

Airedales in the Field

The ATCA Hunting & Field Committee Report
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Ask any Airedale owner who hikes through fields with their dogs and they will tell you that Airedales can find birds! For more than 20 years ATCA worked to provide



Joyce Contofalsky's Ella retrieves the bird during the Junior water work

a venue for Airedales to prove their capabilities as

bird dogs. The original Hunting and Working Committee of ATCA established a regular schedule of Hunt Tests and ATCA Hunting Titles. Yet the AKC was not convinced.

Perspectives changed in late 2007 when Karen Copley became the chair of the renamed ATCA Hunting and Field Committee. Karen was seeking direction for the committee and got input from both Tom Meyer and Doug Ljungren of the AKC, Hal Standish, Maugh Vail and others who were actively training and testing

in the hunting dog world. The ATCA Hunt Tests used for over 20 years were very similar to AKC Spaniel Hunt Tests and now the AKC was favorably disposed to allowing Airedale participation in those Spaniel Tests.

Pursuing this option, in July of 2008 at the Wisconsin Floater, ATCA ran a 'practice' Hunt Test modeled on the AKC Spaniel Tests. After that event, The ATCA President Virginia Latham Smith, Karen Copley, Ken Cook and Pamela Macomber had dinner with Tom Meyer and Doug Ljungren of the AKC. Doug indicated that he would recommend to the AKC board that Airedales be eligible to compete for Spaniel Hunting Titles. The AKC Board accepted his recommendation and effective July 1st 2009 Airedales could enter Spaniel Tests.



Dee Corboy-Lulik's Peyton returns the bird to hand in the Seniors Test



Scott Lichty and Bob complete the land retrieve in Juniors



Airedale and Spaniel enthusiasts watch from the "gallery" at the First Annual Montgomery County Spaniel Hunting Test

This opened the floodgates. Instead of having two or three events a year sponsored by ATCA, Airedales now have literally dozens of opportunities to participate in Hunting Tests held in every region of the country.

Airedales moved to take advantage of this new opportunity, quickly claiming many historic 'Firsts'. Twelve days after the tests opened Mark Warner's Airedales were the first to earn Qualifying Scores; Tessa (Strongbow Tessa of Wingate) qualified in Juniors and Hannah (Hollytrov Hans Rules Wingate) qualified in Seniors. The second weekend in August Airedales rolled up eight

additional Qualifying Scores. A few weeks later Scott Lichty and Bob (Regent Wasabi CD, RN, JH) earned the first Junior Spaniel Hunting Title. Followed a few hours later by Deanna Corboy-Lulik and Kaleigh (CH MACH5 Connemara's Tuff Act to Follow MXF, RA, MXJ,CD, SH) earning the first Senior Hunting Title.

The week of the ATCA National Specialty saw another "First" as ATCA sponsored the First Annual Montgomery County Spaniel Hunting Test in Chester Springs PA. Thursday was an all day seminar conducted by Joe DeMarkis, a long time trainer, handler and AKC Judge of Flushing Spaniels. Joe addressed diverse training issues such as starting pups in the field, training to utilize wind, water retrieves and training to be steady.



Scott Lichty and Bob get individual pointers from seminar leader Joe DeMarkis while Spaniel Handler Deb Kirk watches.

Friday and Saturday were the 'real deal'; Airedales and English Springers and Cockers and Cumpers and Boykens all running for AKC Hunting Test Qualifying Scores. Far Meadows Farm was a 'postcard picture perfect' venue, the weather was cooperative - not too cold, not too hot and only a bit wet, and the ATCA Hunt Test Committee with



Joyce Contofalsky and Ella come to the line for the Junior land work

help and mentoring from the Spaniel community had all the behind-the-scenes tasks well in hand.

Friday had 20 dogs running in the tests with Joyce Contofalsky's Airedale 'Ella' (Strongbow Breezy Ella Louise CDX, RE) earning a Qualifying score in Juniors. Scott Lichty's Bob was running at Seniors for the first time and did well on the land work but it wasn't his day to swim.

Saturday 23 dogs ran. Dee Corboy-Lulik's Payton (Connemara's Competitive Edge MXF RA MXJ MX CD) qualified at Seniors with an aggressive swimming style. He was steady on land and when released he leaped into the



Payton the 'wonder water Dale' does the Butterfly during the Senior water retrieve

water with a howl of excitement and swam doing the butterfly stroke! Several observers, including the AKC Field Rep Tom Meyer, commented that they had never seen a dog swim in that manner. Dee's Master Dog Kaleigh was not steady on this day.

Joyce Contofalsky and Ella earned another Junior Qualifying score to become the first Airedale to Title at an ATCA sponsored Montgomery County Hunting Test. Joyce, her husband Craig, and Ella were all grinning ear to ear at the accomplishment and

Ella's place in the Airedale history book.

Each of the Gunners commented independently that they would be pleased to hunt over an Airedale, high praise from devoted Spaniel folk.



Cover was high as Dee Corboy-Lulik and Kaleigh work in Masters

The First Annual Montgomery County Flushing Spaniel Hunting Test would not have been possible without the hard work of the ATCA Hunt Test Committee Members, Craig and Joyce Contofalsky, Anita Smits and Scott Lichty. In addition, the help and mentoring from the Spaniel Community was essential. Judge and seminar leader Joe DeMarkis, and Judges Theresa Schroeder and Steve Roth could not have been more accommodating. Mary Lou and Tom Dunn provided an awesome venue, skilled Gunners and endless advice and help with all the practical details that make for a successful Hunt Test.



Joyce Contofalsky and Ella display ribbons and ear-to-ear grins as the first Airedale to title at the ATCA sponsored Montgomery County Spaniel Hunting Test

As Airedales and their handles enter and are welcomed into this new world of Flushing Spaniels we have noticed that individuals such as Mark Werner, Scott Lichty, Dee Corboy-Lulik and Joyce Contofalsky are catching a new ailment. We have not determined if it is curable but we do know that it is highly contagious. As Airedale owners from all parts of the country find training groups and testing opportunities within the Spaniel Community, we are sure to see more cases of 'HappyMortis'; or "Grin-Wrinkles as it is called on the street.

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