

May 2025

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126th NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Erin's Perfect Storm Crowned National Champion

By Tessa Hughes | Grand Junction, Tennessee | February 10, 2025



National Championship (front bottom row, l-r): Jennifer Braddock, a fellow spectator in the ballcap, Jonathan Burch, a curious spectator, Luke Eisenhart (handler), Brad Woodie (owner), Judd Carlton (scout) with Erin's Perfect Storm, Christine Woodie, Greg Blair, Greg Tapp, and Kerry Kimery. (Next row, l-r): Amy Weatherly, DVM, Zach Parsons, Darlene Rike, Jessica Price, Steve Hammons, Bill Mason (Judge), Joey McAlexander, Pat Bryan, and Charlie Frank Bryan. (Top row, l-r): Tessa Hughes (reporter), Joe Hughes, Melissa Bain, Greg Bain (Judge), Maylon Price, Rich Robertson (Judge), and Matt Backus. [Photo by Jamie Evans.]

Our 2025 National Champion, Erin's Perfect Storm, stormed across Ames Plantation on the first day of a 14-day trial to sweep the Championship this year, overcoming 55 dogs to seize the win. Storm, a white, orange, and ticked 5-year-old pointer, scored seven beautiful finds in his three-hour race. He is owned by Brad Woodie of Waxhaw, North Carolina, handled by Luke Eisenhart of Leesburg, Georgia, and was scouted by Judd Carlton of Cairo, Georgia, for his win.

Perfect Storm ("Colt") was whelped in January 2020, and this was only his second year competing in the National Championship. Last year, he was a gallery favorite, scoring four finds and setting a blisteringly fast pace before he was lost at 2:43, so fans were delighted to see him seize the laurels this year.

Perfect Storm's sire is Chelsea's Thunder Bolt, and his dam is Erin's Bet On Me. Thunder Bolt is a son of National Champion Whippoorwill Wild Agin, and Bet On Me is a full sister to Erin's Redrum and Erin's Longmire, two highly competitive field trial dogs, so

Perfect Storm definitely has a bright pedigree. Accomplished field trialer Sean Derrig is the breeder of Perfect Storm. In June 2024, Perfect Storm took first place in the Missouri Open All-Age, which requalified him for the National Championship. His Missouri win came off the heels of Storm just having been crowned champion at the Masters Open Quail Championship in March 2024 as well.

The Championship Brace

[Monday morning, 8:01 a.m. Bracemate: Rebel Cause, PM, David Williams.]

The Championship brace happened to be the very first of what looked to be an extraordinarily long trial for the National due to the high number of entries. We broke away at the morning course in rather grave conditions: overcast, muddy, and holding at 37 degrees. However, things in championships can sometimes line up with the stars, and that weather, while not pleasant riding weather, was perfect bird-hunting weather for the dogs in the first brace,

which between them scored 11 finds in three hours.

Both dogs were through the Out Front Field by :03. Eisenhart called point for Storm at :11 on the hill on the left before we crossed Buford Ellington. We arrived to find Storm looking beautiful on his birds, with his head and tail held high. Eisenhart flushed, and all was in order for both wing and shot. Storm moved quickly to cross over Ellington and into Morgan Field, rejoining his bracemate, Rebel Cause, at :13. Before we crossed over Turner, Williams had his dog at :27 by L. B.. Avent's cornfield, but Eisenhart was searching for Storm. At :35, point was called for Rebel Cause in Turner Field, and Rebel Cause handled his birdwork to perfection. By approximately :43, Storm had returned to the front, and at :46, both handlers called point for their dogs at Turner Pond. We arrived to find both dogs standing firm and intense on point, and both handlers went in to shoot. Both dogs held for their game with perfect manners for both the flight of the birds and the report of the gun.

Storm then showed well on the right after we left Turner Pines at :47, and Rebel Cause also made a strong cast on the right at :49.

At :54, Rebel Cause was sighted next on Giovan's Hill. At 1:06, Eisenhart called point for Perfect Storm at Wilson Dunn's, and Storm again looked beautiful when we arrived, and again, he was staunchly motionless for both wing and shot. At 1:09, both dogs crossed over Mary Scott at an aggressive clip. At 1:14, Rebel Cause scored an impressive find immediately on the left across Mary Scott Dam, again handling his bird work with immaculate manners. At 1:19, both dogs were seen making short work of No Man's Land.

At 1:41, Williams called point for his dog again at the far-right edge of the Tennessee Field, and Rebel Cause also handled this find flawlessly. Rebel Cause's manners on his birdwork were flawless. Both dogs then continued hunting hard, and at 1:57, Gary McKibben, scout for Williams, called point for Storm in the field past Kyle's Barn. Storm looked breathtaking on his birds, standing with his head and tail high and motionless, and Eisenhart flushed for his dog, sending quail flying in all directions. Upon release, Storm made an impressive cast in the big crop fields beyond and swept around at a lightning-fast pace to slam into paint again at 2:00 on the right in Edward Clark South. Again, he looked stunning on his game, and when Eisenhart flushed for him, he held well for both wing and shot.

