

Break it Down- by Tok Mostert

There is no doubt that seeing a well trained dog doing everything right is a pure delight to owner/handler or observer, not to mention a judge. The seamless way they cut up a field missing no ground, the sudden stop and lock up on point, the flush on command, the stop, the marking of the fallen bird, the glance for permission to retrieve, the retrieve and the delivery all flowing like a gentle mountain stream over smooth rock. Pure dog poetry in motion!

What few understand is how exactly you get a dog to that level. Many fail due to their lack of experience, the experienced fail due to their lack of adapting. There is nothing more heartbreaking to watch than a handler train one dog after another in the same way, and making the same mistakes, dog after dog. For the novice it is a minefield of advice and methods, some good some totally disastrous!! Some novices will seek advice from the old dog hands, other will shun all help.

I have my own way of training a dog, most of it is old school, some of it is purely my way of doing things, I still do things wrong, but I learn from that pretty quickly when I fail my dog. Yes, I fail my dog, not the dog fails me. If I have not trained or exposed my dog to certain things, I am failing my dog, but that is another topic.



Getting back to watching a dog do everything right. To get to that level a good handler/trainer would have broken down every single step in the opening scenario and then he would have

also compartmentalized the individual steps into single separate training sessions. Don't get it?

The retrieve can be broken down as follows:

1. Dog sitting steady by your side
2. Dog looks at you when you whisper his name or click your tongue
3. Dog takes dummy, or bird, from your hand on command, does not chew or play
4. Dog stays sitting as you walk away, does not drop the bird or dummy
5. Dog comes straight in when called, still holding the dummy
- 5.1 Dog does not keep circling you with dummy or bird
- 5.2 Dog does not drop the bird/dummy at your feet
- 5.3 Dog sits calmly with dummy in his mouth until you give him the deliver command
6. Dog holds steady on a cast, waits for command
7. Dog does not lift on the cast
8. Dog marks cast
9. Dog does not move when you walk and pick up dummy or bird
10. Dog does not move when you place multiple dummies out
11. Dog does not switch dummies/birds when they are placed together

This gives you a general outline of how small the different steps can be broken down into. It is the same for every single thing you train. The point, the flush, the way the dog works a field, everything. I have said times before, sit down and decide what signals you will use, whistle, hand or verbal, train them into yourself long before you try and teach them to the dog, this is crucial!

Do not be in a hurry to weave this all together into your invisible leash. Once the dog can 100% of the time complete

these micro exercises you can start putting 2 together, then 3 and so on. This is the only way to forge a unbreakable invisible leash. Few dogs fall apart during trials, most of them fall apart under high volume high pressure shoots and hunts, this is exactly the time you can least afford it or correct it.

Many people wait for the season to open so they can let their dogs run on field and find birds, this is foolish when you can train so many other aspects before the field season opens.

Keep it fun, keep it focused!

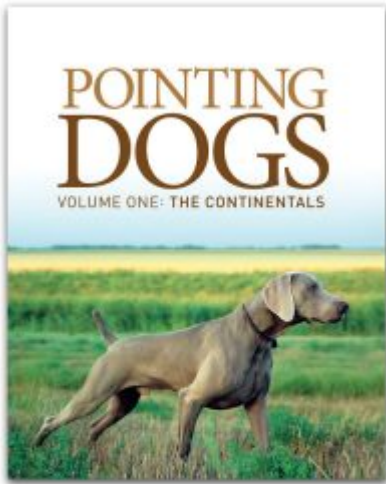
Are you interested in gundogs? [Check out the Gundog Research Project!](#)

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Prizes

For those filling out the survey. We are working on collecting a few items which will be drawn among all those who filled out the [survey](#).

So far Craig Koshyk, from Canada, of [Dog Willing Publications](#) kindly donated one of his [books](#) (Pointing Dogs,



Volume 1, The Continentals) worth 99 dollars

Josh Wiggins, from Texas is donating a [Texas Leash and Collar](#)

Luca Zaninoni, from Italy, is donating a coupon for a T-shirt with the design of your choice among those available on his website [Sanguemiele Design](#)

and I am going to braid a lanyard in the colours of your choice and I offer a [free photographic session](#).



We are looking forward adding more goodies for those who kindly devoted their time to “[science](#)” so... if you want to donate anything (a item or a service), don't hesitate to contact us!

Do you click with your dog? – by Tok Mostert

Just in case folks think I have forgotten about training dogs☐

Do you click with your dog?

It normally took years for trends to reach African shores, that was until Africa discovered the worldwide web. Information and training techniques spread like wildfires over a sun-dried African savannah, for good or for bad these techniques were spread like the gospel and seen as the miraculous training method. This, unfortunately, does not only apply to Africa, but to many parts of the world.

To break it down, you need to have a comprehensive understanding of how a dog's mind works.

A dog understands his name by repetitive training and positive reinforcements. A dog understands commands several ways, you can force it like with force fetch training (negative – positive response training) working on a leash is something I consider force training too, although a more positive less negative form of training. You can also use condition training like with a clicker and treats. Then there is the method I believe in, as taught by Jeppe Stridh, the 95% positive reinforcements /praise and 5% correction method, using the red light- green light principles. Although during the initial training phase it would be more correct to say it is a combination of the order of the principles. Right at the start of the training, the very beginning, treats may be used to teach a sit command to a puppy, but it is also the only phase they may get used in. This initial treat is more a bonding exercise, than a treat training exercises as you are replacing

the bitch in the feeding cycle.

