

Smada Byrd BY HORACE LYTLE

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I've been asked by the FLUSHING WHIP to say something of Smada Byrd. This isn't easy, for:

- 1. Much has already been written of her, and I'd not want to tire you with repetition; and*
- 2. I must try to exercise restraint to keep my heart from running away with my head.*



THE IRISH SETTER, SMAĐA BYRD, OWNED BY HORACE LYTLE, DAYTON, OHIO

Photo from The Modern Setter (Hochwalt 1935)

However, Smada Byrd was the only Red Setter appearing in the canine section of the 1955 Hall of Fame poll. In his discussion of her in his MODERN SETTER. A.F. Hochwalt wrote thus: "This becomes more and more apparent as we see her in greater perspective". In short, she grew on him, and that I've always liked. A few pages earlier, after praising the Oklahoma Irish sensation, Smith's Irish Pat, Hochwalt wrote this: "But he never was as good a bird dog as Smada Byrd, although the two never met in actual competition." Apparently he didn't feel he needed to see them braced together to rate her over him as a bird dog

Smada Byrd was by Donegal's Morty Oge II out of Killarney Babe; and she was six months old when I bought her from Dr. L. Adams. Adams, her breeders at that age she was delicate to an extreme, so much so that the first time I took her for a walk I had to carry her home Later, Frank Reily was to pronounce her hindquarters "the most beautifully developed and muscled I've ever seen". This came about from constantly working and/or hunting her for some eight months of the year and for long hours at a time too. But I myself was young, and tough and didn't know any better.

Come pheasant season in those days and we'd be they're waiting for daylight, to start; and keep at it until dark. Many's the time we'd stop to eat some thing at noon (always shared with her), that I had to lift her up to her feet to help her get going again. It makes my eyes moisten now to type this but in those days I thought that's

what hunters and dogs both did. At night I'd bathe and free her eyes of weed seeds; and stand her feet in buckets of luke warm water, to loosen and free the caked mud from between her toes. Anyhow, we both lived through those long, hard, tough days and Smada Byrd reached an age beyond any other canine I have ever owned.

Having attended two or three trials near Madison, Indiana, a letter came one day from Dr. P. K. Phillips asking that I start her in their next event. I showed it to Al Hochwalt and asked him what he thought of it. "Well, you're pretty cocky and they've heard of her", he said, "but what they really want to do is beat you". The upshot of which was that Hochwalt, Nicholas Daniel and B. T. Houk went with me to see Byrd in a workout. The Hochwalt pronouncement thereafter was thus: "She carries the merriest tail I've ever seen in an Irish but she'll have to run more to " Which was all needed to cause the Cocky One to make up his mind to see to it that's just what she'd do. It was accomplished on a golf course bordered by cover that held birds. The process was very artificial. However, I believe that story has already been told, so we won't go into details here. What counted was that Byrd learned the whistle signals, of which she'd never before had even inkling. What were the factors behind the wins of Smada Byrd ? In my belief they were these: (1) The keenest brain of any canine I have ever known; (2) Conceit of the sort that prompted Julius Caesar to exclaim: "I'd rather be first in a little Iberian village, than second in Rome"; (3) Experience in how and where to find birds, lots of it (4) Complete understanding and love, between herself and her master.

What were her weaknesses ? The main one, I think, was temperament. She had a mind of her own; and when her will clashed with mine she might sulk. I recall two special occasions when this hurt us both badly. In a Free For All at Medford, N. J. She was drawn with Piecrust; and as she ran away from the Pointer, his handler ("Pop" Reece) turned in his saddle and exclaimed for all to hear: "Gawdamighty, there ain't nothin' red about her but color !" But at the far end of the course in those days (I don't know how it is now) there was a swamp which usually held birds. And when Byrd got into that I couldn't get her out without scoldin' her severely; and when I did that she soured. And a result of which her return trip was as poor as her first half of the heat had been good.