At 2:07, Eisenhart called point for Storm with Rebel Cause backing. When we arrived, Eisenhart asked the judges if they had seen a rabbit leaving, but the judges did not indicate they had.

Both dogs then showed to the front at 2:09. At 2:19, Storm was located on point to the right side of the mowed path behind Ryan's House. He looked beautiful on point and handled his birdwork perfectly. At the same time (2:19), Williams called point for his dog on the left behind Ryan's House, and again Rebel Cause handled his find with perfect manners. At 2:25, both dogs were moving with intense forward motion at Jim Braddock, making beautiful casts. At 2:37, Eisenhart called point for Storm again at Edward Clark North, and again, Storm looked magnificent on his birds. He handled his bird work again without error. At



Luke Eisenhart with Erin's Perfect Storm pointed.

2:44, after a brief absence, Rebel Cause returned to the front, but Williams had drifted backward looking for him, so Tom Shenker, a gallery member, requested he be allowed to briefly run the dog in Williams's stead until he returned. At 2:46, Williams returned to the front. At 2:57, both dogs were still moving with alacrity as we were crossing over National Championship to conclude the brace. Storm finished well, still hunting hard and aggressively to secure his championship honors.

The Running of the 126th National Championship

Our Judges

We had an entirely new slate of judges for 2025. Making up our judging panel of three, first we had Greg Bain of Town Creek, Alabama. Bain has an over 40-year history with the sport of field trialing. He is the long-serving secretary of the Alabama Field Trial Club, a club well-known for hosting the Alabama Open All-Age Championship, the last qualifying trial for the National Championship, and the Alabama Amateur. The club also frequently agrees to host other trials, including the Region 6 Amateur All-Age and Shooting Dog Championships, held on the Hell Creek Wildlife Management Area in Blue Mountain, Mississippi. Bain has had much success field trialing over the years, including owning the multi-champion, two-time Region 6 and Mid-South Shooting Dog of the Year, Parker's First Lady, and Parker's Cheveyo, Region 6 and Mid-South Derby of the Year. Bain is also known to be a trusted scout and is a judge to be counted upon. Bain is renowned for having an eagle eye, and he is also well-respected by handlers for being calm under pressure and hosting a well-run, fair-to-all-participants field trial. Those who know Bain know he is also difficult to unseat from a horse and is as comfortable on a roping horse as a Tennessee Walker. Over

the years, Bain has judged many trials including the Ames Amateur All-Age and Derby, the Hobart Ames Open All-Age, the Amateur All-Age Invitational Championship, the Alabama Open All-Age Championship and Alabama Open Derby Classic, the Southern Championship, the Carroll County Open Championship, the Kentucky Lake Open Championship, the Hell Creek Open All-Age Championship, the Sunflower Open All-Age Championship, and the Mississippi Open All-Age Championship. We were delighted to have Melissa, Greg's wife, join us for much of the trial, and she joined us in the gallery for part of the time, too.

Next, we have Rich Robertson Jr. of Payette, Idaho. Robertson also brings a wealth of knowledge, given that he has been a professional field trial dog trainer for over 50 years. Robertson was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2024. Robertson's father, Rich Robertson, was also a professional field trial trainer, so Robertson was born and raised into this world. Robertson has handled dogs to wins in over 150 championships and has handled a total of 64 dogs in 32 prior National Championships. He has also trained and handled two dogs that have since been inducted into the Hall of Fame, the fabled English setters, Tekoa Mountain Sunrise and Hicks Rising Sun. He is also known for his handling of the great Ch. Rivertons Funseek'n Scooter, an English pointer field trial dog that served as foundation stock for a strong line of dogs; Scooter sired, among others, HOF Ch. Just Irresistible, Ch. Dominator's Rebel Heir, Ch. Funseek'n Hit Man, and Ch. Willow Little Aaron. Robertson is known and loved throughout the field trial community for his generosity of spirit, genuine kindness, and willingness to mentor those just starting in the sport. He is well respected for his knowledge of dogs and horses and his ability as an accomplished equestrian. He has judged countless trials prior to judging the National, with some of the more significant stakes being the Florida Open All-Age Championship, the Continental Open All-Age Championship, the Quail Invitational Championship, the National Derby Championship, and the Derby Invitational Championship. Rich's lovely wife, Penny, was able to join us for part of the trial, and we were happy to have her with us; unfortunately, Penny's father passed away during the trial, and she returned to Idaho during the last



Angie Rose and Squeaky Powell at the Rhea Building during an evening reception.

days of the National. We were sorry to hear this tragedy happened to her and the entire Robertson family.