I could have titled this article *How to confuse your dog and frustrate yourself* because this is exactly what we are doing blending training methods and techniques. The secret, that is no secret at all when training a dog, is and always will be consistency. Besides the verbal and whistle commands a dog responds to tone and body language (as well as hand signals) of the handler too. Keeping everything consistent is what turns a good dog into a better one. Why do I not use the clicker method? Read for yourself and decide.

It is my belief and opinion that a dog that works for respect and affection (praise) within a pack type environment will in the end outclass and outlast any dog trained by clicker and or treats. If you use a clicker and treats, the only reward your dog receives is the treat and limited freedom. My preferred method rewards the dog with unlimited freedom, praise and a understanding of where it fits into the pack, it also teaches the dog respect. Besides all of the above, it builds confidence and trust in both the dog and the handler while forging a stronger bond between them. Contrary to what people believe my hunting dog is not kept in a kennel and then cut loose every now and again. My dog lives with me, on the couch, on the bed, in the car, but I can at anytime give my dog a command when I no longer wish for him to be on the bed or couch and he will comply!

You do not need skills to train with a clicker, neither do you need confidence or ability. You are solely relying on the clicker and treats to train the dog. With limited skill and ability, you are no leader to your dog, you are a treat dispenser! When a dog lives in the wild, there are no treats to teach him, there is a pecking order within the pack environment to which every dog adheres or gets rebuked by one of the pack members. It is a simple and common language that dogs have developed over hundreds of years, why change what the dog understands?

It is common knowledge that the level of control/discipline during trial competitions have decreased over the past 40 plus years, the reason has nothing to do with the ability of the dogs but rests solely with the trainers who either train using "new" methods or prescribes to the philosophy that wilder dogs hunt better. A multidiscipline hunting dog needs a multidimensional training method using consistent commands and corrections executed at exactly the right moment.

A good trainer, or handler, will plan every single detail of his training sessions down to the finest details. He will know exactly which commands to use, when to apply more correction or when to give more encouragement. He will have a confident body posture and language, he will anticipate an error by the dog and correct it at exactly the right time. His tone will be steady and simple without repeating commands or physically touching the dog. There will be no confusing, or contradictory, commands given. The dog will clearly understand what is expected from him during these sessions. If you lack the confidence and ability seek help, training in front of the mirror by yourself is a good start, so is writing down your commands and memorizing them.



Flake

Many clicker trainers find themselves frustrated and confused once they have to work a dog in a uncontrolled environment.

Dogs that run after rabbits and chase cats are common. Dogs that do not socialize well with other dogs and people are not uncommon either. Once the dog reaches a distance away from its handler where the clicker is no longer effective, it is pure chaos. Making it even worse is that now the handler tries to “speak” to the dog using other methods with disastrous results. You cannot speak Afrikaans to a Chinese dog and expect it to understand you! Why start training with the clicker if you know it will not be effective once the dog reaches a certain distance from you, why go and teach a whole new language to the dog if you could have used one language right from the start?

Working a dog out to 300-400 meters takes more than skill. The invisible lead that runs between dog and handler is woven from skill, ability, respect, praise, trust and glued together by the bond of interaction forged by hours and years of work. I have unfortunately seen more dogs getting trained with e-collars after clicker training. I will be humble and say this, if a dog is happy and you can control his three basic instincts (to hunt, to mate, to fight) when the dog is off leash then no matter what method you have used, you have succeeded.

Next article [here](#).

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A Time to Reflect (on

Training) by Tok Mostert

I am busy packing for a long holiday, Louise, my companion, says she is actually taking me away so that Flake can get some rest. There is truth in that, sometimes we get caught up in pushing so hard and trying to get to the next level with our gundogs that we forget to have fun, so should your dog. What few of us realize is that the “next level” holds more problems, more challenging training situations and that often we made a mistake in our initial training and that we now have to go back and fix that before we can move on.

If you are serious about your hunting or trial dog, you will always strive for perfection, but you will also know that perfection has many faces. What may be perfect for you, may not be perfect for a judge or for other handlers. True perfection does not exist, it is only the strive for perfection that is true. Flake is lying in front of the fire right now, oblivious to what I may think, write or feel, content in just letting go of the days training. I guess I should learn from her and do the same, I wish I could. As the glow of the fireplace dances over her speckled body, so the season dances through my mind.

1. She has developed incredibly over the last 6 months when it comes to fieldwork.
2. She has not had a break in 16 months, maybe one or two days certain weeks, sometimes only a day a month.
3. If I don't do my part she will never get further, just like those flames of the fireplace dwindle down and die if I don't keep adding wood.
4. Her hunting season is over, it may have not been perfect, but she has made me proud.
5. She is not better than other dogs, she has just had better opportunities and I need to keep giving her those.
6. I need to pay attention to the early signals of a

problem developing, it is easier to prevent a problem from becoming a habit, than it is to break a habit.

7. Going back to basics often builds a better dog.

8. You have to hit the dogs “reset” button at some stage, take a break leave all training and let the dog



be a dog.

As I said above, our season is over until I get back from Africa, she is getting a break and some time to “reset”. I get time to ponder our season and to break down everything I see as a potential problem or a real problem I picked up during our season together. Some are very small, some are very big, but they all get the same amount of attention and focus.

