differing conditions. There are several expansive open fields with long edges, weedy islands and wooded areas scattered throughout that requires a dog that is willing to stretch to the limits occasionally, yet tighten up and hunt the cover as it is encountered.

Weather conditions varied from warm and dry the first two days with a Friday night and Saturday morning rain bringing much welcome cooler conditions for the weekend although scenting seemed to remain relatively unchanged throughout the 4 days.

The Mid-States organization is led by Carl Bishop, the current President of the U. S. Complete Walking Shooting Dog Association. Carl's son Collin Bishop served as Field Trial Chairman. Joyce Bishop handled the secretarial duties as well as the food and drink supplies. Lee Layman and Regis Linn planted birds each morning and Regis supplemented the plant with brace by brace replenishment. Lee Layman handled the dog

wagon duties with Carl Bishop's Ranger. Carl Bishop and Travis Gelhaus donated the use of their horses for marshalling and the reporting.

Field headquarters was the Loyalhanna Hunt Club. A facility owned by Dr. Joe Yurigan that is located conveniently with easy access to the course. The Hunt Club provides a clean and spacious clubhouse with cooking facilities, a bathhouse, horse corrals, camper hookups, bird holding pens and running water taps. Dr. Yurigan donated the use of this fine facility at no cost to the Mid-States Club.

The kitchen crew did a fantastic job of serving hot breakfast and lunches daily. Joyce Bishop, Linda Rollinson and Mary Marten worked hard and definitely satisfied the appetites of everyone. They deserve a medal for a job well done.

Donations were received from several generous sponsors. Purina sent a generous supply of product for the winners, donated a pallet of dog food for the raffle and provided funding for the Friday evening dinner. A heart felt thank you from all to Pat Lamantia at Purina. Tri-Tronics provided an electronic training collar for the winner, Bob Ecker donated a bark collar and Joe McCarl sent food supplement products. Al Romagna of Rock Steady supplies donated several useful items.

The social highlight was the Friday evening dinner sponsored by Purina. The food was expertly prepared by Al Romagna with help from spouse Janet and included marinated barbeque chicken and pork chops, sweet and sour salsa, salads, beans and all the trimmings and libations that a human body can stand.

Participants and visitors included Carl, Collin, Crystal and Joyce Bishop, Bob Ecker, Tony Bingham, Travis Gelhaus, Randy Hopkins, Lee Layman, Ed Tiega, Regis Linn, Kevin and Shelly Klein, Aaron McAfee, Merle Mintenmyer, Joe McCarl, Howard Kerr,

Tom and Jennifer Mains, Ralph Gillota and daughter, Garry Malzone, Bill Wolf, Larry Sutter, Nick Miller, Bill and Wanda Schmit. My apologies to anyone I missed.

A humorous happening occurred on Friday evening. Garry Malzone was on the course in search of his lost dog. Good Samaritans Carl Bishop and this reporter decided to help, aided by a properly coded tracker and Carl's ranger. Off we dashed, the tracker soon picking up a signal and Carl going afoot into heavily wooded area in pursuit while I rode the ranger. Carl was soon out of contact, later calling on the cell phone stating he was deep in the woods but headed toward the main highway so I should return to camp, get a vehicle and meet him along the road. Upon return to camp, several suggested we just leave Carl out there to find his way home as it was nearing time for libations.

Nonetheless, I drove the main road, Carl was not sighted but thanks to contact via cell phone, we finally surmised he was coming out of the forest to a railroad track approximately a mile off the main road. We managed to traverse along side the tracks with our truck until finally meeting up with Carl. Incidentally, the dog was still lost but later found by Garry Malzone so the story has a happy ending thanks to electronic communication and tracking devices.

Paramount to the success of any field trial is the judges. Their knowledge, attentiveness, manners and reasoning can make or break an event. We are happy to report that Tom Brigman Jr. of Baltimore, Maryland and his partner Connie Riley of Cochranville, Pa. exceeded every expectation and rendered the most logical decisions after giving each and every contestant an equal chance to win. The announcement of winners was applauded and well received.

DERBY CLASSIC

First went to a nearly all white pointer female named Phillips Commodore Ellie, handled by Tony Bingham. Ellie scorched the course with a forward reaching pattern and handled though on the end of a string – directing her effort to all the likely looking cover. Near the half way point, Ellie pointed with beautiful style and demonstrated polished manners as handler flushed a well located quail. This scenario was repeated at the 25 minute mark and Ellie finished her stint with power to spare on a distant swing. Indian Creek Lizzy, a liver marked pointer female owned and handled by Garry Malzone was a close second with a highly animated ground race combined with an unproductive near the half where Lizzy showed some uncertainty. She redeemed herself at 26 with a mannerly find pointed with rock solid intensity and sky-kissing style and finished going away with plenty of energy to spare. Third went to Lookout Painted Lady, an English setter female owned by veteran supporter J. R. Williams and handled by fellow veteran Howard Kerr. Howard is in his late seventies and can still out walk most that are half his age. Lady showed plenty of endurance while running in the warmest part of the day and demanded attention with her stylish way of moving. Her lone find plus a back were handled in stylish fashion with more than acceptable derby manners. The judges noted that the best ground race of the stake was put forth by an English setter male called Pork, handled by Joe McCarl. Had Pork pointed a bird, the results would have been different.

