

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!](#)

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.](#)

There is no off season, just time off- by Tok Mostert

Spring is drawing ever closer and our field season has pretty much closed down. It has been a long hard season for Flake, many hours, many miles and many birds. Off days were non existing: we always had a trial or a hunt going on, that was in between the training.

A season like we had takes its toll on a dog, mentally and physically. No matter how well conditioned the dog may be at the start of a season, he is likely to lose weight during the peak of the season. Just like losing weight, a dog will also lose some discipline, it cannot be helped, or prevented,

unless you cut way back on hunting time. As said before, an over disciplined dog does not hunt well, neither does a dog without any discipline. No matter at what level you start at, discipline levels will deteriorate during a field season. Prolonged periods of time that the dog spends away from you naturally make the dog rely more on himself, this is normal and part of the learning curve for a dog, but it also brings complications. Spotting it is pretty easy if you had a baseline for discipline when the season started. Tell tale signs are the need to repeat commands, the dog taking a extra second to respond to the whistle, or ignoring commands completely.

Fixing the issues that came up during the season cannot be done effectively without resting the dog and taking a step back from hunting or trials. Most of us cannot afford to do this without missing out on many opportunities to hunt with the dog. All we can do is try and limit the amount we lose during the season. What compounds things even more is that there is no real off season. Once our field trials end, along with hunting, our water training and tests start, so does our tracking tests. It is common that a dog does well during the first year and progressively slides away the year after if attention is not paid to the issues that came up. How do we fix this? The short answer is to go back to basics, some will have to go way back and others may start in the middle, how do we know this, a simple but extensive way of judging where your dog is at, is to do a "end of season" evaluation. A simple series of "tests" with increasing levels of difficulty to establish a baseline from which to start and to highlight the areas that need more focused training.



Tok & Flake!

How do you establish a baseline

1. Control the environment, leash, no leash, fenced area, unfenced area, no distractions, many distractions.
2. Here is the only place and time you DO want the dog to fail.
3. Keep it simple, heal, sit, stay, come and stop. Increase the time or distance or both gradually until the dog becomes uneasy, that is your limit.
4. Balls, caps, dummies can be used to distract or entice the dog into breaking, do not let them retrieve anything, you are not evaluating that part of their work now.
5. Use other people and or dogs to distract your dog, see how your dog keeps contact with you.
6. This is not the time to correct the dog, this is a evaluation.
7. Make notes of the problem areas, there will be more than one.
8. You will have picked up bad habits too, focus on yourself and see what habits you need to break.
9. If you have to, break up the evaluation over several days, but focus on every aspect you can.
10. Be prepared to be disappointed.

Personally I will be taking a break from any type of training but discipline as soon as our season is completely over. I have estimated that I will need 2 weeks of intensive obedience training before I will see a noticeable difference in

sharpness, that is for both the dog and myself. It will take at least 6 to 8 weeks before I will have Flake back to her pre season level of obedience. This is with training at least 45 to 60 minutes per day on obedience only, dogs don't make mistakes when they are fresh, they make them when they are tired, mentally.

Be confident, be firm and never forget that you and the dog should enjoy what you are doing.

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Too much of a gundog – by Tok Mostert

As I walked through the door of the large gunshop, the familiar aroma of gun oil mixed with freshly ground coffee filled my sense of smell. The well stocked bookshelves drew my attention and I headed to the dog training section, maybe hoping to find a quick fix to training a better gundog. With a pile of books under my arms, I settled in the plush leather couch to learn a thing or two, I did learnt something, but not what I wanted.

The generic layout is one thing, but every chapter in every book that covers selecting a puppy may as well have been plagiarism, it is way too one dimensional and generic. Pages and pages of breeders and breeds, what dog does what and how to select your puppy. You can speak to several top trainers

and breeders and you will get a diverse opinion on how to select a pup, almost everyone has their own way of picking a dog from a litter. The basics is and always will be, reputable breeder and pure bloodlines. That is a good baseline start, but I have seen untypical dogs that do not adhere to the breed standard hunt circles around the show pony dogs, the same for breed royalty.



Flake

There is no guarantee that even with the best breeder and the best litter, you will get what you want in a dog, besides the dogs personality there is one essential thing that is going to determine whether the dog turns out to be what you expected, YOU!