Some may be happy with a HPR dog that picks up ducks all over the place, I want a dog that picks up a specific duck among the many on the ground, especially the winged ones I select even if there are several. I want a HPR dog that can keep it cool under the guns no matter how many shots go off and how many birds are dropping around her.

I want a dog that takes a straight line into the water on a blind retrieve, in virgin water I want the dog to do this carefully, but straight without hesitation.

I want a dog that follows commands on a blind retrieve, but that can work the thick stuff by himself when I can't help anymore.

I want a dog that does not only focus on the flock of birds he just flushed on command, but also understands to look for the bird that I am shooting at, to make the retrieve easier for him.

I want a dog that can work late season birds and pin them so hard that they don't breath.

Will I get all of this done? Maybe not but it does not stop me from trying or training. It may take longer, It may take new training methods, I can't say for sure. What I can say is that I will be breaking it all down in my head long before I start training and as always, I will start with the basics all over again.

Next article [here](#).

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We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 4) – By T. Mostert

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We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 4) – By T. Mostert

Hunting your Dog, the Best Experience

Flake kept on improving to the stage where we shot several birds over her, placed birds and wild birds. The single biggest mistake you can make with placing birds, is making the game it too easy. The dog should work, work hard for each and every bird, some days I placed no birds or only ran her once

other dogs have cleared a field. When you do place birds, place them towards the end and the middle of the field. As said before, if you only place birds on the edges or drainage ditches etc the dog learns to run straight up and down or straight towards these places. It takes many, many, birds to build a bird dog, but there is a thing as too many birds too.

The problem with pen raised and placed birds is that they do not act like wild birds, they do not entirely smell like wild birds either. We say they smell more poop than bird, the bird poop often sticks to their feet. That too can create a problem where the dog associates the poop smell with birds and often a empty point is where there is a concentration of bird poop. You absolutely have to train on wild birds or birds that were released much earlier in the season.



Flake

During these training sessions Sten pointed out how I can read the dog, and what I should look for, some of the things are such small changes in the dog that I would never have noticed them if he did not bring my attention to them. Learn to read your dog's body language and you will only benefit from it. It was this that helped me see a problem coming with Flake's advance (roading) and flush before it became a habit. Time, attention and the right type of birds make a great bird dog.

Some days Flake will still struggle with running birds or figuring out what is fresh bird scent and what is just scent left behind, especially in areas that are close to where pen birds are raised in volumes. She still needs to learn how to

pin running birds or cut them off, she needs to adapt to how the wind flows over and around obstacles and barriers and how to use this. I am not overly concerned about this, it will fall in place with experience and exposure.

Points to ponder:

1. *The 3 P's: a pointing dog can be stationary only while pissing, pooing or pointing.*
2. *Stay calm when your dog point, do not rush him.*
3. *Praise the dog only if you are 100% sure there is a bird.*
4. *Do not allow your dog to steal a point, it becomes a habit.*
5. *Give your young dog a fresh warm bird to smell and hold, he will remember the scent.*
6. *Only you can decide when to shoot for your dog, too soon.*
7. *A warm bird is harder for a young dog to pickup, some will even point them, encourage the dog, don't force it!*
8. *There is such a thing as too many birds, especially over a short time.*
9. *There is such a thing as the wrong type of birds, placement is important.*
10. *Just because the dog points one type of bird does not mean he will point another kind, teach him!*



I dreamt of Africa...

Heat and exhaustion play havoc with a pointing dogs ability to find birds. Keep the dog hydrated, do not run them for more than 15 minutes in the heat (calculate the resting time multiplying the run time for three, eg: 10 minute run = 30 minute break). If you train and see the dog losing speed and focus, break and leash the dog.

Through all of this you should be having fun and so should your dog. Being a Professional Hunter, I have been fortunate enough to have hunted many places and many species over many countries. *I can honestly say that hunting over my own HPR rates in the top 3 of all the hunts I have ever had the fortune to guide or complete by myself, right up there with dangerous game hunting thrill wise.*

This concludes my ramblings and encouragements for now. There are many other factors you need to take into consideration when running your dog on field, hunting or competing. Like a good general you need to train and plan before you go into battle, mentally and physically you and your dog need to be ready.

Go find a Legend and train with them. Best of luck to all of you.

**We are Losing Legendary
Methods (Fieldwork 1) – By T.**

Mostert

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We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 1) – By T. Mostert

This is the single most rewarding discipline for a HPR owner or trainer. Often called the Formula 1 of the dog world, our little “machines” flying over a field, head high and then that sudden dead stop into a rock solid point. A good advance into a sit and the bird gets dropped from the sky, dog marks perfectly, retrieve is brilliant and at the end of the day you get a first prize!! Yeah, I dream too, because getting to this point takes more time and patience than any other disciplines. Many dogs run well, many dogs find birds, many dogs are steady on point, many dogs have a good advance and many still a good retrieve. Putting it all together in ONE DOG is where it gets very, very complicated! Field trials rules, criteria and regulations are different for HPR's in Scandinavia, Europe and the USA, but we all want our dogs to find birds, point them and be steady. I cannot speak for other test methods, I train for our field test and our criteria. Some of what I say will not be applicable to you and it will not make sense in why we do it the way we do it. I don't like ‘kicking up birds” myself and I believe it is easier to have your dog stand still when you ” kick up” birds than to stop a dog after sending him to put the bird on the wing, it does not mean I am right and others are wrong, to each his own. Train within your framework.



