

OUTDOORS

by Lee Wulff

SPORTSMAN: WHO DESERVES THE NAME?

The old-timer was talking, "Anytime you keep score and have a referee, it's not a sport, it's a game. If you need a referee to keep you from breaking the rules, you're not a sportsman, you're someone who plays games. But a lot of folks don't seem to realize that anymore.

"In my day," he went on, "sports meant outdoor sports. We had our own strict code of ethics and we were our own judges. Not one of my friends who considered himself a sportsman would ever deliberately foul-hook a fish or shoot a partridge on the ground, even if it were the only fish or bird he'd seen all week. And it wasn't necessarily the one who caught the most or the biggest fish who was most admired.

"But nowadays, I guess you're considered a sportsman if you indulge in any competitive exercise, even if you're the guy the TV camera caught slugging another player. Why, if you own a horse that wins a big race, you're a sportsman even if you're afraid to ride it yourself."

The old-timer was right. My 1913 dictionary defines a sportsman as: A person who engages in field sports; also, a hunter of big game; a participant who competes fairly, playing the game for its own sake and not necessarily for the prize awarded.

But we of the field sports have lost the exclusivity of our fine old name. Maybe we deserved to lose it. Too many people who go afield today seem to be looking for instant success. Too many tend to measure success by the reward, showing no shame when they break the game laws or the sportsman's code to get it.

What are we doing about it? Hunter safety courses for beginners are stressing the ethics of the sport. Fishing schools are teaching proper conduct to anglers. More and more anglers are following the sporting procedure of releasing good fish for someone else to enjoy catching later on. Society as a whole, by its strong indictment of unscrupulous hunters, is causing those who truly love the sport to work hard for better control of transgressors.

It will be a long road back but, hopefully, we'll be able to reestablish the fine image we once had. Then those of the field sports can proudly call themselves "sportsmen" and I guess those who play games can call themselves "gamesters."



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Gun Dogs

Part IV: Continental Gun Dog Personalities The Worlds of Three Dogmen

BY BILL TARRANT

We're dog-gone to England and Ireland to meet a trio of award-winning trainers

Mottled gray, like a litter of blue merle pups, the rain-clouds romp on high. Now, one breaks loose to race ahead, showing daylight.

But those clouds left behind find leg for chase. They close the gap to block the sun and again the land tones gray.

That's the way with Ireland in July.

On the moors of Ballyfin, I walk head-down to mind my step. Now I look up. John Nash stands on the moor's lee-hip, arm held high, signaling that a dog's on point.

Nash yells, "Hurry! I can't hold her all day, you know." In day's dull light I see but the silhouette of the man. He stands a great wedge driven into the ground. "I'm coming," I tell him.

Upon arrival, I'm met with glower. In exasperation, Nash points to the Irish setter and demands, "Well now, what do you think?" The words pop out like nut husks from a shelling machine—the man's tongue slams the brakes on each consonant.

I look at the little bitch on point: Moanruad Gin, 1974 runner-up in the English Derby. "Good, good," I answer. "She's working fine."

Nash moves toward the pointing setter and asks, "What do you think of the style of her point?"

"Fine, fine," I reply, skirting commitment.

Nash stops, examines me. Then he says offhandedly, "In America

you want the dog's tail to point at nine o'clock. Me? I like ten past nine."

"Ten past nine is fine," I concur. "Hell! Twenty-five after is okay . . . if the dog's into birds and holding them."

"Exactly," booms Nash. "It's what's between the ears that counts . . . not the angle of the tail." I'm handed a sheath of leashes and Nash whistles Gin forward to flush. A cock lofts. Nash barks, "Hup," and the bitch drops.

Eight grouse pop up in singles, grab wind, and zip away. Nash kneels beside the bitch, praising her, then snaps her to leash and tells me, "'Tis enough. I don't want to find the bottom of her."

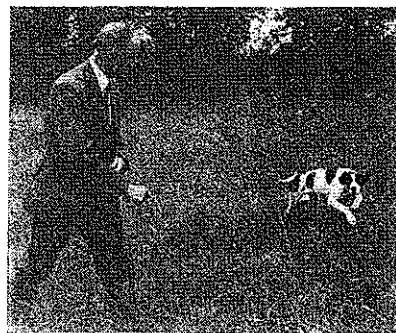
Another setter is released to course ground and we walk on. I'm pressed to stay abreast. Nash observes, "I don't like to hold them that long, you know?" He nods back to where Gin had her point. "To hold point makes a dog sticky. In America you want a dog that way. But here, it is a cardinal sin. The dog must flush the birds on command. What gunner would be in the bush beating about . . . all off-balance? That's dog's work, to get the birds up."