As a ex Professional Hunter I'll tell you we used the term over gunned when a client arrived with a large caliber rifle that he could not shoot well, it happens more often than I like, but too much gun is a bad thing, just like too much dog is. The very first consideration anyone should have when selecting a breed or puppy should be their ability or level of experience with training a dog. Hard dogs will find every single weakness you have and exploit it to the fullest! Many, many handlers eventually turn to the e-collar for help out of despair, they should have made it easy on themselves and

picked a dog that could suit their ability. I fully understand the wish, need or desire to have a huge, hard working and strong male dog, but can you handle his stubborn manner and contain and channel his exuberance? Anyone that has ever trained two dogs from the same litter, knows that the two individuals need individual training methods and adjustments.

Take a long hard look at yourself and acknowledge your ability and skills, then select a puppy to suite your ability. A first time owner that knows nothing about training dogs is far better off with a mild mannered dog than a wild spirited dog. Nothing wrong with either, as long as they match your ability.

Too much dog for your ability will simply frustrate and infuriate you, along with making you negative. It is also the reason why some handlers only train what the dog is good at, a sure way of wasting the dogs potential and true ability. Running too much dog that does not listen or obey you, is far worse than running a mild dog that follows your commands and responds to your instructions. You are also more likely to succeed on field and retrieving with the mild dog, blood tracking being the exception were the hard dog may be better.

Personally I believe even a average breeder can deliver a top dog, it all depends on the handler and trainer. My method may not be conventional or rational, but it works for me. Choose wisely, train smartly and hunt well!

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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.

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Gun Proofing your Dog by Tok Mostert

Introducing a dog to gunfire is and will remain a critical element in his training. Many good dogs have been ruined by a wrong use of gunfire and some develop problems later that are not easy to solve. Having a gun shy dog is frustrating and leads down a long path of re-training and sometimes a dog that cannot be hunted at all. The dog becomes so frightened by gunfire that when he does scent a bird he will avoid pointing, as this will lead to a shot or even more shots being fired.

I have a somewhat different approach to training my dogs, gundog or lapdog all receive the same training. Once the puppy has developed a bond with me and has settled in well in our

home, but most of all, trusts me I start "Boom Proofing" him. Even though our lap dogs have never been around gunfire, they react the same way (or do not react at all) to loud noises or fireworks, exactly like a gundog. As said above, the puppy must trust you and understand that you offer protection and support, both mentally and physically. I start by "scaring" them a little by dropping a magazine flat on the floor, it should make a slapping sound, not a overly loud banging sound. I do this when the puppy least expects this, a surprise if you will. The natural reaction is for them to scare, run or hide, sometimes both. Here two things are extremely important, your response and the timing of your response. I respond immediately, the puppy has no time to figure out what made the noise, I immediately give both verbal and physical support to the dog. *"Come girl, oh there you are, what a good girl"*. I also offer my physical support by kneeling down and opening my arms to the dog, inviting him to me while giving verbal support. 99% of the time the dog responds by coming to me immediately, I then heap praise on the dog. As said before, be overly friendly! This is a negative-positive training technique. Always, always respond the same way, immediately, positively and friendly!

Eventually you will have to move up to heavier books! I go around slapping the outside of cupboards ,doors and any flat surfaces too. My response and the dogs always stays the same, eventually they come straight into me at the slap or bang sound, this is what I am aiming for. I do not stop there however, someday I may sneak up behind them and grab a leg or tail (I never hold onto the part I grab, it is a light touch) once again my response is the same, immediate, positive and friendly. Eventually the dog will respond positively immediately, even as you start your response, this is what I aim for. Do not overdo this, every other day or twice a week, once a day, is enough! I still do this and my dogs are between 1 and 7 years old.

Now please understand that to you it may sound like I am

terrorizing my dogs, far from it, the incorrect reaction by the trainer is what would be categorized as terrorizing the dog.

Keep in mind we expose dogs to many "surprise" noises, doors slammed, cars backfired, plates and glasses breaking, fireworks etc there are thousands of examples.