Flake

There are those that believe you give a young dog birds and when he shows potential you teach him to run a proper pattern. I did not do it that way, as said before I was new to this two years ago and I taught Flake to run a pattern long before I got her onto birds on a regular basis. The single biggest problem with my method with the result that Flake ran, she did not hunt, not her mistake, but mine. She was doing what I told her to do and taught her to do. In hindsight I will use a combination of birds and teaching a dog to run a pattern at the same time. A dog that gets “fed” to many birds too early will not run as hard as he should, he will think it is easy hitting birds, more on that later.

To make it more structured, I will start with how to teach a dog to run a pattern and how to correct and steer the dog. I do not start a dog on field training that is too young, joints, ligaments and so on can be permanently damaged! Do not run a too young dog with another young dog, start your dog alone.

Exhaustion is a real danger, low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) and dehydration will kill your dog, learn the signs and keep a close watch. Young dogs rely on their owners to take care of them. Do not train field if you cannot stop or recall your dog, those who are saying “screw you” right now have not seen a dog run over. If you do run them without a stop or recall in place, run them in a fenced area or a area that has no cars or trains for 5 kms. Finished preaching let’s get to patterns.



If someone helps you...

To teach a dog to run a pattern is fairly easy, to teach a dog to run the desired pattern is harder, a dog that can adjust his pattern depending on terrain and prevalent weather conditions is a very smart dog.

I have seen many dogs on trails that are released, run straight ahead of the handler for 200 or 300 meters, then make a left or right turn head out 100-200 meters, turn left or right and head straight back to the handler before they start running a haywire pattern. I have seen dogs run the boundaries of a field only, educated dogs whose handlers trained too hard on the boundaries and not enough on the fields. There is nothing more funny for a young dog to go out and run freely, use that energy by training the dog to run a pattern. One method of doing this is by going to a field that is 50 meters wide and maybe 200 meters long. You can use larger fields, but your dog will run less pattern and you are trying to teach him to run a pattern. It works best with two people or, if you can run and keep running, you can try by yourself, I did a lot of that!

Let's say you have the 50×100 field and you have two people. Always start training with the wind in the dogs face. Start both people and the dog in the centre of the field, release the dog and both people move in opposite directions, each to one side of the field, right at the edge on each side. I like to take a few steps back after I reach my end and then I call the dog in, this teaches the dog to cover every edge, do not expect a young dog to do this every time by itself. Then I

start walking forward on the edge of the field, the other person should be able to see when the dog reaches me after I called him in. They now call the dog to them, remember to keep walking forward! The person that does the call in should not call in too soon or too late, timing is everything. Continue calling in the dog from one person to the other while walking at a steady pace towards the end of the field, the dog will eventually turn by itself. Do not let the dog turn short on either side! Once they start getting tired, they tend to turn short, the person that has the dog closest to them when he turns short should call the dog back! Please, please do not forget to heap praise on the dog when he gets to your side! He is doing what you want him to do! Do not do this for more than 10 minutes with a young dog, take a 30 minute break or longer if you intend repeating the exercise. Do not push the dog too hard in the beginning of its training on field!



Doing the same exercise alone is possible, but harder, I ran from one side to the other with the Flake, she would beat me to the other side every time, I could turn short! I had one advantage with Flake when I started pattern training, she could

already take directions with hand signals (arms) and with the whistle. A judge once told me that a dog cannot read arm signals, he is wrong. Some dogs take to the pattern easy, some dogs take a little more time and some dogs just don't get taught right. A dog that enjoys your company will follow you, no matter how hard he runs, he will keep an eye on you every now and then, a young dog even more so. Use this, when the dog reaches a point where you are happy for him to turn, turn and walk in the opposite direction (always forward), make sure your back is to the dog, do not walk backwards! You do not need to be as fast as the dog, if he passes you keep walking in the same direction until the dog reaches your chosen turning point, turn and walk in the opposite direction.

[To be continued with depth and width.](#)

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Obedience and Discipline) – By T. Mostert

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This is purely my opinion, what I believe and have experienced, there are many other opinions and beliefs when it comes to training obedience. Clickers, treats, positive conditioning, e-collars, positive – negative training, in the end there are as many methods as there are dog breeds. Everyone sells their method as the gospel, as the only way to train a dog. Then you have the other side of the coin where trainers believe the dog should be as raw as possible, sticking close to his instinct and breeding as possible, with little human interference.

Now I can tell you that the best bird finding dog I have ever seen is a English Pointer that had non existing obedience, the only time the dog would stand still was when pointing, he was wild!

Blood trackers do not care if the dog pulls or pushes, as long as he is tracking and finding game, no recall or stop signals are needed because the dog is restrained all the time.

Unfortunately, if you have a HPR dog and you will use it in

all the disciplines he was bred for, you cannot afford to have little, or no obedience. You may get away with it competing in young dog classes, but you will never, I repeat, never make it to the top 10% of elite dogs without proper obedience. To be at the top of every discipline consistently, you need a dog to listen and obey commands. To have a dog hunt in areas with main roads and rail tracks, you need obedience; to ensure your dog does not go after game you may not hunt, you need obedience and discipline. In short if nothing else to keep your dog from getting hurt or killed you need obedience.



