

SPORTING GROUP

FROM JUNIOR HUNTER TO COMPANION DOG

The statement often heard that a breed “should be able to do what it was bred to do” is sometimes quoted by judges when judging a sporting breed. The *versatility* of the Chesapeake Bay Retriever can be demonstrated by the documentation of Ch./MH Chesapeake Bay Retrievers: The AKC Hunt Test program began in 1985. The first Chesapeake who completed the Master Hunter (MH) title (on August 5, 1989) and was also a conformation Champion of Record was Ch. Berteleda’s Souvenir of Stoney, MH, WDQ, owned and handled by the late Nancy and Les Lowenthal of California.

Since that time, 160 Chesapeakes who are also AKC conformation champions have earned the AKC Master Hunter title. Not only are these dogs breed champions, but they are also adept and talented in the field. Hunt titles are awarded at three levels: Junior, Senior and Master. When competing in a hunt test, dogs are scored on a pass/fail system. The purpose of the test is to show “natural ability to mark and remember a fall, on their hunting style, perseverance or courage.” They are also scored on steadiness, control, response, and delivery. The hunt test is a non-competitive environment where owners/handlers encourage each other to succeed.

The Junior level may be achieved by the average owner, and the dog does not neces-

sarily need to have professional training to earn the title. We have 759 Ch./JH-titled Chesapeakes at this time, as can be found at <http://www.chessiebook.org>.

Because obedience plays a most important role in field work at any level, this article is to encourage owners to consider stepping into the obedience ring to earn a CD title.

Training for a hunt test title at the Junior level requires the following:

The dog must sit quietly when he is in the blind waiting for his number to be called. He should heel smartly to the line while on leash. Although not required to be steady, many are, or he may be held by the collar or a slip-cord while watching the bird as it is thrown and lands. He is released and retrieves the bird on his own. From there he is whistled and called back, and he delivers the bird to hand, usually sitting in heel position. Sitting in front or to the side is acceptable.

Now we have a dog who heels, sits, stays, and has a recall. He is used to the scenario of the hunt test, with workers such as throwers and gunners. The judges are usually sitting behind the handler and his dog.

This dog does not have to learn much more in order to compete in the obedience ring at Novice level. If this dog is also a breed champion, he knows how to stand for a judge when being examined. We now have a dog who can



Chesapeake Bay Retriever Teagie returning with his bird on a pheasant hunt.

perform the following exercises:

Heel on Lead and Figure Eight, Stand For Examination, Heel Free, Recall, and a relatively new exercise—Sit/Stay/Get Your Lead (effective May 1, 2018). A dog who has successfully completed these exercises may come back for the Sit and Down Stays, which were also revised as of May 1, 2018. The group stays are now performed with the dog on a six-foot leash—with six feet between each dog. It is no longer an off-leash exercise but

it is limited to a group of six dogs in a line. If there are more than six, two lines are formed, with dogs sitting back-to-back and the lines more than six feet apart from each other.

This may sound as if you can take the dog directly out of the field environment into an obedience ring. First, however, I strongly recommend training with an obedience class and a knowledgeable instructor. Your dog will get used to the group exercises, with a strange dog on either side. If you have never earned a formal obedience title, you will also learn correct ring procedure and handling tips from attending classes.

The versatility of the Chesapeake is to be commended.

Comments welcome.
—Betsy Horn Humer, Pungoteague, Virginia,
tiderunr2@verizon.net
American Chesapeake Club

Curly-Coated Retrievers

Thanks again to Jenny Dickinson, who this month shares more tips with us about tracking.

MORE ABOUT TRACKING

Every track has to have an objective. You will remember that the sport is derived from

SPORTING GROUP



Curly-Coated Retriever
(Photo courtesy Lynda Beam)

the police search for evidence, as well as the search for the perpetrator. The conclusion of the track in our sport is the dog's discovery of an article—usually a glove. I want to tell you how to teach the dog to indicate that he has

found that article.

Before you ever start tracking, it is worthwhile to teach your dog to “platz” or do a “Sphinx down,” like we use in Utility obedience. With this the dog folds back like an accordion. I want

the dog to fold himself down with the glove between his front feet. That way I can see that there is indeed an article, and I can easily pick it up and wave it at the judge!

Remember that in competition I am 30 feet behind the dog, so I cannot see what he has found until I make my way up to him. Therefore, I want to teach him that an article is a cue to down.

Currently, I am only tracking for fun, and I may never compete again, but I do not want to burn any bridges by teaching the dog a sloppy behavior that I will have to fix later. Therefore, teaching the clean indication is key. Plus, it is a fun maneuver and does not involve anything unpleasant.

If you do obedience, you probably already have your dog doing a sphinx down—but if not, here is how to teach it:

Teaching the Sphinx Down

Face the dog while he is in a stand. With a cookie in your right hand, bring your right hand down between the front feet, and give the dog a moment to think about what you are asking of him. When he folds down, elbows included, he gets the cookie, delivered on the ground.

When he understands the Sphinx down, begin to add an article between his front feet. Later, build in a stay. Remember that you have

to make your way to the dog after he indicates the article, so he has to know to stay put!

Also, I just learned recently of a tracking program offered by the Australian Shepherd Club of America (ASCA). The Beginner Tracking Dog title will offer a transition to AKC tracking. The distance is shorter than the TD distance, and prior certification is not required. It provides an opportunity to experience tracking with a judge. All breeds are allowed. I cannot wait to learn more about this program!—J.D.

Thank you so much, Jenny, for this tracking information. In the past I have been quite active in tracking, and I feel that it is such a worthwhile activity to do with one's dog.

—Ann Shinkle,
annshinkle@aol.com

[Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America](#)

Golden Retrievers

THE SEARCH FOR A GOOD BREEDER AND A GOOD PEDIGREE

Finding a quality Golden Retriever puppy can be a daunting task. Experienced Golden owners will agree on the two most important elements in searching for a pup: a reputable breeder, and the pedigree.

Good breeders understand the importance of pedigree. They select their breeding stock