Finally, we have Bill Mason of Moundville, Alabama. Mason is known far and wide for his great knowledge of field trial dogs and good-humored, affable temperament. Mason has run such great dogs as Greensboro's Hardhead, which won the Alabama Open All-Age Championship in 1998 and the Memphis Amateur in Como against 48 dogs. Hardhead was the three-time runner-up Alabama All-Age Dog of the Year. Mason also owned and handled Gus Delight, the three-time Alabama Amateur All-Age Dog of the Year. In addition, he owned Greensboro's High Point, a dog named Alabama Amateur Derby of the Year and Amateur All-Age Dog of the Year. Mason is also well-known for knowing and riding very nice field trial horses, and he brought some of those impressive horses with him to the National this year. For many years, Mason managed the M. Barnett Lawley Forever Wild Field Trial Area, also known as the "Cattle Ranch," in Alabama, a well-known field trial venue. During Mason's tenure at the ranch, such trials as the Prairie Open All-Age, the Pelican Open All-Age, the U.S. Open Championship, the National Derby Championship, and the National Open Free-For-All Championship have all been held there. Mason has judged many trials prior to judging the National, including the Southwestern Championship, the Region 16 Amateur All-Age Championship, the National Amateur Derby Invitational, the Missouri Open All-Age Championship, the U.S. Open (3x), the National Amateur Quail Championship (2x), the National Open Free For All (2x), the National Derby Championship (3x), the Continental Derby Championship, and the National Open Shooting Dog Championship.

Henrietta Mason, Bill's wife, also

joined us for part of the trial, and we enjoyed her good sense of humor and learning more about her nickname, "The Hornet." Their daughter and son-in-law, Jennifer and Jamie McKemie, were also on hand and rode in the gallery on the first Saturday of the trial. They were absolutely delightful, as well.

Coordination of the National Championship – Behind the Scenes

There is a great deal of complexity and effort that goes into putting on a trial of this magnitude. It is a complicated endeavor to ensure that the judges and the reporter have horses saddled, fed, and trailered from place to place. In addition, all of these people need to be fed, have a place to stay, and know where they are supposed to be each hour of the day. On top of that, all the handlers, scouts, and owners need to know where they are putting their horses and dogs, when they are breaking away, if there will be a delay, etc.

People who have never served in an official capacity for this trial may wonder why the Ames group goes to all the effort of saddling, washing, and trailering club officials' horses—the answer lies in part in the length of the trial and the braces, plus the extra time those in any official capacity spend meeting with the public.

Thus, Ames envisions all of this work and ensures it is done for the club officials, which is a remarkable act of grace. There is a great deal of tireless work the Ames team does behind the scenes, rising early at 3:30 a.m. and staying late in the evenings taking care of stock and grounds. There is even an on-site veterinarian, Dr. Amy Weatherly, who checks on the health of all the horses and administers medications. The Ames crew works like a well-oiled machine—if you notice, each morning, at the far left end of the red barns, the Ames's horse trailers roll in, and the barn crew start unloading horses well before the morning breakaway and neatly tie them to the trailers. What you may not see is that if the dogs pick up early, those trailers magically show up at road crossings and pick us up, which saves us valuable time and saves our horses, which are going every day, all braces, in all conditions. It also allows this reporter to handwrite (in a truck on the way back to the Manor House) those brace synopses you see on the Ames Plantation website and hand them over to Jamie and Dee Evans for posting.



Judge Greg Bain explaining a matter to NFTCA Vice President Joey McAlexander and Michelle Clark.

The Evanses have retired after working as part of Ames Plantation Cultural Resources but returned from retirement to assist again this year.

This year, we also had our new NFTCA President, Dr. Stan Wint, in the saddle with us showing good humor and a servant heart as he sought to make sure everyone had what they needed. He was also at the Rhea Building in the evenings, joining handlers, owners, breeders, and gallery members as we relived the running each evening. We were also pleased to have Angie and Lou Rose, Greg Tapp, Darlene Culver Rike, Maylon and Jessica Price, Bill and Rob Rhea, Colin Rosser, Matt Rhea, and the NFTCA (Dr. Wint and Matt Backus) hosting receptions many evenings at the Rhea Building, and Angie Rose's help was invaluable in organizing other Rhea reception sponsors. In addition, our new NFTCA Vice President, Joey McAlexander, was present several days in the gallery and at lunch, and he was on hand several evenings at the Rhea Building, as well, ensuring the smooth running of the trial and pitching in to make sure the trial was on course.

Ryan Braddock and Chris Weatherly were also in the field with us, ensuring we remained safe and stayed on course, ensuring the gallery was not straggling or running over the judges or the dogs, and also quietly helping me identify the many fields, house places, and crossing points on the courses. We are also grateful to have security staff, such as Zach Parsons, on horseback herding gallery members who ensure the road crossings are safe for dogs, horses, and humans. We also have paramedics, including Greg Tapp, who ride and are very much needed.

