

Switzerland and Team Bond :-)

Somebody asked whether I forgot about the “ A Month on the Moor” section. No! I did not, I am just busy with so many things to do at the same time, like always! This is why I am “taking advantage” of Tok Mostert writings on training but... I still want to tell my tale.

So, let's try to be brief and remember some things about the day [I left](#) from Italy. It was July 15th and I had set this date because I did not want to be in France on the 14th. I somehow felt something was bound to happen on that day, France national day. I was going to go to bed on that night, when the TV announced there was an ongoing terrorist attack in Nice. I was sorry, worried and moved but not surprised.

On 15th morning, I had to finish to load the car: I have never completely grasped the concept of “travelling light” and UK 2016 trip was not an exception, my “packing” issues will be told in another story . I passed Milan swiftly, and stopped at a service station near Varese, right before the Swiss border. I had a coffee flask with me: my plan was to be smart and save money. Bad idea, the temperature was already around 30°C and my coffee was still steaming! Why did I stop then? Because... people told me that when you travel with a dog you need to stop every two hours, which I stupidly did on all my way to England! While trying to sip some coffee, the service station man came to greet me and look at the dog. It was the same man I met on my way to Switzerland, a couple of years ago, while I was travelling to meet Briony's breeder. He did not remember me of course, but I did as he told me again about his Maltese dog and about his love for these four legged critters.



Team Bond

What astonished me the most, however, were two cars parked by mine: they were wearing a Scottish plate! I have never seen any Scottish plates in Italy before, so I took it as a good sign! These cars ended up being three, not two: they were expensive cars, Audi or Saab if I am not wrong and, weird thing, each of them had a driver and no passengers. Drivers were two middle aged men and a girl, I know this for sure as they sort of escorted me until the French border. I was missing them, finding one of them again, miss them another time and so on. I crossed Switzerland with these three unusual travel mates, which, for no rational reasons, reminded me of James Bond... and British spies!

How do you travel in Switzerland? Are there any breathtaking sceneries? Yes there are, you drive through mountains and lakes, but you cannot really enjoy them as you need to be well focused on the road. There is much traffic, as many car drivers and truck drivers favour Switzerland over France because the Mont Blanc and the Frejus tunnels are very expensive (while the Gottahrd is free). Also, French and Italian motorways are much more expensive than the Swiss ones: in Italy and France you pay according to your mileage and your veichle, in Switzerland you pay about 40 Euros and you can travel as much as you like for one year. Driving in Switzerland is cheaper, but equally demanding: speed limits are really tight, these roads are not made for high speeds and speed limits keep changing constantly. Beware of them and of all the cameras set to trap incautious motorists. We stopped before the Gotthard, again , having been told that you must

stop frequently when you are travelling with dogs...



South Gotthard service station

We were right in the middle of the Alps this time and it was pleasantly cold. Past the Gotthard tunnel – full of Belgian cars – we enjoyed bordering the Luzern Lake (in the midst of a thunderstorm and still escorted by Team Bond). We finally reached Basel when we stopped again for lunch. I had food with my but I went inside the service station to see what else they had: very cute cakes, 7.50 Euros (6£) a slice! I therefore opted for my homemade “piadina” which was consumed under a tree. My neighbour , under the next tree, was a Swiss man with a wirehaired Dacshund. And then... in the blink of an eye, [I was in France](#).

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 2) – By T. Mostert

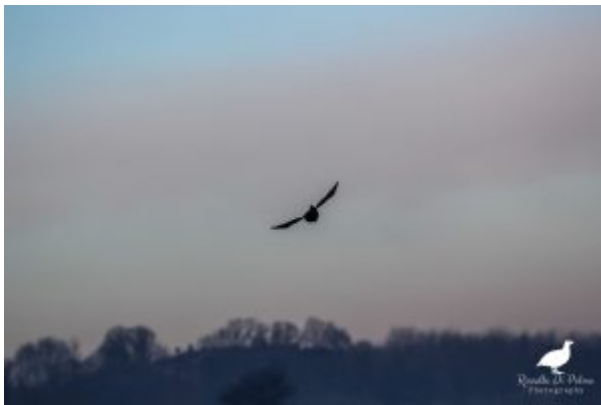
Tok Mostert, a Professional Hunter from South Africa, now living in Sweden, is sharing his writings on dog training with us. [You can start reading them from Part 1 here](#).

