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SPORTS AFIELD

VOL. 136, No. 3

T.M. Reg. U.S. and Can. Pat. Off.

SEPTEMBER, 1956

THE AUTHORITY FOR FISHING AND HUNTING

1956

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COVER BY WENDELL KLING



How does it feel to be charged by a huge and dangerous animal? We posed this question to Chris Sergel, who wrote this month's special feature. He replied simply: "It feels as though a heavy wall is falling on top of you." A glance at Artist Kling's cover imparts a small portion of this sensation—the ultimate moment between hunter and hunted.

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They mean

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ABOUT FOUR YEARS ago, this department carried an article titled "High Tails on Irish Setters," in which I discussed at some length the decline of the Irish setter as a gun and field-trial dog and deplored what we deemed this unnecessary drop in prestige. The article created considerable comment, and I received many letters concerning it, some highly complimentary and some rather sarcastically critical, a reaction to be expected on any controversial subject.

In that article I had advanced the belief that the main trouble with the Irish setter lies with the breed fanciers. In their enthusiasm for the beauty of the breed, which is admittedly one of the most handsome of all dogs, Irish setter breeders had paid more attention to color and conformation than to field qualities, such as hunting enthusiasm, intensity and style. This is particularly true regarding those fanciers who value the breed as a bench-show contender or as a family companion only, and there is no gainsaying the fact that in these two attributes the Irish setter takes a back seat to no breed.

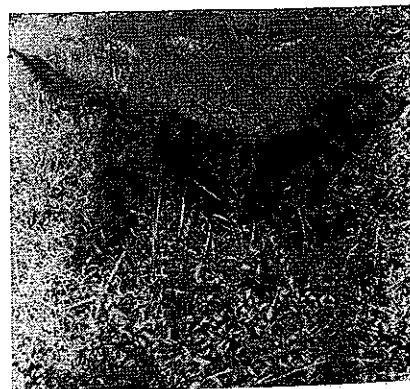
However, efforts to intensify one good quality without regard to others are almost certain to be of disservice to the whole. And so it has been with the Irish setter. Many individuals from a number of strains developed principally for bench-show competitions have lost much of their hunting desire, a great deal of their intensity on point and practically all of their style in field action and on point. This is not to say that no bench-bred Irish setter is capable

of doing a serviceable job in the field as a bird dog, for a number of bench-show winners have made, and continue to make, creditable showings in gun-dog field-trial events. But in the majority of instances, the dash, fire, hunting enthusiasm and style is rather woefully lacking when they are placed in competition with English setters and pointers. Only the most biased or gullible enthusiast could expect a dog, whose ancestors for generations back had never turned in a day's work in the hunting field or had never even heard shotgun fire in a natural environment, to record a winning performance against dogs coming from the proven working stock of breeds that had been developed almost solely for the purpose of hunting.

Certainly such dogs possess a modicum of hunting instinct. They have keen noses still, and the instinct to point game is there. But it is only natural that they be somewhat lacking in that great desire to find game at all costs, regardless of rugged terrain or physical fatigue. And when it comes to the climax of the hunting effort—the point—they often stand their game in a completely relaxed attitude or, at best, with lowered head and tail, providing little thrill for an experienced gunner or one not blinded by the love that accompanies personal possession. It is this flaw alone that has turned many Irish setter admirers away from this breed to others in the pointing group who provide a thrill in every hunting jump, and fairly electrify the viewer by their intense attitudes when game is contacted.



Ike Jack Kendrick, son of Lady and holder of present record for Irish setter field-trial wins, 32.



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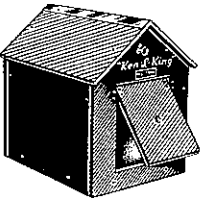
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"Pretty is as pretty does" is an old axiom that is particularly applicable to gun-dog field performance.

THE ARTICLE four years ago caught the imagination of W. E. (Ned) LeGrande, sportsman-industrialist of Douglassville, Pennsylvania, who promptly wrote to me, describing himself as an Irish setter enthusiast who was seriously interested in improving the breed and willing to make the effort if an attractive breeding program could be outlined. A spirited correspondence ensued, which has ripened into a valued friendship. The advice of the noted veterinarian-geneticist, Dr. Leon F. Whitney, was asked and passed along to LeGrande. Various ideas were discussed at length, and LeGrande fashioned his program along the lines he thought would be most productive in the shortest length of time.

The first and most important problem was choosing the proper breeding stock. The Pennsylvania sportsman, whose hunting experience dated from his boyhood days, was a stickler for performance, with the rare ability to analyze the work of his own dogs with a critical eye. He wanted working dogs, dogs that had proved their worth afield as good gun dogs, and dogs who would point with acceptable style and intensity. The latter factor was the stumbling block.

Finally a correspondent wrote, giving the name of a man in Enfield, North Carolina, who owned "a little Irish setter bitch that points with a high tail."

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Since disappointments had only served to increase his determination, LeGrande was on the phone in jig-time. The owner would not agree to shipment on trial. LeGrande bought the little bitch sight unseen, and hit the jackpot!