We talk, with the man cleaving off bits and pieces of his life. "I used to be a falconer, you know? Caught a peregrine once. Took her from her nest on a rock cliff. But I dropped my bag and had to put her in my shirt to climb back up. She left me scars for life."

"I'm the fourth generation to breed Irish setters. Shipped dogs all over the world, I have. Especially to the States and Japan. . . ."

Later he tells me, "Lady Jean Fforde, the daughter of the Duke of Montrose, who lives on the Isle of Arran . . . she sponsored the first dog seminar in Great Britain last year. Invited me as one of two instructors, she did. It was a good thing . . . so I donated my time."

Nash picks up a pebble and shows it to me. "Quartz!" he says. "A moor must have it or there'll be no grouse.



Pointer man Alfred Manners and his retriever brave the British rains

Need it for their gizzards . . . to grind the heather. And the heather? 'Tis both bell and ling."

I pinch a sprig of bell and hold it to my nose. It has a musky fragrance. I put it in my mouth and chew. It tastes like parsley. Nash laughs at my curiosity. Then he says, "We'd better get along. . . ."

I stand. Nash steps out. "You'll have to excuse me," he says, "I've never been a social walker." I keep even with him for a few minutes, then drop behind and wave him on.

I dally in muse, reviewing what I've learned today, and at other times, here and in other foreign fields. Commonwealth gun dog training is minimal. Here, the best dog wins, not the best trained dog—the emphasis being the development of the animal's free spirit; the latent, instinctual excellence God may have put in the dog. I've found no training techniques differing from one trainer to another. Essentially, the man buys a dog, takes him for a walk, talks to him, and enters him in a field trial.

There is no negative reinforcement: no punishment for wrongdoing. The dog is cajoled into proper performance, sweet-talked into excellence.

As a matter of fact, training is really considered a calculated hazard. Earlier, Nash suggested this when he made the observation, "Nobody ever had a bad pup, you



Above, John Nash strides the Irish moors of Ballyfin with his setters. Below, British trainer Richard Burton watches one Lab work, while another Lab and springer honor, with chins to the ground



know. There's only bad dogs."

The man has stowed his dogs in the toy Renault IV and is kicking the tires when I arrive. He bids me follow him to the local village before we say goodbye. There, we drink beer and talk of dogs and Ireland. The local rustics regard us in awe. When I depart, I find someone has pushed both fender mirrors face-down. Country kids are the same the world over.

From Dublin, I jet-jump to Man-

chester, England, rent a car from the world's Number Two Company, and drive north to Lazonby, Cumberland. I want to say hello to Richard Burton. No! Not that one. Another one.

The man I seek is the one who's maintained the Bracken Bank Sporting Lodge since 1933; who pioneered the driven grouse shoot for paying visitors; who maintains a bulging kennel of Labs and English springer spaniels for sale to field trial enthusiasts on five continents.

I arrive in time for afternoon tea.

Burton, a caricature of the distinguished professor, with rumpled clothes and mumbled speech, invites me to the sitting room.

Enroute, I glance at a trophy tiger skin draped over a sofa. Burton catches my interest. He tells me, "From my prodigal youth . . . whoever thought they'd become scarce? I spent many years in the Indian provinces of Bengal, Behar, and Assam. There, I spent my time big-game hunting and *mahseer* fishing. And while so doing," he nods at the tiger skin, "I ran many tiger battues involving drives with up to forty beating elephants." The man sits with a sigh of fatigue. "Sugar?" he asks.

"No thank you. Just black."

"But we're having tea, not coffee."

"Okay, I'll take it brown."

Between sips, I seek to delineate the man. "How many acres of grouse moor do you have, Mr. Burton?"

"Nearly 20,000. And all well-

maintained. You know, the success of a moor depends upon proper gritting, burning, vermin control, draining, and driving. I daresay, I have the best moors in all the world. But that's just part of the Bracken Bank story. We also have two duck ponds, many root fields for pheasant, timber for wood pigeon, and several miles of fishing for trout and salmon in the River Eden."

"If you had to pick one thing," I ask, "what would be most important in guaranteeing a bounty crop of grouse on your moors?"

Burton smiles. He says, "You've got to shoot the old birds, you know. Young birds will stand breeding close together. You might have on 30 to 40 acres . . . you might have a half-dozen pairs of young birds, but only two pairs of old birds. You've got to know how to drive . . . to get the old birds over the butts. Harvest them and you increase next year's crop."

Following tea, we exit the great Bracken Bank hall and walk in the rain to Burton's kennels. While passing a sugar-beet field, Burton observes, "Always drive your pheasant toward the timber . . . gives better loft to the bird, you know. Gunners appreciate the more testy target."