As said before, I spent many, many, hours with Jeppe Stridh and I believe in his methods. My own conclusions run parallel to his training and the 95% – 5% rule (praise- correction ratio) is what I stick to, in all my training, not just obedience. As Jeppe clearly states, dogs see a red or green light, there is no amber warning light for them, it is yes or no, keep it simple. A leash is a restraint, when you start training a leash is a great tool but, unless the dog learns that you are a mental and physical leash right out to beyond where the dog can see, you will never have full control. Your "presence" needs to extend to the limit of where you are willing to let the dog go, this is also the limit at where you should work the dog! If you cannot control the dog at 20 meters off leash why, why try and control it at 300 meters?

You are simply allowing the dog to say fuck you!

Mistakes, or inappropriate behaviour, shall be corrected immediately and swiftly, is everything. Do not hang over the dog or extend the corrections, it places more pressure on them and has more negative effect than correction attributes. Also once the correction is done, give the dog space, take a step sideways away from the dog. He will close that gap up by himself, which is exactly what you want! Always, always be friendly with the dog right after any corrections, always!

I have a problem and I have had it for a while, I am working on it and I try to keep it in mind everyday. I want to keep touching Flake to reassure her and calm her down, it is wrong. Your voice ,attitude and general body language should be enough to do all of these things, save the touching and stroking for when you are not training (you are always training, I know).

Flake was a unsure puppy and needed more encouragement than most other dogs. Lucky we got over that quickly, but the touching habit has not been broken by me. A dog is low, or insecure, when his tail is tucked, ears and whole demeanor are low, won't look you in the eyes, keeps exposing his stomach to you and follows behind you. Then you need to be extremely careful and give him all the support you can. Opposed to that, is the strong bullhead dog that needs progressively harder correction until they toe the line.

It is all a balance, fine adjustments in voice, movements and commands both positive and negative should be made all the time, until you find what is best for you and your dog. Repeated useless corrections are only going to make things harder for both you and the dog. When the dog does something right, praise him immediately and excessively, once he understands, tone the praise down bit by bit until a simple click of the your tongue is all the praise the dog needs, I don't even do that anymore a simple nod, and silent good dog

is all she needs to acknowledge me



I get asked how often I train discipline and obedience My answer is always the same ,I don not train it I live it, it never stops. Feed the dog, sit, stay, okay you can eat now. Door open dog still waits for a command to indicate it's okay to go out, finished outside door still open, dog sits and waits for my command to say she can come in. Open her crate in the back of the car, she waits for a command to get in, same for when she gets out. It is a never ending process. Why? The dog keeps evolving, new experiences, new places,new faces and hormones as they age, but they need to understand the same rules always apply.

Now for a crucial part that relates directly to field work and obedience. It is a contradiction, but a vital part of turning a well trained HPR into a bird machine! You cannot have a good field dog if you have too much discipline! The two do not go hand in hand! It is no use having a remote operated dog that will only do what you tell it to do on a field, for a dog to find birds it has to rely on its senses and experience, not on the handler. Here and only here do you need to back off on the obedience! Your dog needs freedom to make the correct choices and gain experience.

Example 1:

Trainer and dog arrive at a field test. Dog has no leash from the moment he gets let out of the vechile. Trainer and dog follow after the pairs being released, dog is never more than a arm length away from the trainer, never. Time comes for the pair to run their beat on the field. Dog is released/sent out

to work the field, runs left 50 meters, switches, runs right 50 meters switches, goes out 30 meters, cuts back to pass a meter from the trainer. This continues for 5 minutes, until the dog is maybe 70 meters deep and 50 meters wide, dog stops looks back at the trainer and waits for a command. Same scenario plays out the whole 15 minute beat, often accompanied by the trainer blowing on the whistle every minute. This dog is focused on getting it right, it is getting it all wrong!

Example 2:

Trainer arrives at a field test, gets out of the vehicle with a leash, is forcing the door open, but also blocking it at the same time until he can slip the leash on the dog. From there he is a weight being dragged after the dog until he and his dog have a beat to run. Leash off dog runs up down, left right finds a hare and 4 hours later the retainer still has not managed to get hold of the dog. This despite blowing himself blue in the face for at least 2 hours on a whistle that has never worked on the dog.

They may be two extreme examples, but they are real examples of both too much and too little obedience and both end the same way, no birds no score.

There is so much more I want to write on this topic, but it is better to find a Legend and train with him.

While testing dogs may be hard, hunting with them is going to multiply any lack of or excess of obedience. No matter how much of a simulation you do while training, it is nothing compared to the real thing. I have picked up more mistakes under high pressure hunting situations than I ever will simply training, if your HPR is just going to do the circuit of trails you have it easy. If however you are going to use the true potential of the dog and take yourself and your HPR to the limit of your and their abilities, make sure you have a solid foundation in obedience and discipline. *You cannot let*

go something you never had, you can only let something go if you have it, simple rule for obedience and discipline.