And, last but not least, for me personally, I am grateful, and I think we all enjoyed having Joe, my husband, join us to ride, help me get tacked up, too, and also celebrate his birthday with us

again this year.

Opening Reception and Drawing for the Championship

At 7 p.m., we convened at Bryan Hall to conduct our drawing for the running of the Championship. We were grateful to McAlexander and his wife, Elise, for hosting the reception accompanying the drawing. First, the NFTCA Secretary, Matt Backus, welcomed us to the drawing and explained the order of events. He then acknowledged the following:

• *Acknowledgment of Ames Staff, Volunteers, Directors, and Attendees*

Backus recognized the Officers and Directors of the NFTCA: Dr. Stanley Wint, President; Joey McAlexander, Vice President; Matt Backus, Secretary/Treasurer; Dr. Terry Terlep, Dr. Fred Corder, John Ivester, Matt Rhea, Keith Wright, David Williams, Tom Shenker, and Larry Garner.

Backus also commended the newly named Archivist, Steeple Bell, for his invaluable assistance in providing detailed notes regarding each nominated contender's registration, coloring, DOB, owners, handler, breeder, win record, and detailed pedigree. Bell also provides a wonderful write-up for amesplantation.org on each dog's history and pedigree. The pedigree and win information I supply regarding any competitor is based almost entirely on the wealth of information Bell generously provides.

Backus recognized Jamie Evans as the Official Photographer. Jamie and Dee work with this reporter to ensure this reporter's morning and afternoon brace synopses are posted to www.amesplantation.org and the Ames Plantation Facebook page.

Backus also noted that Braddock would serve as Front Marshal and Weatherly would serve as Back Marshal.

Also joining us was Dr. Allan Houston, a cultural biologist with Ames, who provided the detailed and helpful announcements at each breakaway, and James Morrow, who drove the truck with the medical equipment and dog boxes.

Backus recognized the security group of Parsons, Chris Kelley, and Jacob Jenkins (FCSO) and the Fayette County Sheriff's Department for allowing two deputies from the Sheriff's Department, Deputy Moses Allen and Deputy Ricky



Greg Tapp and Larry Garner at an evening Rhea reception.

Wilson, to assist us at times with road traffic. Backus also recognized our faithful paramedic on horseback, Tapp.

Lauren Abbott of Hunt & Field Magazine was also commended for her generosity in providing the program for the event and all her publicity and coverage of the National Championship.

• *Memorabilia, Awards, Prizes, Gifts, and Hospitality for the Championship*

Backus also paused to recognize those who had donated memorabilia, awards, prizes, gifts, and hospitality for the Championship:

The family and friends of Mike Perkins for the donation of the M.G. "Mike" Perkins Memorial Trophy.

The family and friends of Barry H. Saunders for the donation of the Barry H. Saunders Memorial Trophy for permanent possession by the winning handler.

The Waldo and Pearl Dodge Commemorative Belt Silver Belt Buckle is given to the winning owner.

Greg Dennis Designs for donating a custom engraved Acme Thunderer whistle.

Whippoorwill Wild Card Memorial Breeders Award to the breeder of the winning Dog.

Nestlé Purina PetCare, the Exclusive Pet Food Sponsor, which provides a year's supply of pet food to the winner, a National Championship Oil Painting by Ross Young, and a one-of-a-kind 2025 National Championship Souvenir Cap to the handlers, owners, and club officials.

The Bank of Fayette County provided a cash supplement to the purse.

Spalding Labs for providing bio-beneficial fly predators to Ames throughout the year.

Tucker Trail Saddles awarded a Custom saddle to the winning owner.

Jeff Haggis provided a Haggis Trooper Saddle to the handler of the National Champion.

John and Susan Ivester provided owners, handlers, and officials of the 124th Running with a commemorative hat pin of a one and only original design by Barry Saunders.

Tennessee Tractor also provided two John Deere Gator Utility Vehicles for officials to use during the trial.

SportDOG Brand and Gun Dog Supply, Inc. provided a SportDOG Brand SD-1825 Sport Hunter to the handler of the 2024 Champion.

Sportsman's Pride Pet Food sponsored a Brunswick Stew and Barbeque Dinner on Thursday night during the running.

The Saddle Guy provided a handcrafted Trooper Saddle to the winning scout.

SportDOG and Gun Dog Supply provided the winning handler a SportDOG SD-1825 Sport Hunter.

Garmin International provided three Garmin 430 Receivers and T20 collars—one each to the winning owner, handler, and scout; a Tri-Tronics Pro555 Remote Trainer and Bark Limiter Deluxe to the winning handler; and four Garmin units for use during competition.

Area Wide Communications donated six two-way radios for use by Ames Security patrol during the National Championship.

