

Monthly Newsletter of  
Spoon River Chapter of the  
North American Versatile Hunting Dog  
Association. April 2009

# On Point

## *Spoon River Chapter Spring Test*

May 29-31, 2009

Gobbler's Knob Hunting  
Preserve

Canton, IL

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## **Trainin' Dogs with Rick Smith: Being a Leader**

by Rick Smith & Sharon Potter

Over the years, we've often written about how important it is that you are the pack leader. This time, we're going to devote an entire column to it, for a couple of reasons: First of all, we believe it's extremely important in our relationships with our dogs; and second, we feel the need to define it further and help you understand just what being a leader is and isn't. Being a leader is something we humans should be familiar with, because our own groups throughout society have leaders. It goes all the way from the playground at school to clubs, churches, community groups, and government, just to name a few. Somebody emerges from most any group as the leader, whether they're elected or just rise to that level because they inspire confidence in others. This parallels dogs as well. In any pack, there will be a leader, and in dogs it's an earned position, not an elected

one. What makes a good leader? Dogs look for the same qualities we humans do. We want a reliable, fair, consistent, intelligent, patient, and disciplined leader. These qualities inspire trust, and trust is a big part of what makes any group successful. The one that can be confusing is discipline. Too often, discipline is confused with punishment. Discipline is defined as training that develops self-control, efficiency, and uses strict control to enforce obedience. A good leader is not a dictator or a bully. Dictators and bullies tend to be feared rather than respected, because they dominate through brutality and force rather than through trust and respect. A good leader is looked up to and admired, not feared. Additionally, a good leader's "pack" stays strong and gains numbers, while a brutal leader or dictator's pack tends to shrink as its members look for ways

to escape. How do we translate this to dogs? That's easy. In fact, we already have. The same qualities we humans look for in a good leader will make us a good leader for our dogs. Think of people in your life who have been exceptional leaders to you. It may have been a Cub Scout leader, a football coach in high school, or a teacher; it may be a minister or priest. It may even be a boss or a friend or parent. Think about what it was that inspired your confidence in that person, and what characteristics you admired. Now let's go the opposite direction. Do you remember following anyone who consistently got you into trouble? Probably not a good example of a leader, and you eventually drifted away from that person, right? Dogs want a leader. And while some dogs want to be the leader, most dogs are happy to follow rather than lead. The problems creep in



This is Bridger my 5 month old Wirehair that I got from Smoke Creek Wirehairs in Bennett Colorado.

-Clint Joesting

when there is a dog that doesn't want to be a leader and a human who isn't being a leader. That puts the dog in the position of having to lead and they don't like

it. Behavioral problems crop up in these situations because the dog is forced into trying to be the leader it is not. The dog then gets blamed, but it's the

human who's at fault.

Reprinted from *The Pointing Dog Journal*- February 2009  
Submitted by John Sondag

## News and Notes

- Our next training day will be April 25<sup>th</sup> at Gobbler's Knob. Don should have pheasant and quail available. If you need pigeons or ducks, contact John Sondag a.s.a.p.

- Randy Ashman and his Griffon, Palmer, are headed for the 2009 NAVHDA Invitational.

- Pat McKinley has written and submitted an article to

*Versatile Hunting Dog* about Randy and Palmer's journey.

- Howard Zimmerman is featured in an article in the April 2009 issue of *Versatile Hunting Dog*.



My 11-month old Spinone, Omar, on point during a recent training at Windy City Spinoni, in Poplar Grove, IL.

-Adam Jaquet

In an effort to improve everyone's experience in our Chapter, I will be sending out information sheets in the coming weeks that I would like to have filled out. The purpose of these sheets will be to get a little glimpse at who the members and the dogs of the Spoon River Chapter are. Then, each month, *On Point* will feature a short bit on a different

member and their dog(s). Second, few things are as exciting as bringing home a new puppy. Why not let the whole Chapter share the excitement. The "New Puppy Profile" will be a special feature in *On Point* for you to share some information and a picture or two of the newest edition to your family.

Third, I am looking for a volunteer(s) to write a

short training tip for each month. This would not be something long, a paragraph or two is plenty.

Finally, this is your forum to share and brag. Send in pictures and stories of your dog and you. Have a great day of hunting, show off the results. Did your best friend just do something you had to take a picture of, let us all share in the laughs.

-Adam Jaquet

## New Features Coming to *On Point*