[More on fieldwork here.](#)

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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 (Retrieves 2)– by T. Mostert

A few more things I learned from Jeppe and Arne on training a dog to retrieve before I moved on to training for water work. Some dogs will try and move around you once they have retrieved the game (or the dummy), almost as if they want to circle around you, do not allow this. You can stop the dog from doing this by training against a fence, or with a natural barrier behind you, a corner fence works best for this. If you do not have a fence available, wait for the dog to come to you and once he is 2-3 meters away from you, coming towards, take a quick side step in the direction the dog is drifting and give the sit command. You have to be quick and precise, otherwise he will keep drifting and still circle you. The same goes for a hard charging dog that likes to pass you and then turns back. The dog should come in to your left, sit and present the dummy or game. Lots of folks do not mind if the dog sits or stands with the delivery, I want my dog to be planted and steady. I also want to be able to stop my dog on

the way in without her dropping the dummy or game, she should sit and wait for me to give her the come command, same goes for sending her out. Stop, sit and then I can send her left, right, back, or over a obstacle.



Flake and the fox

On a side note, I want my dog to present the dummy or game with his head up, with the dog looking at me and not at the ground! Some game will be too heavy for the dog to do this, but even ducks can be presented this way. Bo Nilsson (great retriever trainer) gave me this little tip. Once the dog is on the way back to you, bend down in a kneeling position, arms open and call the dog in, be friendly! As the dog reaches the 2-3 metres mark stand up quickly. This will not only make the dog lift his head, but also help him to sit.

Do not ever lean over a young dog, or tower over a young dog when you start training retrieving or holds! Doing so, you are applying pressure on the dog mentally, they hate it and it is one of the main reasons dogs drop dummies or game at their handlers feet, or just out of reach! Coming in should always, always, be a positive experience for the dog! have seen countless people scream and repeat the command for the dog to pick up a dummy or game they have dropped at the handlers feet, it is utterly useless and creates even more pressure and negative connection to retrieving. If Flake drops a dummy(or game) on the way in, or at my feet, she already knows she is wrong, I do not need to say anything, or repeat a command, what I do is take a step or three away from the dropped object

and from her, immediately relieving the pressure on her. 100% of the time she will pick it up again and deliver it as it should be.

Keep in mind this is only training, hunting is a whole different thing where the excitement and pressure is multiplied 2000 folds. If you have never seen a dog simply coming apart on a duck hunt because there is 100's of shots going off and ducks raining down on and around the dog, you have not exposed the dog enough. More on that another time.

Points to ponder

1. *Casting dummies in the beginning is a NO NO, sit the dog down, walk away place the dummy, walk back to the dog, give it a line and if you are sure it has the line give the retrieve command.*
2. *Never start a young dog on a retrieve if they have not taken the line (= understood they are being casted in a straightforward line), start short, 5 meters.*
3. *Do use a long lead when you start your young dog retrieving.*
4. *Use clear and short commands. I have different ones for a simple pick-up and a long retrieve, I use the same command for back as for out.*
5. *Always be positive when the dog is getting it right, to the point that you excite the dog! As you progress, tone it down. Dogs learn by positively reinforcing their behaviour!*
6. *Retrieving only on sight will become a problem if you do not challenge the dog to use its nose.*
7. *Bird dogs drift more than pure retrieving breeds, give them a bit more freedom.*
8. *Break every training session down, from the sit to the delivery, work on them as separate exercises.*
9. *Your dog will try and break and fetch the dummy without a command, if you are not fast enough to stop it, keep your mouth shut. Never stop a young dog going*

on to a retrieve unless you are 100% sure you can. Do praise the dog if it delivers the fetch correctly!
10. You will laugh and you will cry, suck it up.

HPR breeds are not for everyone,



Flake and English Pointers

multiple disciplines, with contradictory commands and outcomes, phase many owners. I do not expect my dog to compete against a pure retriever when it comes to retrieving, but I train her with pure retrievers and she will be on par with any average pure retriever any day I do not expect her to run like a English Pointer, but I run her with English Pointers and she may not go as wide and as deep, but she goes just as hard. HPR dogs are not the best at everything, but they are the best choice for everything. I cannot say this enough, you are investing time and effort into training a dog, make the wise choice and get a Old School Legend to help you!

No clickers, no treats just respect, discipline and loyalty.

[Click here if you want to read about waterwork.](#)

UNCAA – ST. Hubert Academy Field Trial

UNCAA – Accademia di S. Uberto Pointing Dogs Trial

Last June I was invited to a trial organized by the [UNCAA](#) (National Union of Appennines and Alps Hunters) – ST. Hubert Academy, but the trial was later cancelled and re-scheduled for September. The grounds and the birds changed as well, the trial was going to be held at the Ruino Estate, on the highest hills of Oltrepo' Pavese , and the dogs were going to be assessed on grey partridges, no longer on quails Those who know me, are well aware of how much I love Ruino as I spent about eight years regularly shooting and handling English Setters there. Ruino's grounds are perfect for pointing dogs, and they are wide and open enough to make any dogs belonging to a British pointing breed happy.



Ruino – Villa Alta

In the e-mail I received, there were only a few details on the trial. It was created specifically for those associated to the UNCAA-St. Hubert Academy, nevertheless it was open to everyone. As I did not know what was going to happen exactly, I forwarded the invitation only to a few people, next time I will be more generous!

