

# Spring Test Weekend

Friday evening's set up of the Sebasticook Chapter's camp for the Spring Test weekend was interrupted a short while by a porcupine. I arrived at the Cottle Hill (Mt. Vernon) test site about 4:30 that afternoon and was met by Todd Chrisman. The big green trailer was already in place as was Dan Albert's ice fishing shack which the Albert's would spend the night in. Todd and I commiserated a short while, then Malcolm Charles arrived and we decided to put together the two sun/rain shelters. We had no sooner started when Colt and Winnie, two of Todd's GSP's, both came around the corner sporting new whiskers in the form of quills. He and I started removing them with needle nose pliers as Dan and daughter Monique arrived with a trailer load of Chukars for the test. Both dogs were loaded, Colt the worse of the two, but they were the best behaved dogs I've seen in a long time while having quills removed. While this was going on, a few others arrived to help with the set-up.

Keeping in mind that we've had four or five Chapter events this year and all were either with snow or rain and cold, a lot of us, despite the forecast for the weekend, were apprehensive. Saturday dawned sunny and mild with a breeze. We loaded our equipment, dogs and other necessities and arrived at Cottle Hill about 6:30am. There were

quite a few people there; breakfast was being served under the tent and following that the judges briefing was held about 7:00. The three Judges for the day were; Billy Bishop of Richmond (Sr. Judge), John Murphy of MA and Mike O'Donnell of CT. They briefed the handlers (most of whom were first timers in a test situation, me included) as to what was supposed to happen and they stressed that we should not hesitate (in fact they encouraged us) to ask any questions.

For the day, Malcolm Charles of Rome was the Field Marshall (the one who keeps things moving, ensures that birds are out, handlers and dogs are ready, equipment is readily available and a myriad of other details); myself and Bob Engelhardt were the gunners and Linda Engelhardt, Monique Albert and Burt Spaulding were bird planters.

The first team (dog and handler) of a scheduled 10 was started about 7:15am and the last went out about noon. There was one no-show. In this test, the N/A (Natural Ability) there is three phases: field, water and tracking. In the field phase, the dog is hunted in cover where the presence of game is assured by planting game birds; in the water phase, the dog is tested for its willingness to swim and in the tracking phase, the dog is given an opportunity to track a flightless

running bird. No game is shot and no retrieves are required. The dogs are not competing against each other; they are being evaluated according to established standards.

Phoebe, my 15 month GSP and I were 4th out and by this time it had gotten quite warm. She did, in my opinion, very well in that she pointed six birds rather than the required four that were set out. After the last one I became concerned

**In the field phase, the dog is hunted in cover where the presence of game is assured by planting game birds; in the water phase, the dog is tested for its willingness to swim and in the tracking phase, the dog is given an opportunity to track a flightless running bird.**

that she might be overheating and Judge John Murphy had us go to a small pool of water in the field nearby. She did go in and drink, even though I had given her bottled water a couple times. I got mired in about two feet of mud and couldn't move my feet. John had to grab my belt from behind and pull me out, leaving a sneaker sole behind. Those sneakers were just broken in; they were only ten to twelve year old New Balances.

At this point I must say that the three judges put me (remember, this was my first time handling in a test) at ease and were most helpful

with suggestions as to handling a dog. We had lunch about 12:30 and then all went to Ingham Stream for the Water Phase. There, a pile of throwing dummies is placed near the shore and one at a time, dogs are brought to the waters edge, a

## The Checkcord



by Charles Tappan

went on her track and was a short distance to my front with the judges on either side when a woodcock rose just a few feet to my left, directly in front of a judge and flew across in front of us. I could have caught it in a long handled net had I had one. The nest had two eggs in it. It was marked and we kept away from there the rest of the weekend. We also had deer and two turkey nests to contend with throughout the weekend. This phase was completed about 6:00pm, the judges had their conference and the scores were read to all.

Following that, an exquisite dinner of prime rib and scallops, prepared by Chapter President Bob Engelhardt with all sorts of salads, extras and desserts was enjoyed by all, followed by our raffle and auction of great items donated to us by Chapter members, The Great Outdoors and tri-tronics. The mosquitoes were brutal, but we toughed it out 'til about 9:00pm.

We had to be at Cottle Hill at 6:00am on Sunday since Judi was cooking breakfast and I was to be the Field Marshall. At about 7:00am the judges gave the briefing to the eight teams signed up for this day

(Weekend cont. pg 72)

# Weekend

(Cont. from pg 71)

and the first were into the field portion about 7:15. The judges for this day were Bishop, O'Donnell and Peter Wade of Farmington. Suzie Moore was the gunner for the field portion, birds were planted by Mike

Higgins and Monique and Caleb Albert. It was partly cloudy with a breeze and quite "buggy". They finished that about 11:40 and we had lunch under the tents, then all adjourned to Ingham Stream for the water phase. With only 8 dogs, this was over fairly soon and we returned in about an hour. We went right to the tracking part of the test,

finishing about 3:30. While this was going on, the "camp" was being dismantled and equipment being packed away. The judges conferred and scores were read. A storm was visible on the horizon and we wanted to be able to say we'd had a test weekend without rain....we made it.

One young man entered was 13 year old Drew Snadecki of

Marblehead, MA with his 15 month old Spinone Busy B's Decisive Decision, called Bruno. They earned a 110 (out of possible 112) Prize 1. An excellent performance by both. This was Drews second test and he plans to continue and enjoys hunting. He and his dad had been to the Yankee Chapter's Pre-Test the day before and came to Cottle

Hill and camped over night.

*Charlie Tappan is an active outdoorsman, member of the Sebasticook Chapter of NAVHDA, Ruffed Grouse Society, several sportsman's associations, writes the monthly column Clay Targets and is a competitive shooter.*

**Audibert Farms, Inc.**



**POLARIS**

\*Sales \*Service \*Parts \*Accessories

away from there the rest of the week-

**AROOSTOOK AREA**

**GRIFFIN'S ONE STOP**

**SEBOEIS STREAM RACING**

**Mudrun dates:**  
 Aug 7th  
 Aug 21