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS & OTHERS

Taz, a handsomely built orange and white male English setter rendered a dazzling performance to win Championship honors. In the ownership of Phil Gould of Bloomsbury, NJ and capably handled by Pa. professional Bob Ecker Jr, Taz added to his

impressive field trial resume, this his sixth time in the winner's circle in championship competition. He won the Northeastern Woodcock Championship and Wisconsin Coverdog Championship in 2003. He was Runner-Up Champion in the Wisconsin Coverdog and Michigan Grouse Championships in 2005 as well as 2005 Champion in the U. S. Complete Northeast trial. Taz is known to be a bird finding machine and did nothing to ruin his reputation here by attacking the course under hot and humid conditions late Saturday morning and finishing the hour with plenty of zip left and six clean finds. Start was made at 11:40 near the round top hill with Taz getting down to business immediately showing strength and plenty of range. His first find was at 11 along the cornfield edge, handled with intense high pointing style and impeccable manners as was all of his finds. Taz was found on point at 20 far ahead near an olive autumn clump, after initial flush attempt failed; Taz relocated the running bird in expert fashion with no hesitation. Taz hunted well forward and handled like a dream until 48 when he was again found along forward edge, quickly adding number 4 at 52 at the end of this same line. Sent ahead, Taz ducked into wooded creek area and was found standing solidly at 56. Sent across the hard top road into the open bottom country to finish, Taz proved he had plenty left by making a distant swing to a likely objective and nailing his sixth find at the 59 minute mark, a well earned finish to a deserving effort, for sure one to be proud of. The Runner-Up, Thunderbird Punch Buggy, also a handsome orange marked male English setter owned by David and Sue Anderson of Bloomfield, NY and handled by professional trainer Travis Gelhaus made a strong challenge on Sunday morning after conditions had changed drastically from hot and dry to cool and wet after an all night rain made the grounds soggy with plenty of mud to content with. Punch started at 8:40 with

light rain still falling and quickly went to work in the big bottom, recording his first of six mannerly finds at 4 in overgrown weed island. He added solid finds at 15, 23, 36, 44 and 50. Punch maintained a powerful ground attack from start to finish in spite of the muddy conditions. He handled his birds with admirable pointing style, granite-like intensity and manners above reproach, sans a slight sidestep on two finds to mark flight with no indication of a want to chase. The scope of ground coverage and application of the Champion and Runner-up were consistently similar with the slight edge going to Taz, who probably had the more challenging conditions due to the dryness and heat when he performed.

Challengers that came through clean but experienced lapses in ground coverage or slight foibles around game included Foxy On Fire, Indian Creek Missy, Urban Brilliance, Wolfe's Elhew Jack, Sutter's Harley Blue, Medford Mike and Texas Copper Top. Readers are referred to the account of the running for additional details.

THE RUNNING

Powell's Sarah (Ecker), Heavens Elhew Taggart (Gelhaus) – Sarah started out strong, going at wide range and looking good until erring on game and leashed. Tag hunted forward at medium range; notched a good find, then up early after two unproductives. Verlene's Ringo Star (Bingham), Foxy on Fire (Ecker) – Star took off like a rocket, seldom seen and counted out at 30. Foxy was making her presence know early, recording four mannerly finds and making well directed casts. A couple of letdowns in application during the second half detracted.

Runnin Rebel's Toad (McAfee), Blazing Trails (Malzone) – Toad started strong with a solid find at 8 along right edge, then a unproductive at 14 followed by a good find at 25, a

back at 43 and finds at 50 and 52 with some flagging on both as handler approached.

Trails hunted hard and wide the whole time, backed at 8 and followed with well earned finds at 40 and 43 along hedgerows but was up at 50 for a breach of manners.

Waybetter Max (Collin Bishop), Skydancer Making Time (Gelhaus) – Max was off to a classy start but up at 15 for chasing a quail. Time pointed stylishly at 6 but went on, hunting with good eye-appeal until erring on game at 47.

Powder's True Colors (Ecker), Indian Creek Missy (Malzone) – True reached far forward and slammed on point at 2, the bird lifting on relocation, no fault of True. He rang up nice finds at 15, 17, a back at 25 and well handled finds at 47 and 53 before ending his bid at 55 on an upward spiraling woodcock. Missy backed solidly at 2, then maintained a solid hunting effort with plenty of eye appeal and looked good on a find near camp at 25 and another at 47 near the old paved road showing solid intensity and polished manners.

Waybetter Brett (Collin Bishop), Thornhill Stretch (McAfee) – Brett's back from afar was a thing of beauty at 3, after which he took in a vast amount of country before erring and up at 40. Stretch hunted hard but seemed unsure of himself on finds at 3, 15 and 25 and was on the wagon at 35.