A dog that is not accustomed, nor trained, for this often has a hard time when things go wrong. Dogs hang or impale themselves on fences, run through glass doors or run in front of cars every year with the fireworks, my dogs either look for birds or lie sleeping through it. As said before in another article, break down your training, a dog should be able to retrieve before you introduce gunfire like training with the retrieving training. I start with a cast and clap of the hands, move on to a cast and blank pistol (plastic revolver with very low charge caps). When you start with the blank pistol it is a good idea to have another person doing the cast and the shooting, Shoot 10-12 meters away from the dog, keep the dog steady and offer a lot of verbal support. If the dog shows discomfort at the shot, move further away with the blank pistol, if it does not bother the dog, move closer. Do this for every type of "gunfire" you introduce,. 22,9mm and shotgun should be started at least 20-25 meters away from the dog, further is better. Increase the caliber progressively, do not go from blank pistol to gauge 12 shotgun directly!



Blank pistol first

Read the dog, if he is uncomfortable offer more verbal, or physical support, if you do the blank pistol training right, the dog will already know that following the shot comes a retrieve, which you made a fun thing during the retrieving trainings, that is if you followed my advice. Once you get to the shotgun with the cast and shoot, your dog should be steady to the shot and cast, never let the dog break at the shot, never. Go back a step without the shot to get the dog steady again.

As said clearly before, hunting amplifies any little problems the dog has 1000 times. Get it right in training and you will have less disappointments during hunting (problems always come up during hunting).

Keep in mind that any negative inputs from you after the shot is going to affect the dog, you may not even realise you are being negative! It only takes three of such sessions to turn a dog gun shy, always, always end on a positive note when training, go back a step if you have to! Remember to have fun

when training, the dog must enjoy what he is doing, and his desire to please you must be greater than his fear to fail. It is so easy to get caught up in getting one thing right that you forget it is only a small piece of a incredible dog you are building, see the bigger picture!

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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 (Retrieves 2)– by T. Mostert

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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 pair 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.](#)

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Retrieves)– by T. Mostert

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Part 2: We are Losing Legendary Methods (Retrieves) – by T. Mostert

Arne played a major role in training Flake for water retrieves, but before a dog can retrieve in water, he has to be able to do this perfectly on land! So, let's take a step back. Too many folks have opinions on which method is the best, *force fetch* or the *natural fetch* training method. Dogs react to movement: you throw a ball and the dog wants to chase, or catch, or fetch it (that's why hare and rabbit are so hard to proof against), movement is a trigger, it is a natural thing for them. To me it breaks down to what works for a particular dog and I use a hybrid system between natural retrieve and a forced fetch.

Both, or a mix of the systems, however, are useless if you cannot have your dog off leash sitting by your side without moving to a cast, or a false cast (I use false casts to steady a dog). One thing to keep in mind is that with a force fetch the dog will retrieve everything you tell him to retrieve, whereas a natural retriever will, at some point, refuse to take a retrieve, especially to pick up predatory animals.



Casting Flake

Flake would sit on command and I would start with a wooden dummy wrapped in a towel in front of her, sometimes getting her a bit excited, or worked up. Some dogs need encouragement, others need to be held firm. On command I would give her the dummy in her mouth and tell her to stand steady. To release the dummy, I would simply say thank you and take it. Sounds pretty easy doesn't it? Well, it's not, I just skipped over hours of frustration and swearing (silent swearing). Make up your own mind on what works for you and stick to it. Once she takes the dummy there is no chewing or playing, this is not an option. A lot of praise (95% praise -5% correction rule) and stroking her under the chin while she holds the dummy. Some folks say never pat the head, as it encourages them to bite into the dummy, hard mouth dogs do not need any encouragement, but I can't say yes or no, because I have not had a hard mouth dog.

Start slow, 3-4 seconds is a good hold for a young dog and work your way up to a time that suites you, I get bored after

a minute. If Flake helds for a minute, I would start walking her on leash with the dummy in her mouth, only a few steps at first, then stop, sit and *thank you*. I did not let her drop the dummy into my hand, they tend to do that when your hand goes to the dummy. Only after I say *thank you*, she must release. I also took time to falsely take the dummy away without a *thank you*, to make sure she understood the whole process.