David Kelley Jewelers provided a handcrafted Joe Hurdle lapel pin.

Glovers' Eats-N-Sweets, Somerville, Tennessee, furnished lunches daily in Bryan Hall from 10:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Backus also recognized the First Baptist Church, Grand Junction, Tennessee, which continued its tradition of providing sausage and biscuits every morning.

Cindy Krag Catering for the closing reception and the dinners for the officials.

5 Star Equine Products for the provision of three saddle pads, one each to the winning owner, handler, and scout.

Predator Management Solutions provided two weeks of professional trapping by Doug McKenzie.

Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' and Exhibitors Association (TWHBEA) donated a cash supplement to the

winning handler, provided the handler is riding a registered Tennessee Walking Horse.

Park Cities Quail Coalition made an in-kind contribution to help fund the event.

Mid-South Farmers Co-Op also provided two tons of 11% protein horse feed for use by Ames Plantation for their horses during the trial.

• **Haney's All In, 2025 Winner of the Joe H. Hurdle Top Dog Award**

Backus then announced the winner of the 2025 Joe H. Hurdle Top Dog Award, a memorial awarded to honor Mr. Hurdle and given to the dog that acquired the most points each year to qualify for the National. The owner of the dog receives a pin handcrafted by David Kelley of Kelley Jewelers, Somerville, Tennessee. The 2025 Winner was Haney's All In, owned by Stacey and Steve Croy and handled by Mark McLean. All In accrued 1,415 points in the 2024-25 season to secure this award. This is a significant accomplishment because All In won this award last year. In 2024, he accrued 2,492 points in the season to win the Hurdle Award. He is one of the few dogs in history to win the award twice. Dr. Corder graciously accepted the award in the stead of the Croys and McLean.

• **Additional Comments**

Backus noted that Ames would provide tracking collars for competing dogs. He then conducted our drawing, which we also videoed and aired on social media, with Backus announcing the running and cataloging the running order. Backus explained that he had employed a new computer program to shorten the length of the drawing. This greatly shortened the drawing, and so, once all the names were entered, we had our drawing conducted within approximately 30 seconds, and our meeting was largely concluded.

Backus did read the rules of conduct for the running of the Championship, and he also indicated that running would begin Monday at 8 a.m. for the morning brace and at 1:15 for the afternoon braces at the appropriate breakaway sites unless otherwise provided by the judges and officials.

Kick-Off Party Hosted by Purina

At the Kick-Off Party Sunday evening, which was generously sponsored by Purina and Greg Blair, a silent auction was well attended by guests, with

proceeds going to fund the important work of the Bird Dog Museum. Several items were available for bidding, including jewelry, tracking and training collars, handmade baskets and pottery, glassware, and many other noteworthy and valuable items. Last year's National Champion, Touch's Gallatin Fire, was recognized, and Greg Blair stepped up to the podium to make a few remarks about this wonderful dog and his talented performance. Purina also provided a delicious taco dinner for all attendees, and the event was much enjoyed.

The Braces of the 126th National Championship

[Brace 2: Monday afternoon, 1:11 p.m. B M B's Free Ride, GSHM, Brandon Blum, and Bonner's Hot Rize, PM, Patrick Siebels. Clear, 48 degrees.]

B M B's Free Ride, handled by Blum, made history by being our first German Shorthaired pointer to compete in the National Championship. Both Free Ride and Hot Rize left the East Pasture with alacrity and were sweeping around to the left in the next green field by :03. Both dogs were to the front crossing over Buster Graves at :16. At :17, point was called for Hot Rize and Free Ride at Buster Graves, but no birds were flying, although both dogs held well for the flushing. At :24, Blum called point for Free Ride again, with Hot Rize again backing. Again, Free Ride looked very nice when the judges arrived. Blum flushed extensively and then asked Free Ride to relocate, but Free Ride at first indicated he was loath to do so. He eventually agreed to relocate, but no birds were produced. At that point, much to the gallery's disappointment, he suffered his second unproductive and was in the harness. Hot Rize continued across Ames Road, but he was not seen after :30. Siebels requested his tracker at 1:03, thus concluding his brace, as well.

[Tuesday Morning: The morning brace was delayed until the afternoon due to extremely stormy conditions. Brace 3: Tuesday afternoon, 1:33 p.m. Southern Thunder, PM, Tom Shenker, and Painted Owyhee Toad, PM, Bridget Ledington. Raining, 43 degrees.]