The new purchase was Askev's Carolina Lady, at that time enjoying only a local reputation as a "pretty good" gun dog. Now, through her accomplishments in field-trial events, not only against other members of her breed but in direct competition with pointers, English setters and other pointing breeds, she is known as the "First Lady of the Irish Setters." Despite the many handsome trophies she has added to the household at LeGrande's Willow Winds Farm, her main value lies in the fact that she is a highly prepotent brood bitch, stamping her progeny into succeeding generations with the sparkling style that made her name a household word in Irish setter field-trial circles and caused much favorable comment throughout the general field-trial sport.

Quickly recognizing that Lady was the type of dog for which he was searching, LeGrande set out to locate as much of her blood as possible. Her parents had passed into limbo and could not be located. He did find a sole surviving son from her only litter and promptly bought him. This was a dog called Ike Jack Kendrick, possessing even more style on point than his mother and, with remarkable good fortune, the ability to transmit this quality to his get. Both Lady and Jack quickly made their

G ad al 21 L Pup slice Field Oth. lives full NEM Stati Ge or Upt ater re A F complete has. R. . ORTS A:

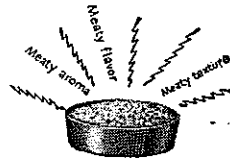


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marks in field-trial competitions and have been awarded field-trial champion titles by the American Kennel Club. It is safe to assume that had LeGrande been able to unearth any more of Lady's kin, they would have been promptly added to his kennel.

With these two dogs LeGrande has scored the remarkable total of 60 field-trial placements (Lady 28, Jack 32), many of them in competition with other pointing breeds. Both dogs are still going strong, although Lady is beginning to show her age. Both have produced numerous winners, which are in turn producing promising dogs.

It was upon this pair that the Douglassville breeder pinned his hopes of success in producing red setters who could hold their own against the more popular breeds, particularly in the area of style. "High tails on Irish setters" became a sort of battle-cry with LeGrande, and his efforts were concentrated on this accomplishment. However, he did not lose sight of the importance of increased hunting desire, intensity and searching judgment. Lady was mated with several sires that possessed at least some of the good qualities her owner sought, and matrons were carefully chosen for union with the best. LeGrande also made this blood available to other fanciers interested in improving the breed, and now finds himself in spirited and friendly competition with his own stock. This is in accordance with his ambition, for he has a desire to establish an exclusive strain.

THE SUCCESS of Ned LeGrande has been nothing short of spectacular, and he readily admits that he did not expect to make such a rapid advance in so short a span of years. His breeding operations have extended into the fourth generation, and while many of his efforts have resulted in rank failures or have been attended by no improvement whatever, he is convinced that he is still on the road to establishing a line that will produce red setters possessing the sense, acceptable range, keen scenting powers, tractability, proper color and eye-filling style in action and on the ground. If he can make this contribution to the American field sport in general, and the Irish setter fancy in particular, he will feel his money has been well spent and his difficult years of studious planning and careful breeding effort have

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been worthwhile.

Evidence of his progress is immediately discernible when one reviews his success in present-day gun-dog field trials. Dogs from his kennel have hung up a formidable record. Other owners who have secured young stock from him have enjoyed fine success. The first National Red Setter Open Shooting Dog Champion, Double J, owned by Ralph C. Baynard, Jr., of Dover Delaware, is one of Askew's Carolina Lady's sons.

Other evidence is readily at hand for the casual visitor to LeGrande's kennel. Here specimens of his breeding acumen can be seen at work in the field, traveling with an attractive gait and handling game with style and intensity. These are, of course, selected individuals because LeGrande is quick to discard individuals who do not show exceptional promise. Some of these young dogs are pictured here, pointing liberated game. While they are not yet finished in their manners and still have much to learn, there is no denying the fact that they possess a well-developed pointing instinct, good conformation and color, plenty of intensity and pleasing style. Whether or not they will mature into polished performers remains to be seen, but it is a safe assumption that they will be given every chance and some of them, at least, will be heard from when another field-trial season rolls around. It is also pretty safe to assume that so far as LeGrande's dogs are concerned, "high tails on Irish setters" are here.

The improvement of Irish setter style is, however, only one phase of LeGrande's breeding program. It is his ambition to produce dogs of intense hunting desire that can be properly controlled and channeled without the pupil losing his fire and dash and going "soft" under restraint. Bird sense is another quality that is receiving full consideration, as is handling response. While reaching out in searching is encouraged, no effort is being made to develop excessive range. Range adaptability will come, he believes, when the other good qualities have been developed in the proper degree.

While LeGrande has been on his own in his breeding program, he has received much encouragement from other enthusiastic Irish setter fanciers. Among them are Ralph C. Baynard, Jr., Archer Church, New York city, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Schollenberger, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Herm David, Cleveland, Ohio. All are prominent in the activities of the National Red Setter Field Trial Club. David is editor of "The Flushing Whip," the official magazine of the club.

This organization is conducting an effective campaign to create more interest in the Irish setter and is dedicated to the improvement of the breed, both in quality of conformation and field performance. With a membership of almost 200, the organization is making aggressive strides, and if the present high tide of enthusiasm can be maintained, it should not be long before the red setter will be known not only for his striking beauty, but for the fact that he has regained the proud prestige once his by virtue of outstanding gun-dog performance.

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