

FRENCH BRITTANY NATIONALS (Wild Pheasants in South Dakota)

By: Tim Powell

On April 3, 2004, the French Brittany Gun Dog Association of America sponsored the first Epagneul Breton National field trial. This was the initial running in North America of a U.K.C. sanctioned European style pointing dog trial. The trial was run on wild pheasants under demanding hunting conditions at Big Spur Lodge ,near Mitchell ,South Dakota. As judge Reynald LeFebvre of Quebec prepared to cast off the first dog, he quietly congratulated all participants, stating that field trial history was about to be made..

At 8:30 the traditional hunting horn was sounded, and “Molly”, a 5 year old Epagneul Breton (French Brittany) owned and handled by Brett Shipley was cast off as the first dog in the open stake, into a brisk north wind. Molly’s 3 finds in her 15 minute heat was the start of a day where virtually every dog competing had an opportunity on wild pheasants. The birds were running ,and a wild flush ,with a short chase on her third find caused “Molly” to be picked.up.

OPEN STAKE -Only 4 dogs competed in the open stake. Although the judges commended their effort , the finished manners required were lacking,and placements were withheld. “Hoss”, a 7 year old Epagneul Breton owned by Fred Overby, had a notable forward reaching pattern, strong desire, and a nice find with 1 minute remaining. As Overby flushed a rooster directly in front of Hoss, the temptation was too great and Hoss took several steps in the direction of flight. He was picked up as time expired.

NOVICE STAKE – 17 dogs in the novice stake competed in two large CRP fields. The entire gallery was caravaned to fulfill the requirement for each dog to run a fresh course, with favorable wind. “Texas Tresor De Plum Creek” a 2 year old liver and white Epagneul Breton owned by Matt Dewaard of Armour, South Dakota bested the field with an outstanding 15 minute performance. He continually used the wind to his advantage, patterned and quartered the field effectively, and had two solid finds. Manners on birds were excellent, staying steady to wing and shot on both. Reserve was withheld; however, three dogs were awarded a “Pass” indicating that they successfully completed the requirements of the stake. They were: “Susiane de Keranlouan” and “Urba de Bois de Vuachelles” owned by R.L. Dalrymple, and “ Unite de Plum Creek” owned by Fred Overby.

The judging team of Sandy Gunn and Renalt LeFebvre, brought from Canada because of their experience in judging these trials in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, did an outstanding job both in judgement and in working with handlers new to this type of trial. Brett Shipley, field trial chairman and field marshal, is also to be commended for the organization that kept the trial running smoothly, as are Bill and Kathy Dillon, owners of Big Spur Lodge, for hosting the event.

In attendance was Mr. Todd Kellam ,Vice-President of Hunting Programs for U.K.C.. At the end of the day he said, “I thought it was a great event in every way, including dog work, camaraderie, organization, and amount of game. U.K.C. is proud to see a quality pointing dog program become a reality”. The judges also added a positive note when they addressed the gallery saying that they felt that as we go forward, “this is going to be a very important national event” and noted that “ we had gentlemen and real sportsmanship in the field.”