

ALL-AGED FIELD TRIAL - BREWLANDS ESTATE, PERTSHIRE

Judges: Rita Howard and Chris Gray

by kind permission of Sir Brian Ivory. Sponsored by Rodger Skinner Ltd, Dog Food.

Date:

1st November 2014

Scenting conditions:

The trial was carried out on the periphery of the open hill with the usual mixture of heather, rushes and white grass interspersed with occasional willow bushes. The beat was worked to the instruction of the steward and all wind directions were encountered. Most dogs had the advantage of at least one run into the wind though unfortunately this was not possible for all dogs. Weather on the day was cool but pleasant with a gentle westerly breeze, remaining largely dry throughout. Scent appeared reasonably good until later in the afternoon when it dropped off appreciably.

Game:

The game encountered on the day was largely composed of pheasants though there were a number of red-legged partridges, a couple of hares and a solitary woodcock for variation.

Whilst sparse at times, this only added to the quality of the hunting required to get in to birds and if anything made the day even more enjoyable, virtually all dogs had the opportunity of a bird or two and the steward of the beat went out of his way to ensure this was the case.

Type of ground, quantity and species of game:

It would be fair to say that there was a wide variation of experience within the dogs on the card (as is normal for an All-Aged Stake) and this was reflected in the work we saw. Most, if not all dogs, went well when presented with a head wind and bare ground, but the same dogs faltered, (a little), when presented with a back wind and the copious ground scent from birds running ahead. In these conditions the more experienced dogs rose above the others and gave us three very deserving award winners.

The water test for the award winners was carried out across a narrow but fast flowing River Isla with a steep entry and was completed by all three dogs.

Results

1 st	Stubblemere Cawdor	GSP(b)	Mr M Canham
2 nd	Jhebron's Crachin	GSP(b)	Mr D Elliot
3 rd	Graham's Mark One	GSP(b)	Mr C Graham
4 th	Not Awarded		

Judges Critique:

Stubblemere Cawdor

In the first part of her run this young bitch showed us her expertise in handling the light variable back wind on the open hill before dropping into some thinned conifers where, after a short time, she positively indicated game ahead. At this point the wind (which was now in our face) dropped for a second, but the dog was not to be denied and she quickly relocated the bird which turned out to be a woodcock. The bird flushed of its own accord and was unfortunately missed.

At this juncture we picked the dog up and after a short walk we started her in a new area composed of a felled shelter belt adjoining a triangular game cover strip. The shelter belt was blank but the dog directly came on point within the cover strip and was rewarded when five hen pheasants flushed straight ahead, the dog still solid on point! Luck was not with the guns on this occasion and nothing fell despite the excellent opportunity. The dog was picked up.

Her second run took place within the confines of a steep rocky gully, the base of which was covered in thick willows. Almost immediately after the dog descended a couple of cock pheasants flushed of their own accord but were missed, the dog remained steady and was asked to hunt on but she did not have to hunt for long before we could see her clearly on point below us. The handler went down to his dog whereupon a single hen pheasant flushed and was shot, falling on the far side of the gully and presenting the dog with a 30m blind retrieve up the very steep bank. The retrieve was completed with a little direction and the bird was brought tenderly to hand with little fuss.

A third run was called for, such was the difficulty in deciding a winner from the top two dogs!

This took place in a three quarter back wind out on the open heather. After some pragmatic hunting, (the scent was obviously deteriorating) the dog indicated a moving bird which was trapped between us and the dog. The bird, a hen pheasant, flushed and was shot and retrieved with pace from a straightforward mark. This ended the dogs third run.

Jhebron's Crachin

Like the previous dog, the first run for this bitch took place over a variety of terrain with varying wind conditions. Starting with a head wind in a paddock of rough grass she quickly made good her ground and we progressed across a small road to a rather tight birch wood where the handler worked hard to keep his dog in hand. This opened out back on to the open hill, the dog finishing her run in a back wind in high rushes. The back wind work was superb and she was rewarded with a staunch point facing both guns and handler. The handler stood his ground and the dog flushed the bird, on command, directly towards the handler. The bird was shot, though not quite dead, and was retrieved promptly without incident.

Her second run took place in the same gully as described for the previous dog and, in a similar fashion, she quickly came to a point. The handler commanded the dog to flush from the top of the bank and she went in without hesitation a bird flushing shortly thereafter. The dog remained steady, though remote and unsighted from the handler, and the bird was shot. Unfortunately it was only winged and glided about 100yds down the gully before crash landing round a corner, blind to all of us. The dog was sent from where it sat with only the flight direction of the bird to guide it. We allowed the handler the grace of moving 50m down the gully to get a decent view of the dog and its work. She quickly located the winged bird, which had not travelled far on foot, and it was retrieved tenderly to hand.

The third run was on similar terrain and wind direction to the preceding dog and again ground treatment and style were impeccable. The third run was blank and the dog was picked up.

Graham's Mark One

Running, with a back wind on open ground, this older dog was a wee bit slower than the other two, but what she lacked in speed she made up for in guile, using the wind and the cover on the ground to her absolute advantage. She needed little handling and almost looked like she knew her way about the hill such was the economy of her style.

It was not too long before she had a nice find 150m or so above us. We all marched up there and were not disappointed when both a hen and cock pheasant flushed from either side of the dog. The hen was shot, and whilst it dropped in view of the dog, the actual fall was unsighted to both dog and handler. This mattered little as the dog made an excellent unaided job of the retrieve.

Her second run was as per the previous two dogs, in the bottom of the rocky gully, and again it was not long until she was indicating game running ahead. Two cock birds flushed and were both, shot dead, flapping and rolling to the bottom of the gully in full view of the dog which remained steady, though remote from the handler who was still at the top of the bank. Both birds were retrieved tenderly to hand with minimal handling and this concluded the run.

She was not required for a third run. Her work showed measured experience that can only be found in a mature dog and her handler can be rightfully proud that she is still capable of work at this level.

Conclusion

On behalf of Rita and myself I would like to thank the German Shorthaired Pointer Club for the opportunity to judge this trial on what was excellent ground for HPRs.

I should also like to thank Rita personally for putting up with me!

We thoroughly enjoyed our day which was made all the more interesting by the quality of the work on show. The three dogs in the awards were all top class making it very difficult to decide on an actual winner.

In terms of the other dogs, there were several that on another day, with a little more luck, may well have been within the awards and we wish all the handlers every success with their dogs in the future.

Christopher Gray