By choosing to be there, I gathered more details. The trial was open to all the pointing dogs, and most of the competitors were HPRs, you will soon understand why. Dogs were requested to behave like in a ENCI/FCI official trial but, big difference, eliminating any dogs was not on the menu. Major or eliminating faults were going to be written down but, in some cases, especially if the dog was a young one, the judge could decide to let him continue his run, in order to assess his natural qualities. The trial's aim, indeed, was not to nominate a winner but to see, assess and describe each dog natural qualities. At the end of the trial, each dog was going to receive a written evaluation (like it is done in any FCI trials) and a score. Scoring had German hunting trials as a model, this explains why we had so many German HPRs competing, some of which had already been tested at VJP, HZP. VGP, German Puppy Derby and Solms). As you might see looking at the evaluation form, natural qualities were considered very important(Ferma = Point; Cerca, impegno, passione, avidità, movimento e stile = Quartering, dedication, passion, avidity, movement and style; Correttezza del cane e collegamento con il conduttore = Obedience/training and connection/cooperation with the handler).



Perdix perdix (Grey Partridge)

Organizers were expecting 10-15 dogs to compete but 25 showed up: The dogs had different ages (many were around one year old) and very different backgrounds and training. There were some experienced dogs who regularly attend trials and dogs, without formal training, which are used for rough shooting exclusively. According to the judge Ivan Torchio (whose mentor had been Giacomo Griziotti), all the dogs, including the best one, need to explore the ground with more “logic”. He explained the difference between exploring the ground during a “quail” trial (dog should quarter very regularly (left/right), in a very geometric pattern and not miss any ground) and during a “wild bird” trial (the dog has more freedom but still...) and concluded saying that all the dogs he saw need to be refined under this aspect. Some dogs proved to be highly skilled and perfectly trained, they waited for the handler on point, roaded on command without being touched, remained steady, dropped and came back when asked to and so on...) others were wilder, some of them were very young and some others paid

for their handler's lack of skills. Several humans, indeed, made awful mistakes: a man roaded and produced in behalf of his dog (then he-the man – literally ran after the bird...); another one insisted on making the bird fly by beating the ground; some kept yelling at the dog... A few handlers asked if they could keep a collar and a check cord on the dog for safety purposes, or if they could pick up the dog before the bird flushed: they were given permission to do so but, of course, this was taken into account in the final evaluation. Silent and "professional" handling, instead, though not compulsory, was appreciated. Two pups wanted to enter the trial as well and they were asked to find a planted quail while on a check cord. They both found it and the GWP was so careful and concentrated that she remained steady to wing, without having ever been trained for that.



ATTESTATO DI PARTECIPAZIONE

Prova su selvaggina liberata senza sparo

Data: 11/9/016 Partecipante Sig. DIPALMA ROSSILLA

Nome del cane: BRIONY Razza: SETTER Età: _____

Turno: _____ Ora: _____

Punteggio:

Ferma (da 1 a 10) 10

Cerca, impegno, passione, avidità, movimento, stile (da 1 a 8): 8

Correttezza del cane e collegamento con il conduttore (da 1 a 5): 5

TOTALE PUNTEGGIO: 23

Relazione:

PRESTAZIONE AL MASSIMO LIVELLO COME PRESA D'INTERNO E UTILIZZO RAGIONATO DEL VENTO INTELLIGENZA NELLA CERCA MA NON SUPPORTATA DA UTILIZZO LOGICO DEL TERRAENO BASE DELLA PREPARAZIONE MA NON UBBIDIENZA AUTOMATICA NECESSARIA NELLA PREPARAZIONE PIU' URGENTE - QUALITA' GUSTISSIMA

Briony

The grounds were those typical of the High Appennines, alfalfa

fields, furrow fields, bushes and so on. It was very hot, late in the morning we reached temperatures above 30 degrees, wind was weak and kept changing its direction making the dogs' job very difficult. Each dog was given ample opportunities to find birds, but a few failed and some, given the difficult conditions, eventually bumped into birds. The organizers plan to have this trial again next summer as it is a very nice way to keep an eye on the most experienced dogs, and to introduce shooters and pet owners to trials.

Briony did very well. She found a grey partridge and a quail. Produced nicely and remained steady. She got the highest possible score and the judge wrote that her run was at the highest levels for quartering, speed and use of the ground/wind... He would have liked more refined castings (left and right) and that obedience could be more automatic (indeed it was me telling him that she dropped the second time I whistled, not the first!). He concluded saying that she is an extremely high quality dog.

Handlers Opinions:

Sara Orlandi (GSP): This was the second trial organized by the Accademia di St. Uberto that I attended. The previous one was the 24 hours deer tracking trial (FCI recognized) organized in Cecima, this time we are in Ruino... another wonderful place! It was great to see my dog working with such a determination and then receive such a positive written critique by "The Professor" Ivan Torchio! We later had a very tasty lunch with much game and we share opinions on dogs while eating all together. I am likely to show up again at the next trial!

Daniele Malacalza (Spinone Italiano): I felt at ease, people were nice, friendly and funny. Ivan proved to be extremely skilled, more than I expected. Dogs were evaluated differently than they use to be during ordinary trials.

Note: St.Hubert Academy does not take its name after ST.Hubert

type trials (as some misunderstood). It is school (hence the name academy) which organizes classes on shooting (including woodcock counting), stalking, deer tracking, hound handling, wildlife management and game keeping through Italy. Classes are open to everybody wishing to gain expertise in these fields, some of the classes offer certification which are officially recognized by the Italian government and by several EU countries.

