

FIELD TRIAL

Trifecta

by Roselyn Wilson



L to Rt: Ready, Nan and Tank. Photo by Lauren Springer

On June 20, 2014, at the Lake Country Retriever Club, the Field Chairman was set to reveal the results of the Owner-Handler Qualifying Stake. Five dogs were carried to the fourth series; three of those final five dogs were Golden Retrievers. The results were announced with Reserve Jam going to #14, Wildfire Bad Hat Harry (Tank); 4th place to Wildfire Anya of Sanborn (Nan); and 2nd place, becoming a new QAA Golden, Wildfire Ready for Trouble (Ready). I felt like I should stop and pick up a lotto ticket for Saturday's drawing. Who would have thought that a gal and a bunch of Golden Retrievers would not only be in the last series together but take three of the placements. I have bred and raised family hunting dogs with high standards, often more limited by their owners than talent, but this was a Licensed Retriever Field Trial.

The day started with my absolutely having to leave the house by 7:45 a.m. to make LCRC Owner-Handler Qualifying by 9 a.m. I needed to check the weather forecast, get the kennel fed and aired and outside before I could leave the house. The usual one-hour and 20-minute trip could be lengthened due to flooding. The running order of my dogs was #6 Nan, #14 Tank, and #21 Ready. I was glad Nan drew an earlier running number than the other two dogs since it was her first Q. She had a litter of nine puppies in mid-February 2014, and not much training due to a late winter and a cold spring. Both Tank and Ready have been to the last bird while running the Qual, so they should have the best chance of getting it done today.

We arrived as the test was still being set up. I had heard the cover was getting long due to wet weather. And, since the hunt club's land is part of a conservation program, it can't be mowed. Susan Kluesner was the Marshall, so we chatted. The first test was a triple with a 220-yard memory bird up the guts of the field with a short retired bird to the right and the go bird flyer to the left at 160 yards. The test dog picked up

the flier and short retired with a hunt and needed help on the long bird...that was the test.

I came to the line with Nan, hoping she would sit for all three birds, and she did. I sent her for the flyer going right to it; next bird was the short retired. As she came back, I told her "easy" and think I pulled her a bit because she took a big leap into a pond right off the retired gun. The line to the short retired was a grassy road, so taking the pond was much more work. The judges commented, "and they say Golden Retrievers don't like water." Set her up for the last bird and sent her, she back sided it, but was the first dog to get all her birds clean which made the judges very happy. At that point I mentioned that this was the first triple I had run with her. All her work was broken into singles and buildups so far this year.

Tank ran next with a little hunt on the flyer, nailed the short memory mark, and then one bad decision on the long bird. I had him lined up great for the middle long bird, but when he left he went back through the short bird and kept going to the long bird. One bad decision, but then many good ones!

Ready was on deck next. When I removed her choke chain and said, "Heel," she was on the mat before I got out of the blind, all set to take her marks. After the marks went down, I released her for the flyer and she nailed it. Saw her look over her right shoulder a couple times at the long middle bird as she was coming back. I said "easy" before she got back to the mat and "easy" on the mat but she set up for the long bird. My plan was to get the short bird. But knowing how she likes the long bird, I decided it was best to get the long bird and try for the short bird last. Dogs that had trouble with the test went back to the flyer when sent for the long bird. She back sided the long bird but then right to it, came back and smashed the short retired. We all joked how much one of the judge's female Golden "Bailey" and Ready are alike on line and taking marks. All three were called back to

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the land blind.

The land blind was run from the same spot using the flyer crates and long center mark as draws. There were many bad jobs with many way off line and with cast refusals. I was very pleased with the job my crew did on land blind, good initial lines, casting and challenging the blind. The judge commented that I need to be on my toes with these gals. I responded, "I've told many pros that if they want to become better trainers, train a good female Golden." All three were called back to water blind, a total of 11 dogs.

The water blind was in a newly flooded area just north of the club house. As they were setting up the blind there were nesting ducks getting up off the field, which is a hazard in itself. The blind started off with a long land entry to a small piece of water that was not more than 30 yards across, right to left brisk wind and it seemed like a bridge of land just to the left of the line to a marker approximately 80 yards beyond the water. The dogs' line to the water was good but then any cast given to keep them on line would result in cast refusals, auto casting and hunting back and forth around water far too left of the line to the bird.

Nan was the first dog to run after the test dog. Not a great job compared to her land blind, but many people had white shirts on behind me and it seemed to influence her performance. She had a hard time picking me out from crowd behind me in white. The judges asked the gallery to move and remove any white after Nan ran. Nan does not have much coat and one judge commented to the other that he should consider getting a Golden like Nan as she was like the dark red Labs (said all in fun)! We later found out the resident pro

had done puppy training with pigeons in the field earlier in the day, which explains all the scent in the field. I had three tries at the water blind and didn't get it right with either Tank or Ready. I tried to send wide to the right but all the dogs, not just mine, broke down in similar ways. There were many naughty dogs! Callbacks to last series, five dogs and all three of mine were called back.

The water marks were an in line triple, shot left to right with left and center birds converging, and the go bird was a land mark. The water blind had been run between the center and left hand mark. My first dog was Ready, and she actually walked to the mat from the holding blind and worked well on line with me. I really concentrated on not sweating the dogs too much so I'd have to pick up or handle. All three did the last series well with some back siding the gunner but right to the bird. As I finished with my last dog, one of the judges asked me if this had ever happened before, breeding, owning and handling three Golden retrievers to placements in a field trial. Gosh, I don't know but it was really cool.

If one thinks this journey is a singular process, they are wrong. A big "thanks" to my Wednesday Old Farts training group that has decades of experience at Benton Retriever Group, Tim and Lauren Springer, Lynn Troy, and Brian and Lisa Hartfield plus all those who threw for these guys. ❖

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