A few reminders:

1. *Have fun training, if it is work for you or the dog, you are doing it wrong.*
2. *Never end a training session with a failure, go back a step until the dog gets it right and finish there.*
3. *A dogs mind gets tired before the body does, keep sessions short but focused.*
4. *Dogs do not speak human language, but "fuck you" is "fuck you" even in dog language, do not ever let a dog say fuck you and leave it there, you will fail again and again.*
5. *Sometimes you need to take a step back to go forward.*
6. *If you get it right all the time, you are not doing it right.*
7. *Even a bad trainer can teach you something, even if it is only the difference between good and bad. Take what you need from a training session and leave what you do not appreciate.*
8. *A good dog will make a bad trainer look good, a good trainer will make a bad dog look good.*
9. *It is never about the quantity of time, it is about the quality of the time.*
10. *Protect your dog from dogs that have no discipline, it builds trust.*

Final few words, a HPR dog does play games that are not some form of training. I smoke, and every time I went out of the house to light up Flake would follow.



Thanking Flake

I would send her out in the garden tell her to sit and throw a tennis ball at her to catch, simple innocent game? Wrong! The next time I sent her out in the field to search for a retrieve she sat down and waited for me to cast that bloody ball! Took me three weeks to break that habit I created.

Think, think, think, structure everything and plan it, then stand in front of the mirror and repeat it, if it still makes sense teach the dog. This brings me back to Legends like Arne, get help we are all blind to our own mistakes, even if we see mistakes done by other handlers or dogs!

[To read the second part of the article click here.](#)

We are Losing Legendary Methods 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.](#)

Part 2: We are losing legendary methods (Tracking)

By the time Flake was 8 months old, I could do a left or right

retrieve on command, I could stop her on the way out to one retrieve and switch her to the other, Jeppe Stridh made extra effort with us, I figure it paid off. It was time to get her to track blood so we could work our way to getting her qualified as a Swedish Blood Tracking Champion. Time to call on another Legend in the HPR world, Arne Johansson. Arne flies under the radar, no Facebook, no Internet and he seldom carries a cell phone. What he lacks in visibility, he makes up for in pure experience and technique.

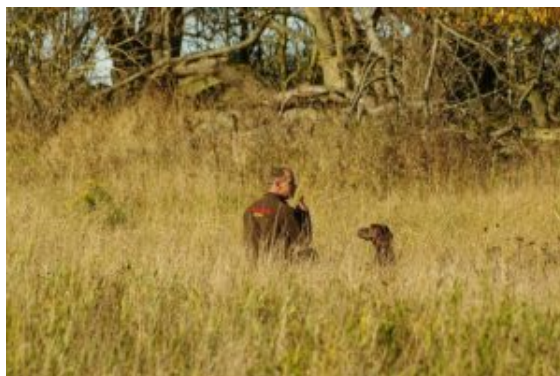
A few things Arne drilled into me:

- 1. Never set the dog up to fail when they are starting out.*
- 2. Never use too much blood with any dog, especially young dogs.*
- 3. Let the dog do the work, keep your mouth shut and your eyes open.*
- 4. Read the dog.*
- 5. Don't let the dog work fast, slow is fast when it comes to tracking.*
- 6. Let the dog figure it out for himself.*
- 7. When the dog succeeds, drown it with praise, even if it was frustrating with mistakes made.*
- 8. The dog can only do what you expect him to do if he understands what you want.*
- 9. Heat is the enemy.*
- 10. Do not over train on blood!*

Most important, trust the dog, once you are on the track you are simply holding a long line, the dog is the one working.

Flake became a blood tracking champion eventually. I was not expecting much on that day, it was hot and she was not 100%, I was sweating, she was panting, heat and stress, I guess. She never quitted, I could read her every moves and hesitations, I could see when she was on the track and when she lost it, I gave her lead and time to find it again. I was pretty sure we were going to run out of time or just not make the cut, but it

did not worry me, no matter what score we would get that day, I would have been happy. Simply because I knew she gave her best and that her and I worked as a team and we understood each other.



Flake

The same basics apply for rabbit drags, it is essential that the dog understands the difference between blood and drags. Get clear separate commands for each of these disciplines! Always start a drag by sitting the dog down and walking over to the drag start, the dog should watch you, kneel down, point at the drag start or scratch around in the dirt or leaves around the edge of the start, get the dog to focus on the spot. Go back pick up the long lead and once at the start, point it to the dog, bend down if you have to and give the dog the command to track. Congratulations you are now a spectator on a lead, keep your mouth shut and focus on the dog!