Point was called for Southern Thunder at :02 in the middle of the East Pasture with Toad backing. Upon arrival, the gallery pointed out that birds were flying. Judge Mason indicated he had seen birds flying but could not confirm

they were quail and told Shenker to go ahead and flush for his dog. Shenker did flush but produced no quail, then shot, and continued on with his dog. At :04, point was called for Thunder again with Toad again backing. This time, quail were flying, and Thunder stood firm, head and tail held high, for his birdwork. Shenker next pointed out Thunder at Buster Graves to the front, making a nice cast on the left at :18. Both dogs were seen to the front crossing Buster Graves's driveway at :19. At :26, they were seen at Buster Graves's mailbox. At :31, Ledington called point for Toad at George Kemp, and, as we approached, Ledington pointed out the birds flying to the left away from her dog, who stood firmly, tail high. Ledington walked in front and shot for her dog, who stood perfectly for that as well. At :37, Toad was seen to the front at the Horseshoe Field. At :45, Toad showed to the front as we were passing Giovan Hill. At :56, Shenker called point for Toad, who was standing near the Agronomy Unit. Ledington arrived to flush a woodcock for Toad, who again handled his birdwork impeccably. At some point shortly after 1:00, Shenker requested Thunder's tracker, thus concluding his brace.

At 1:06, Korry Rinehart, scout for Ledington, called point for Toad at the Agronomy Shed, and Ledington, after extensive flushing, relocated Toad, who then had a stop to flush.

Toad scored another find at 1:09 near the Demonstration Farm Pasture, handling his birdwork again with excellent manners. At 1:26, Ledington again called point for Toad, this time at Prospect Church, and once again, he stood up well for both wing and shot. At 1:41, Toad was showing well to the front in Turkey Bottom. By 1:52, Toad was pointed again, scoring an excellent find at 1:52 on Pine Hill. At 2:23, Toad showed to the front in the field beyond Jack Harris Cemetery. Toad's final find was at 2:28 at Jack Harris. Toad finished his three-hour brace to the front, still running hard.

[Brace 4, Wednesday morning, 7:58 a.m. Highground Gidget, SF, Lori Steinshouer, and Ramblin Rivers Unplugged, PF, Brian Gingrich. Cloudy, 42 degrees.]

Both dogs were out of the field after the Out Front Field by .04, running hard and to the front. At :09, Unplugged showed well at Heartbreak Hill. Both

dogs were across Buford Ellington and into Morgan Field by :13. At :17, Steinshouer's dog was seen on the left at Morgan Basin, and then both dogs were seen in Morgan Basin, making impressive casts to the front.

At :22, Unplugged was seen on the left at Turner Road. He was next seen at :26, moving into Turner Field. At :30, Unplugged was impressively rimming Turner Field. At :32, Rinehart, Unplugged's scout, called point for him but waved it off. At about the same time, Gidget, who had suffered a brief absence, returned to the front. At :35, both dogs had swept around Turner Pond and moved swiftly through Turner Pines. However, the setter was again absent thereafter. At :54, Gingrich called point for Unplugged at Turner Ditch, but even after relocation, no birds were flying. At 1:00, Gidget returned to the front after another absence. At 1:10, Gidget was spotted across Mary Scott Dam, and then both dogs showed to the front in No Man's Land. Gidget moved into the Locust Fork Turn at 1:24. Both dogs came out of Locust Fork Turn, but at 1:36, Gingrich chose to put Unplugged into the harness. Gidget moved through the Tennessee Field and the Big Oak Field, and just beyond it, she pointed, but even after relocation, she moved no birds. At that point, at 1:45, Steinshouer chose to put her in the harness.

[Brace 5, Wednesday afternoon, 1:15 p.m. B M B's Freeloder, GSHM, Brandon Blum, and Bonner's Bulletproof, PM, Randy Anderson. Light rain, 49 degrees.]

Freeloder is the second GSP to ever compete in the National Championship and is the son of the other GSP competing this year. Freeloder broke away hard, blazed a fast trail out of the East Pasture, and made an impressive, eye-catching rapid cast in the big green soybean field on the other side, taking it all the way around and out of sight. Freeloder had the gallery sitting up and watching by this time, as Blum dispatched scout Kyle Graves to ensure Freeloder made it around the bend and back to the front. Meanwhile, Bulletproof, also casting in the same general path, made the bend of the course and swept around to point at :17 at Buster Graves. Bulletproof looked very intense on his game, and when Anderson went in to flush, Bulletproof never moved a muscle. Continuing on, at :25, Bulletproof swept into George Kemp, while Freeloder was spotted



Handler Chris Cagle watching as Judge Rich Robertson began a downward descent on foot to a find.

at Cedar Hill at :31. Freeloder and Unplugged were spotted right before the Horseshoe Field running hard and to the front at :33. Freeloder then made another eye-catching and rapid cast all the way around the Horseshoe Field. At :43, Freeloder suffered an unproductive to the right of the lane in heavy cover. At :47, point was called for Bulletproof near the Agronomy Unit with Freeloder backing. Both dogs looked impressive, and Anderson flushed birds for his dog. After that point, Freeloder was not seen again, and Blum requested his tracker at approximately 1:25.