A similar instance occurred at Buffalo during one of the early Pheasant Championships. My main regret about that one was that Bill Brown was there for the AMERICAN FIELD, and I believe that was the only time he ever saw her. She just went from one pheasant to another until there was no "running at all. She was finding too many birds. She didn't have to run; and when I made her leave a particular cluster she soured and wouldn't hunt. She'd run far and fast to get to game; but you couldn't hire her to stay away from it.

I think perhaps her most outstanding field trial performance was at Washington Court House, Ohio the first year she won the Miami Valley. Tom Noble and George Harris were judging. As George told me afterward: "If we had thought you were going to come that close to losing her we would never have called her back. She had already

won it. But this is the only trial running today in Ohio. New people were coming, and we thought we owed it to them to let them see her. All I hope is that you and she never scare me that badly again".

What happened was this: When I turned Byrd loose, and she saw all those people behind her, she really "sold out". Riding a fast polo pony, I'd started to gallop she'd sifted from sight. Finally, way off in the distance, farther than I'd ever seen her go; my eye caught what at first I took to be a fox. Riding hard, I saw it was Byrd. She looked like she might run right out of Fayette County if she didn't find birds first. Suddenly, sailing over an old rail fence, she lit and turned to stone. Looking back I raised my hat high. Then galloped closer, tied my pony and went to her on foot. Never saying a word, I lit a cigarette and sat on a close by log. When the judges got there they waited for everyone else to come up, before ordering me to flush. With which flush and shot, George Harris said: "TAKE HER UP"! The whole thing had taken but a matter of minutes. Even the Judges had been carried away by it all so much so that they never did order up Byrd's bracemate, for which said bracemate's handler never forgave me.

Some three years ago one of my present pair, Ilisley Chip, had a Miami Valley stake sewed up equally hard, and then took it into his head to cut both his throat and mine. That's something Smada Byrd would never have done. Her brain would have told her she had it won; and her conceit would have kept her from upsetting the applecart. Why, then, did she upset it both at Medford and at Buffalo? I think, Kipling like, we'd just have to call that "another story".

Not wishing to be tiresome, and though I feel like going on and on, there is another first place win that can't be brushed aside. The Judges for this one were Charlie Jordan of Monticello, Georgia and C. W. Campbell of Tulsa, Okla. The place was Otterbein Farms in Ohio and the club was the Southern Ohio Field Trial Association. When it was all over, Smada Byrd was placed first; while second to her was the great Phil Essig. The significant thing about this win was that they both had been on game so that no luck entered into it. Byrd had a smashing performance on a hen pheasant, while Phil's game had been quail.

Soon as the decision had been announced, Hochwalt came to me and handed over his hat. "I've always said I'd take my hat off to her, he said, "The day she'd ever show me a performance to force it, which she has just done". With which Watt Campbell delivered himself thus: "Down our way no one believes there's ever been an Irish Setter having any business in the same field with McKerry's Pat. But now I'm going home and I'll have to tell Ben Curtis, and all of the rest of boys, that I've not only seen but judged one that's just too hot Pat to handle".

Of Smada Byrd's puppies, Smada King was a grand dog. But, for field trials, he lacked his mother's competitive spark. Besides which his right front leg was crippled by a car, and a front leg so crippled is worse than a hind leg. To shoot over, however, King was fully his mother's equal for as long as his leg would hold him up. I have never

seen any puppy, regardless of breed, that has looked better to me than Byrd's Eileen, litter sister of King. She, I think, had a potential for field trials that might well have overshadowed her mother, and surely no man could ask me to say more than that but that I believe. Nothing has ever hit me harder than when Eileen was killed by a truck. Had it not been for that I might still be with you boys but God bless you all, and good luck. Nothing can beat winning with a RED 'UN!

ABOUT HORACE LYTLE

Horace Lytle is a great name in the field trial world as evidenced by the popular vote he polled in this years Balloting for the Field Trial Hall of Fame. He was Gun Dog Editor of FIELD&STREAM for 20 years and was twice secretary-treasurer of the Amateur Field Trial Clubs of America. He has judged field trials from Minnesota to Georgia, including the National Championship of 1933. Author of many books, his latest is POINT!