While training do not let the dog off the lead every time! Once every 5th or 6th time is enough! Only do this if you are 100% certain the dog is working the drag and not the wind, bird dogs love to work the wind, here it is wrong. Once again slow is fast here. There is no time that passes slower than when during a test you slip the lead after 5 meters and you stand and wait for the dog to return with or without game in their mouths. Part 2 will continue with water retrieves and how I trained the Flake to take a dummy, bird and rabbit in the mouth.

Arne has devoted much of his life to helping others train their dogs and still tests dogs especially for blood tracking, he has seen and done it all a thousand times. Not only does he test and help train for drags and water retrieves he also makes his water and forest available for us who don't have testing grounds. Arne has trained double champion dogs and I still pick his brain every time we train with him. The bucket loads of knowledge and experience is what makes Arne a Legend. I am blessed to call him a friend. Find a old school gentleman like Arne , time is short and life throws you a curve ball every now and then.

[If you want to learn on retrieves click here.](#)

We are Losing Legendary Methods 1 – by T. Mostert

Brief intro: here at Dogs & Country we are often looking to publish good articles, articles dog people can benefit from. I (Rossella) was therefore very happy when Tok Mostert, from Sweden, accepted to share his writings with us and our readers. At the moment, unfortunately, I do not have time to translate them in Italian, but if anyone wants to help out with the translation, I'd be happy to share that as well ☐

Part 1: We are losing legendary methods

Two years ago I came into the hunting dogs world, I knew nothing, I could not make a dog sit or stay, much less retrieve, track or hunt birds. Sure I tried and watched videos and read as much as I could, but it is not the same. I saw a man handle a dog in the field one day, and I understood that I needed help. Needed may be the wrong word, craved is more in

line with what I felt.



Flake in Sweden...

You ask opinions on trainers and you get maybe 10 different opinions on every trainer, good, bad, asshole you name it, for everyone that had a good thing to say, there was 10 others with bad things to say. Screw it, I thought, I will find the right help by simply looking at whose dog I see doing what I want my dog to do and ask who help to train him or her. I did not ask for opinions anymore, I set a goal and found a trainer that suited this goal. When I wanted my dog to have discipline, I went to a man called Jeppe Stridh. Almost two years later, I still go to him, because a dog is never finished, you evolve, the dog evolves, you want to test the limits and see how far the dog will go, and most of the time it is the handler that holds the dog back by not challenging him more. This and reinforcing the old commands again and again is a never ending journey, get use to it and enjoy it.

A few things I remember, sure I forgot many:

- 1. Train the owner to train the dog, much harder than it sounds.*
- 2. Learn how to read your dog.*
- 3. 95% Praise, 5% Correction, always time the correction perfectly.*
- 4. Make sure you understand the commands before you try teaching the dog, otherwise keep your mouth shut.*
- 5. A collar and a leash are restraints, they can only control a dog by your side. Respect and trust are what*

makes an invisible leash that stretches as far as your voice, or whistle, carries.

- 6. Do not train with a attitude, dogs do not respond well to assholes (yeah, I heard that a lot).*
- 7. If your dog keeps making the same mistake you are doing something wrong, not the dog.*
- 8. If you are always doing something wrong, get help.*
- 9. Different dogs need different touches while training.*
- 10. No matter how good is the trainer you are working with, if you do not put in the effort yourself, you are wasting your time and a good dog!*

I can write a hundred more points to ponder, but that's not the point.



Flake goes to school

Men like Jeppe are few and far in between and we are not taking the opportunities to listen and learn from them. They are the here and now Legends of the dog world that we need to learn from, so all that knowledge will not disappear one day. Not to make us better, but to keep future generations at the top of the game. Yes, dog training evolves and people keep reinventing the wheel, but in the end its results that count and he is one of the Legends who's methodology always works if applied right.

Books, DvD's and video clips are great, but they lack the essential personal touch that a true Legend brings to training a dog. One Legend's method may not fit you or your dog, but there is always one who's method will.

The most common comments I hear from judges these days is that dogs lack discipline. This is where I started with Flake and thus Part 1, Part 2 will cover retrieving and [tracking](#) with a Legend that flies under the radar.