Bulletproof continued, scoring a very nice find at 1:33 at the entrance to Marshall's Jack Harris. He also had another beautiful find at 1:55 at the Jack Harris Cemetery. At 2:03, Bulletproof had another excellent find at Jack Harris CRP. At 2:30, Bulletproof showed to the front at Cox's Ridge. As we moved into John Fason Bottom at 2:33, Bulletproof showed nicely to the front. At 2:46, Bulletproof scored yet another find in the field beyond Kyle's Barn, again handling his bird work to perfection. Bulletproof finished the three hours running hard and to the front.

[Brace 6, Thursday morning, 8 a.m. Touch's Malcolm Story, PM, McLean, and Haney's Silver Dollar, PM, Chris Cagle Sr. Cloudy, muddy, 36 degrees.]

Silver Dollar was seen leaving the breakaway and then was not sighted again. His handler requested the tracker at :30 at Turner Road.

Touch's Malcolm Story showed well in Morgan Field, making a beautiful cast at :14, and proceeded well across into Turner. His handler called point for him at :50 in Turner Pines, but even after relocation, no birds were flying, although Story looked beautiful. Story continued hunting hard and to the front, but McLean chose to pick him up at 1:10 at National Championship Drive.

[Brace 7, Thursday afternoon, 1:15 p.m. Late Hit, PM, Shenker, and Miller's Heat Advisory, PM, Judd Carlton. 35 degrees, cloudy.]

We had a large gallery on hand for the afternoon running, as we had two popular contenders the crowd had turned out to see, Late Hit (scout Kirk Law) and Miller's Heat Advisory (Eisenhart, scout). Late Hit was fresh off winning the Hobart Ames Open All-Age, the Alabama Open All-Age Championship, and the National Open Shooting Dog Championship, and Miller's Heat Advisory has been a contender this year as well, winning the Lee County Open All-Age and taking a runner-up at the United States Open Championship. Both dogs were away and flying in the East Pasture, and both rimmed it with alacrity. They were then spied spinning out into the soybean field by :04, sweeping around it on the left and then into the next field beyond it quickly. Both dogs then swept on across Buster Graves by :12, were across Ames Road by :19, and Late Hit was seen going past Cedar Hill by :21. At :22, both dogs were seen streaking around the Horseshoe Field. As both dogs swept on to the right and down the path away from that field, we started scanning for them in the fields in the Chute on either side up ahead of us. At approximately :30, Gary Lester, who was riding in the gallery, called out behind us in that clear, exciting voice of his, "Dog's going away out there up on that right-hand side now!" It added a little umph to have our favorite showman back in the gallery, and everyone laughed happily! We should never forget that field trialing should be done just for the sheer joy of it, and it was good to have Gary, a true sportsman, remind us that sometimes we should remember to enjoy the pure beauty of it!

Business picked up for us by the time we were out of the Chute from a bird perspective, as Eisenhart called point for Heat Advisory at :56 to the east of the Agronomy Shed with Late Hit backing. Both dogs looked stunning on their game and held perfectly for wing and shot. Both dogs swept through the countryside, making beautiful casts at various points, and then point was called at 1:26 above Turkey Bottom. When we arrived, the beautiful strong dog that is Late Hit was standing firmly with head and tail high, and Heat Advisory was backing. Shenker flushed for his dog, and birds boiled out. Late Hit stood

motionless for both wing and shot. The dogs were released and flew through Turkey and Alfalfa Bottoms and up Pine Hill. We saw them again at 1:53 when Heat Advisory scored a find east of the Agronomy Shed with Late Hit backing. Both dogs' game manners were again immaculate. Six short minutes later, point was called again at 1:59, west of the Agronomy Shed, and we again found Heat Advisory pointed and Late Hit backing. Heat Advisory looked outstanding on his game, a beautiful dog who is magnificent on game.

As we turned back and were riding away from the Agronomy Shed, at approximately 2:05, we began to hear someone calling point in the distance. As the marshals began to lead us to the sound, we realized we would have to go downhill to a significant draw and then ease across a section of creek bed that was at least 3 feet high in places and not particularly stable from a horse footing standpoint. We did make it across the creek in various places and up the other side to find both dogs in the Chute, with Heat Advisory pointed and Late Hit backing. Both dogs looked beautiful and stood well for the flushing and the report of the gun. We then proceeded to return down the hill the way we had come to re-cross the creek, which was not an easy feat, and return to the course. We resumed the running at approximately 2:20, as it took some time to get all the officials' horses to cross and negotiate up the other side of the hill.

Both dogs then continued hunting with a strong forward race, but before we reached Caesar's Ditch, Shenker was out looking for his dog, and he requested his tracker at approximately 2:38.

Heat Advisory was looking strong as we proceeded up the hill on the other side of Caesar's Ditch, and at 2:40, point was called for him at Cox's Ridge. However, even after relocation, no birds were flying. Heat Advisory had no further bird contact in his brace, but he did have a strong finish, still running with speed and intensity at the three-hour mark.

