

V E R S A T I L E HUNTING DOG

A Publication of The North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association • Volume XXXIX • No. 2 • February 2008

**Tabletop
Training**

*The True Meaning
of NAVHDA*

Rabies



Dreamworks Gauge
Pudelpointer

Breed Focus: Today's Pudelpointer



Dreamworks Gauge Pudelpointer

Yaba Daba Do!

I hadn't seen Gauge since he was eight weeks old. At that time he was a bold and good-looking pup and, like all puppies, full of hope and promise for his new owner. Tony Serpa had come to my home to pick out his new best friend. Tony was a bit apprehensive about the training of his new pup, but I assured him that if he joined the local chapter of NAVHDA and went to the training days he would get all the help he would need, and that I was just a phone call away if trouble struck. With Tony being new to the training of a versatile dog and Gauge being such a bold pup, I knew that it wasn't going to be *if* trouble struck but *when* trouble struck.

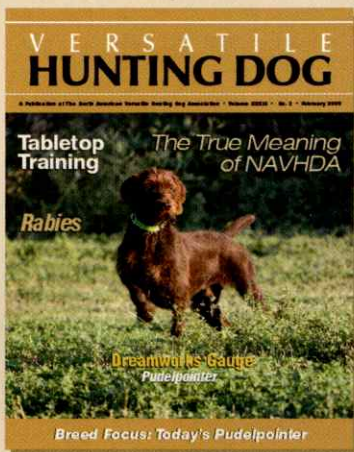
So when the phone rang and Tony was on the other end it came as no surprise. Tony had joined the Greater Central Valley Chapter in California and, as luck would have it, they held their training days a short drive from his home. Like most NAVHDA chapters, this chapter has a diverse make-up of members with a wealth of knowledge free for the taking for people willing to watch, listen and learn. All the questions Tony had for me I had heard before and were part of the normal training problems most people have with a new pup. The local chapter and its members had Tony and Gauge on the right track in preparation for their first NA test.

As the test date got closer, the phone calls got more frequent and as I worked through the questions with Tony one question kept coming up in every phone call, "How big is this dog going to get?" It seems that Gauge had big feet and Tony was afraid that he was going to grow into them.

Well, test day came and I laid eyes on Gauge for the first time since he was eight weeks old. Tony was right. The first thing that came to mind was to have him fitted for a saddle. Other than being on the large side, he was a handsome fellow, well put together with a nice wiry coat, and he was full of himself. As they headed for the field, I reminded Tony to relax and have fun. Twenty minutes later as they left the field, Tony had a smile on his face but was unsure as to how well they had done. At the end of the day when test scores were read Tony's smile grew even more as Gauge had earned 110 points and a Prize I.

As Tony and Gauge were going over their test run with everybody back at the gallery I heard Tony say the name Fred. As I looked around I didn't know anybody named Fred. The more I listened the more it became apparent that Fred was Gauge's call name. Now, when I looked at Fred I saw a dog that should have a name like Tank, Bear, or maybe Grizz, definitely not a Fred. Tony said that the name fit his personality to a "T" and that it took several weeks to come up with the name. I told him that he should have spent more time on the name and that no good hunting dog should be named Fred.

By the following spring Tony's training confidence had grown by leaps and bounds and he called to ask about taking Fred through a Utility Test. I encouraged Tony to give it a try but also warned him



that Fred was young. Getting any dog through a Utility Test can be tough. Throw in the fact that Fred was such a bold pup and this would be their first try, he would have his hands full.

The first phone call came from a friend at the end of the test day. Tony and Fred had passed! What really piqued my interest, besides the high score, was how my friend went on and on about the duck search Fred had. Tony had mentioned several times Fred had a good duck search but with this being Tony's first versatile dog I didn't think too much

about it. But with a four in the duck search, and several people telling me I needed to see this dog in action, I began to think that maybe this was one dog that might have to come back into my breeding program. I told Tony that although they had gotten a good score, with a little more age on the dog, they should get a great score. As luck would have it I would be at the next test and would get to see Fred's duck search first hand.

As Tony brought Fred up to the start of the duck search, gone was the tall lanky pup I had seen a year earlier. Before me stood a mature, impressive-looking dog. At the shot, Fred held steady until sent. I was unprepared for what I saw next. Fred hit the water like a tank, mowing the cat tails down like they weren't even there. I don't think a tug boat throws a bigger wake going through the water than Fred. He covered more water in four minutes than most dogs cover in fifteen. It wasn't long before the Judges had seen enough and asked Tony to call him in. Unfortunately, all that drive combined with a bad case of the terrible two's led to their undoing in the steadiness in the field and they ended their day without passing.

I had seen enough to know that I wanted to work with him myself to see what other surprises he held. I asked Tony if he would send him to me six weeks before the next test to see if I could iron out some of his wrinkles. Tony was all for it and the following spring I put Fred in my kennel for six weeks. It did not take long to see where Tony got the name Fred; like a pair of worn jeans the name was a perfect fit. Fred's enthusiasm for training and the hunt was contagious; you couldn't help but love this dog at home or in the field. Tony had done a great job with laying down a solid foundation for Fred and all he needed was a bit of spit and polish.

When test day came we were ready and, like last time, the Judges called him in from his duck search, but this time he aced the field portion as well. We ended the day with 197 points and a Prize II and plans to find him a girlfriend. While we were ready for test day what happened next caught all of us unprepared...

As I write this it has been over a year since we lost Fred to a car and it still brings tears to my eyes. Fred was a once in a lifetime dog, a dog that could never be replaced but as Tony leaves my home today with his new pup I think I see a bit of that YABA DABA DO spirit that Fred had.