When dog training meets pragmatism

There are instances in which you need someone reliable and pragmatic by your side. It is not only soldiers on battlefields who need mates full of practical sense and decisiveness, dog people need them as well. Some dog people, especially those with red hair who get lost in training philosophies and follow shamans, need these people more than others.

After religiously following [White Feather](#) for more than six months, Briony decided that it was time for a change, she wanted less discipline and more freedom, I could hardly find the balance. WF training grounds, furthermore, were no longer available as the alfalfa and other crops were growing quickly. No other suitable training ground was available: spring was coming with its crops which were going to make impossible to run a dog anywhere. My only option was to go to some private areas, called Zone B or Zone C, in which dogs are allowed to run all year round, there I went. My first training sessions were short, I wanted to play on the safe side, until one morning, C. showed up accusing me to train at a “snail speed”.

I first met C. in **1999**, I just had to say goodbye to Massachusetts for good, my former dog had died and I decided it was time to treat myself with an English Setter. After all I had wanted one since I was a 10 years old child. Given my unhealthy tendency to save the world and rescue those in need, I had absolutely no interest in a puppy: I wanted a rescue and I got one. I fell for a sweet and gentle orange belton male who reciprocated my feelings immediately and with too much enthusiasm: after eight hours in my house he had already developed a severe form of separation anxiety. I knew he had been poorly socialized, kept kenneled for three years and then trained (aka abused) by a professional trainer. I knew he had all the reasons to behave like he did but...living with him was hell! I follow the manual: undertook a behavioral therapy; enrolled him in an obedience class; started him as a search & rescue dog and even gave him antidepressants, improvements, however, were small and slow. His breeder, happy to know the dog had been safely re-homed, gave me his pedigree and I realized Socks was meant to be a working dog, he even had a great ancestry. He was my first "gundog" but, my previous experience with other breeds told me that, MAYBE, letting him do the job he was born for, could have helped him to overcome all his fears.



Socks at 13 years old retrieving a pheasant

At the time, however, I had no idea of how an English Setter was supposed to work; of how I should have handled him and of what I needed to teach him. I read books, which is what I do when I need to learn something, but I wanted to meet someone who could provide a face-to-face support. Given Socks' behavioural problems, I could not board him at a professional trainer's kennel and... professional trainers boarding their pupils seemed to be the only people training English Setters. I tried to ask some shooters for advice, but none seemed to take seriously a young and inexperienced woman with a rescued ES. Women with English Setters in Italy are still very rare in 2016, imagine how the situation could have been in 1999: it was, and still is, a male dominated and male oriented world! Opportunities, however, often show up when you least expect them and, Monica, a woman training GWPs in sunny Tuscany, phoned to tell me she had the "men" for me, and that they were located just a few miles away from my house. To make the long story short, Monica contacted [two famous drahthaar](#) (GWPs)

handlers and trainers and convinced them to help me. One of them could not offer any support at the time (he did later), while the other one was brave enough to accept to work with us.



For about two months, I trained at least twice a week with C., who was already a quite successful trainer and handler in Italy and in Germany. We worked mainly on recall, but he taught me some very basic things I would have never imagined at the time, such as how to use the whistle and how to keep the dog focused on me by changing directions. Socks improved, and I later continued to work him by myself and for himself: I knew he was not going to become a great shooting dog, I simply wanted him to enjoy life and become more sure of himself. I think I last trained him with C. on quails in 2004, I then moved to work with other setters on the hills and we never had other chances to train together, We always kept in touch though and in the years, I sent him some “clients” who, together with other dogs he worked with, gave him the opportunity to become one of the most successful HPRs trainers

I know.

C. is now a well known “pro”, specialized in training GWP's for German Hunting Tests (VJP/HZP/VGP) and personal rough shooting dogs, I was not surprised to meet him on the training ground dealing with a GSP who used to eat and swallow quails. I watched his pupil running, and saw she retrieving the quail correctly after the shoot, so I asked the gamekeeper if C. had already solved the problem. “

“No... The dog never eats the quail in his presence, just with the owner. It should be a matter of body language and stance, look at him.... But he needs the dog to make the mistake to correct her... He is the best trainer working on my ground”.

I kept watching and nothing happened on that day, until it came my turn to run the dog. “Let her go” – yelled someone behind my back “- but when you whistle be firm, and yell at her if needed. The key to freedom is control”, easier said than done! That was just the preface.



Let her go...

When C. Found out I was training Briony for grouse trials, he started to behave as if he wanted to be part of the project. We kept meeting on the training ground by chance but, each time we met, he had some good advice for me. He never tried to train Briony in my place, nor to ditch the [Shaman](#) methods, he simply intervened, firmly and pragmatically, to speed up my training and to teach me to be more sure of myself and of my training. I think he somehow trained me: he was the person who forced me to remove the check cord and the same one who encouraged me to forget quails and start testing steadiness using partridges and pheasants. He also encouraged me to trust the dog more and to run her on other grounds to see how she would react to different birds in different places. He watched all my moves and all my handling, corrected my mistakes and created new, more advanced (that was smart!), settings in which to test Briony. He minimized my concerns on rabbits and even lent me an expensive bird launcher. Well to be honest he lent that but... recommended me several times to switch it off after each use and... not to loose it (as if it were small!). So, well, thank you C. for being one of those experienced and helpful people who made grouse trials possible for me and Briony.