At the kennels, Burton selects four Labs and heads to field. There, he throws a few marks, plants a few blinds, practices some honor work. He talks as he trains, saying, "I won twenty- (Continued on page 120)

The worlds of three dogmen

(Continued from page 111)

seven open stakes with three Labs and one spaniel . . . including the 1953 National Springer Championship here in Great Britain. And another of my spaniels, Brackenbank Tangle, won the 1959 American National. You can safely say this is the chief exporting kennel of great retrievers in Great Britain." Burton pipes his whistle and a dog comes to heel with an orange plastic dummy. Burton takes the bumper and, holding it forth, observes, "A dog can't see them, you know?"

"Yes," I tell him. "I know."

The man looks at me with mixed expression of pleasure and surprise.

The day grows late and I've miles to go before I sleep. I tell this to Burton. He nods in understanding. We bid good day and I head 300 miles south to the suburbs of London. I must meet Alfred Manners, of Sutton Scotney, manager of the Red House Kennel—the greatest pointer kennel in Great Britain.

It's rain all the way—with a toad-strangler finale for my arrival in Manners' drive.

The man exits his home to determine why I'm parked in his lane. Since rain is constant in England, it is ignored, and Manners approaches

me in tweed coat, white shirt, and tie. He has about him the Musketeer air of a Ronald Coleman: gray sideburns; permanent, built-in smile; trim build; affable manner. I climb from the car and shake hands.

"I've come to see you, Mr. Manners," I relate, "for I'm told you're the greatest pointer man in all of Britain."

MANNERS is not flattered. He protests, saying graciously but firmly, "People should not deal in such talk. I'm but a gamekeeper-turned-trainer. That's all. All credit due here must go to the late Lord Rank, to the present executors of his estate, and to his daughter, the Honorable Mrs. Cowen."

"I understand," I respond, but go on to emphasize, "however, you did win everything there was in dogdom . . ."

"Not so. It was Mr. Brunt who did it all. He was the kennel manager and trainer before me. I but followed him."

I can see it will do no good to honor this man. In truth, Manners has manners. No more self-effacing person could I ever meet.

We set upon a tour of the kennels,

and Manners releases a dog with the proposition, "Shall we walk the rabbit pen?" He looks to the rain. "I'll be doing little training today."

"We're both knocked out of work," I tell him, "I'll be taking few pictures."

We head out to the rabbit pen—the sort of training field maintained by most gun dog kennels in Great Britain. Therein, the dog is taught to blink rabbits. The vermin bound about while the dog is conditioned to ignore their scent and their scat. The dog put down is FTCH Scotney Isle of Arran Jack, with twenty-two open wins: truly a rabbit-proof dog. But Manners lets him stalk a sitting rabbit, "So you can get a picture in the rain, if you want."

Following the rabbit walk, Manners invites me to his kennel kitchen where tripe boils in a large vat. He produces a logbook and says, "You might be interested in this. It's a list of the late Lordship's wins."

I read the following account. "From 1950 to 1969, the Red House Kennels made seventeen pointer field trial champions in which there were 174 firsts, 148 seconds, 110 thirds, twelve fourths, eighteen certificates of merit, and nine winnings

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of the national championship.

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I close the book and hand it back. "Truly remarkable," I tell the man.

He smiles, accepts the book, and invites me to tea.

I glance at my pocket watch. I must be at the London air terminal within the hour. "Okay," I agree in fretful voice, "but I must run . . ."

Over tea, I tell Manners, "You know, it's very unusual to meet a man who's made both pointer and retriever champions. What's the great difference in training the two breeds?"

Following due consideration, Manners says, "Pointers taught me quite a bit about wind and scent, which with the Labradors I haven't noticed. But the essential difference in training . . . we first start the retrievers on basics, what you call yard training. That's not so with pointers. We always let the young pointers

have their head. Then, too, we use dummies on Labs, but pointers are kept in wild birds."

From other sources, I've been told that Manners recently wrote a book on gun dogs. I see it on the coffee table, pick it up, and speed-read the dust jacket. *Training Setters and Pointers for Field Trials* is the title. It's co-authored by Professor Beazly, Manners, and an amateur trainer named White-Robinson.

I hold the book face-forward to Manners and tell him, "People say this is one of the three best books ever written on the subject . . . along with Arkwright's *The Pointer and His Predecessors*, 1905, and General Hutchinson's *Dog Breaking*, 1850 . . ."

Manners laughs. "You have done your reading, no?"

"Not yours, I haven't. But I'll get to it, soon."


A few minutes later, Manners accompanies me from the house. We shake hands and I drive off. Glancing in the rearview mirror, I see Manners walk to the side, bend

over, and pick up a piece of litter. I smile. The Red House Kennels are really the most immaculate I've ever seen.