Zumbro Ace (Gelhaus), Urban Brilliance (Ecker) – Ace ran hard with plenty of eye appeal. He scored a perfectly handled find at 12, finishing the hour at somewhat shorter range in the heat. Urban ticked slightly on a back at 12, then took to the front in stylish hard driving fashion, pointed solidly at 15 with handler spying a ground-hog hole and sending him forward to notch a well earned find at 32 and an even better limb type find far to the front at 52 after a 12 minute absence, finishing the hour strong and well ahead.

Ard Righ Rockette (Malzone), Wolfe's Elhew Jack (Wolf) – Rockette took off as her name would indicate and vanished in short order. Jack hunted in workmanlike fashion and proved to be a bird finder with well handled finds at 13, 30 on a woodcock, 35, 48, 54 and 60. Jack couldn't overcome a slow start but his application and range improved vastly as the hour elapsed.

C Tans Scyther (Bingham), Spring House Nellie (Ecker) – Scy made a big opening swing and pointed solidly at 9 along cornfield edge unproductively, then left for parts unknown and counted out. Nellie failed to back at 9 and was leashed.

Millrun Gabby (Miller), Slim Jim (Ecker) – Gabby hunted earnestly and notched mannerly finds at 30 and 48 but was up at 57 when the heat took its toll. Jim rambled to parts unknown and counted out at 15.

Sutter's Harley Blue (Sutter), Rachel Ray (Collin Bishop) – Start was delayed on Saturday until 10:30 at the request of the Pa. Game Commission to prevent interference with the spring youth turkey gobbler hunt. Blue handled like a glove, quartering the fore in workmanlike fashion. After a pair of stylish backs at 8 and 10, he scored mannerly finds at 36 and 46, then an unproductive at 50 and finished the hour. Rachel started out to get the job done with classy rock solid finds at 8 and 10, the first find found after a huge opening cast. After a long absence she was found at 37 far ahead and handled her third find with polished manners but couldn't resist temptation on a find at 37 that ended her fine effort.

A J's Buck (Hopkins), Taz (Ecker) – Buck was up at 11 for failure to back. Taz's championship performance has been described.

Indian Creek Shine (Malzone), Bittersweet Sensation (Gelhaus) – Shine got under a bird and leashed at 2. Sensation hunted hard and handled with ease, she notched well handled finds at 18, 20 and 30 but was up at 36 after her second unproductive.

Triple L's Cate (Bingham), Medford Mike (Ecker) – Cate went wide and out of contact early. Mike handled kindly as he hunted in forward fashion, racking up stylish and mannerly finds at 11, 24 and 40 with a lone unproductive at 31. He also backed a white plastic bucket with terrific style.

Texas Copper Top (Klein), Class Act Liz (Bingham) – Copper ran one of the best ground heats of the trial, racking up four finds with a slight tendency to tick and a pair of unproductive stands. Liz got in trouble with birds and was up early.

Runnin Rebel Freckles (McAfee), Grouse Woods Spark (Ecker) – Freck handled well at medium range, racking up clean finds early, then shortened in overall range. Spark was classy and showed plenty of spark in the way she attacked the cover. Her bird work was not up to standard today. The heat seemed to take its toll on both.

Lansdale Mike (Ecker), Indian Creek Saga (Malzone) – Sunday morning the weather had changed drastically overnight with rain and much cooler temperatures. Mike, still of tender age, hit the course with reckless abandon but got into trouble on birds and was up early. Saga ran a solid race, racking up several clean finds but shortened near the end.

Thunderbird Punch Buggy (Gelhaus), Waybetter Spec (Collin Bishop) – Punch's winning effort has been described. Spec was up at 4 for failure to back properly.

Indian Creek Lizzy (Malzone), Lumber River Sue (Bingham) – Lizzy started fast but was up at 7 after an infraction. Sue started out to get the job done with well handled finds at 8, 18, 25 and 28 but unfortunately was up at 35 after erring on game.

Waybetter Jade (Collin Bishop), Thunder Bird Ginger (Gelhaus) – Jade scored a divided find at 1, notched a stylish find at 8 but was up at 22 after shortening. Ginger hunted eagerly at medium range with finds at 1, 10, 12, 20, 34 and 36, then shortened in range and was up at 40 to bring the championship to a close.

PHOTO ID'S

THE KITCHEN CREW – L TO R - 001

Linda Rollinson, Joyce Bishop and Mary Marten

MID STATES CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS – L TO R – 004

Taz with Bob Ecker, Thunderbird Punch Buggy with Travis Gelhaus
Second Row, Tom Brigman Jr. – Judge, Carl Bishop, Connie Riley – Judge
Behind, Dr. Joe Yurigan, Tom Mains, Dale Marten, Regis Linn, Garry Malzone

MID STATES DERBY CLASSIC WINNERS – L TO R – 005

Ellie with Tom Brigman - Judge, Indian Creek Lizzy with Garry Malzone
Behind Carl Bishop, Collin Bishop, Tony Bingham, Regis Linn, Connie Riley - Judge