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 2) – By T. Mostert

Depth and Width

There is nothing more gracious than a good dog gliding over a field at full speed, turning at the edges without cutting back and working a good distance from you without losing contact. Some fields cannot be run edge to edge, it just does not make for a huntable situation, just like some areas do not allow a HPR to run at speed, this happens normally where you have thick cover.

What is acceptable depth and width for a dog to run? It depends on whom you ask and on what terrain you are hunting. I participated in a field test not too long ago during which a dog found and pointed a pheasant for over 4 minutes. The point was maybe 300 meters ahead of the judge and shooter. Judge refused to walk up to the dog and have the pheasant flushed and shot, he said the dog was not hunting for him, it was too far out. I have my own opinion on this particular scenario, and I am sure many others will have too. Point is that what is desired by one handler, is not what suits another.



A good dog will work as far as needed without losing contact with the handler completely, now that is another subjective phrase depending on whom you speak to. I do not mind losing contact with my dog for 2-3 minutes when she is working high

cover or thick cover, I know if she is gone longer she is probably on point. It is for the same reason I do not call her in when I cannot see her, I do not want to break off a possible opportunity. You cannot expect a dog to run the same way in a forest, as he would on a large open wheat stub field. If your dog is not steady on point and cannot stand without flushing the bird by himself, then you probably do not want him to go too deep or too wide, because chances are he will

flush the birds before you get there anyway. Do not confuse this with birds that flush by themselves without the dog moving. In short, depth and width should create a huntable situation for the dog and handler. Some dogs will start shallow and short, until they figure out there are no birds close and then start going wider and deeper.

As said before, here and only here is the time to let off on the discipline and obedience a bit. Give the dog some "freedom" and let them work. The dog needs to gain experience and confidence so he can rely on himself. There is no problem with a young dog that sticks close, as his confidence grows he will increase his range. A young dog that runs wild is another issue, here hiding from the dog to force him to keep contact is a good idea.



Flake

I have been extremely fortunate to have a Legend by the name of Sten Rönnerling who has helped me with Flake's training on field. Sten has trained multiple field trials champions in multiple breeds. He had several double and triple champion dogs, a fist full of 10/10 field scores and dogs that have placed high in pointing dogs World Championships. This easily qualifies him as a Legend. He has single handedly helped me turn Flake into a proper field dog that understands what is expected from her. His methods have been tried tested and proven, again and again. At way over 70 years old, he still runs his dogs daily and can still drop a bird from the sky with little effort. When it comes to field training he has a

few chosen pieces of advice, one of his first phrases was this:.

" The only time a dog should be standing still on a field is when he is pissing, pooing or pointing".

Young dogs will, at some stage, start pointing rats, mice, rabbits, hare etc. Although this is not what we want them to do, they are doing what comes naturally, finding game. Do not be too hard on the young dog if he does this, simply break the point as quickly as possible and send the dog in a different direction. Never, never assume it is not feathered game the dog is pointing, always presume it is feathered game until you learn how to read the dog and interpret the signals. Never, never praise the dog on point if you are not 100% sure it is in fact a bird they are pointing! This, as discussed before positively reinforces the dog, but if it is not a bird you are reinforcing him to stand for game and possibly a empty spot where a bird was before, but has long since left (more on that later).

Dogs that stand and route around in one spot are a no, no be patient with a young dog that does this, but get them to move as soon as possible.

Don't run two dogs that want to play with each other on the field, run a experienced dog with a young dog, or run him alone. Different breeds run different ways and look different, Flake ran and hunted her own way when she ran with other dogs, until I ran her with a setter, for some reason she shadowed the setter. I ran her a few times more with the setter and she let go, running her own lines again. Expose your dogs to different breeds on the field. If your dog shows any aggression towards any other dog on the field, pull your dog out, it is a completely unacceptable behaviour.

This is a broad brush I have used to describe field width and depth, there is much more detail that goes into making a dog run well, including external factors like weather, bird density, lack of birds etc.

Find a Legend like Sten to help you, it is incredible what difference it makes.

[The next part will cover how to work a dog on planted birds.](#)