The dash clock reminds me there are only 45 minutes left before my plane will take me to meet still more of Europe's premier gun dog men.

I rub my eyes and realize I'm tired. The pace has been swift. I came to Great Britain to visit two kennels and ended up calling on eight.

My thoughts turn back to Manners. If ever he's nominated to a gun dog hall of fame, it will need be done posthumously. The man's modesty will not permit such acknowledgment while he's alive.

Gradually, that tenseness I always feel when driving in England—the awkwardness of being on the south-paw side of the road—slips from mind and spine. I must experience a few miles before I can feel comfortable. Now I depress the accelerator and move out. Once again, I'm dog-gone. 

King of jacks (Continued from page 49)

"Which side is he on?" yelled the man. "Which side!"

"On this side, you maniac!" the battered girl replied. "Back off!"

In the clear green water beneath a cloud of bubbles swirling off the propeller, the girl saw a school of spadefish and several amberjack. One of the jacks swam swiftly to the surface, rolled slightly on one side, and appeared to look at her before heading back to the depths.

"Where is he now?" yelled the man. "I can't see the line!"

"Under the boat. Oh!" The woman quickly jammed her rod overboard and down as far as she could reach to clear the line when the hooked jack made a sudden run to the other side of the boat. She banged her knees on the step-up over the wave-smacking bow and cleared the line just in time to see the fish head back for the buoy.

"He's going for the chain!"

"Which side?" yelled the man as he throttled hard into forward gear and nearly sent the woman crashing into the console again.

"I don't know!" said the woman.

And at this point, I don't care! she thought. Already the pulsing of the amberjack's tail was sending corresponding throbs of pain into her wrists and forearms.

The man made his decision. He ran the boat to the right of the buoy, the side where the fish was first hooked. The fish had gone left.

The woman watched in horror as her line swung parallel with the boat and then astern as the man raced ahead to clear the surging buoy on the upwind side. The woman released the drag and thumbed the spool, but it was too late.

The spidery thread went limp,

and its end came quickly to the surface and began to blow astern. Just before the man began his tirade, the woman rubbed her bruised elbow and thought, *Well, Ms. Terrell, your record is safe by me.*

Variations on this scene involving fathers/daughters, brothers/sisters, and husbands/wives were played more than once last summer when an unusually large number of amberjack showed up beneath offshore buoys and over wrecks from Georgia to Maryland. A good many potential record breakers were hung and lost, but the only world mark established was a record for male anglers exhibiting overwhelming ambition on behalf of their female angling companions. At 13 pounds, Charlyne Terrell's 5-year-old amberjack title is still intact as of this writing, but it cannot long withstand such widespread determination.

Of course, record breaking depends to a large extent on cooperation from the fish, and *Seriola dumerili* is not known for its cooperation. The amberjack is smart. There is no other way to characterize this fascinating brute. Sure he's a sucker for live bait, but so is the black duck a sucker for corn, and no legitimate waterfowler who takes his birds over unbaited ponds would ever call the black duck stupid.

Not that using live bait for amberjack is illegal, you understand. However, the difference between casting artificial lures and drifting live bait is the difference between catching a fish and the fish catching you.

When I go out to tag and release amberjack, I'll often use live bait. Given enough amberjack and enough live bait, some days you could practically set up a tagging

assembly line on gullible fish. Yet if I'm angling for the critters—that is, if the strike is going to mean as much as the slugfest that follows—amberjack fishing must be done with artificial lures.

There is an additional challenge. In order to catch amberjack consistently on artificials, the lures must either be surface noise makers that arouse the competitive instincts of a group of buoy loiterers, or the lures must be superbly crafted copies of an amberjack's normal prey.

Whatever your choice, a minimum of exposed hardware (swivels, wire leader, and the like) is recommended, and you'll get more strikes from a surface lure by fishing it at first light, preferably in lumpy seas, and keeping the leader and line completely out of the water by holding the rod high during the retrieve. Sound complicated? The prize is worth the effort.

In Florida waters, jigs—sometimes tipped with shrimp, bonito, or even scented with oil of peppermint—are successful takers of school amberjack when they've ganged up over a reef. Off the Carolinas, amberjack are regularly caught on trolled spoons and feathers, the latter often rigged with a whole mullet or ballyhoo.

However, in Virginia last year, where we could see the fish (and presumably where they could see us), my angling companions and I completely failed to interest our visiting amberjack in spoons, feathers, metal jigs, or dead baits. And we tried literally dozens of makes, sizes, patterns, and species.

The water was so clear, we were fishing in the equivalent of an ocean-sized aquarium. We sometimes found the amberjack tailing at the