[Brace 8, Friday morning, 8:04 a.m., Touch's Breakaway Fred, PM, McLean, and Westfall's Mandalay, Andy Daugherty. Cloudy with ice in the puddles at 27 degrees.]

Both dogs left the Out Front Field with rapid intensity by :02. At :06, Fred



Gary Lester flushing for one of his dogs while Judge Mason looks on.

was spotted in the curve on his way to Heartbreak Hill. Unfortunately, he was not seen again, and McLean requested his tracker at :32.

Mandalay showed well at :11 at the top of the hill before Buford Ellington; he then showed again at :19 in Morgan Basin and had a beautiful find at :42 in Turner Neck. All was in order with his birdwork, and he then journeyed on, hunting well to the front. Point was called for him beyond Turner Ditch, but Daugherty waved it off. At the road crossing before Mary Scott at :47, Daugherty chose to put him in the harness.

[Brace 9, Friday afternoon, 1:14 Lester's Storm Surge, PM, Gary Lester, and Game Heir, PM, Corder. Cloudy, 46 degrees.]

Ch. Storm Surge is a brother to former National Champion Lester's Shockwave and is this year's top sire. Storm Surge is always a contender, and it seems everyone in the field trial world owns or wants a "Storm Surge" puppy. Game Heir, his brace mate, took two third placements this year to requalify, at the Rend Lake Open All-Age and Hobart Ames Open All-Age, but he had also just battled it out two months prior in this year's hard-fought Ames Amateur All-Age on the same grounds to seize first place over 44 other dogs (some of these being other National competitors), so he was known to be yet another significant competitor this year.

Point was called in the middle line of pines in the East Pasture for Game Heir at :04. He looked outstanding on point, head and tail absolutely vertical, and this is where Heir showed us why he can sweep a field trial. He doesn't move for Doc until Doc releases him from this extremely stylish position. This time, unfortunately, even after relocation, no birds were flying. Both dogs then made impressive casts in the

East Pasture before moving into the green soybean field beyond, carrying the field all the way around and out of sight. At :18, both dogs were across Buster Graves's driveway. At :22, Lester called point for Storm Surge in Buster Graves, but even after relocation, quail were not produced. At :24, across Ames Road in the Old Mounting Block Field, point was called for Game Heir, and, when Corder relocated him, Heir had a stop to flush as birds got up. Both dogs continued hunting hard and to the front, past Cedar Hill. At :38, Surge was proceeding up the hill in the field beyond Horseshoe Field at a fast clip. At :51, both dogs were found on point east of the Agronomy Shed, but the handlers decided they might be backing each other and chose to go on. Storm Surge showed to the front at 1:11 as we were going across the Pond Levee. Both dogs were seen hunting well to the front in the Turkey Bottom at 1:23. At Pine Hill, Storm Surge was still to the front at 1:27. At 1:30, Surge was making a nice cast to the left at the top of Pine Hill. Game Heir was sighted to the front at 1:40 west of the Agronomy Shed.

At 1:46, Lester chose to pick up Storm Surge. At 1:48, as we were heading away from the Agronomy Shed area, Game Heir was sighted again to the front. At 2:02, Heir was moving quickly up the hill away from Caesar's Ditch. At 2:22, Heir was found on point in John Fason's Bottom. He looked outstanding again, on point and held well for wing and shot. Unfortunately, as we were heading downhill to the find, a horse and rider fell into the slippery mud slope, but the rider managed to fall in a way that prevented the horse from rolling onto him. Luckily, the rider was not seriously injured. Heir crossed into the field behind Kyle's Barn and swept on into the Tennessee Field at approximately 2:20. He was found pointed in Morgan Swamp at 2:44. As we were riding up, a large covey of birds got up in waves around Heir, but he stood without moving a muscle. He once again looked magnificent on his birds, and he had his head and tail held high just as firmly for the flight of the birds and the report of the gun as he did when we rode up. He kept his pose until Doc released him to return to hunting.

Game Heir finished his three hours hunting hard and to the front.

[Brace 10: Saturday morning, 8:00 a.m. Woodville's Yukon Cornelius, SM,

McLean, and Erin's Code of Honor, PM, Eisenhart. Cloudy, breezy, 55 degrees.]

Cornelius and Code of Honor led us into the final day of the first week of running. The day dawned with a strong threat of thunderstorms, but this threat thankfully did not materialize. Both dogs left the breakaway running hard and were out of the Out Front Field by :03, and Honor was out of the field beyond it by :04. Both dogs were seen to the front by :11 before we crossed over Buford Ellington. Yukon Cornelius showed at :15 in Morgan Basin, far to the front, making a nice cast. Both dogs were next seen at :24, crossing Turner into Turner Field. At :33, both dogs were seen making impressive casts in Turner Neck. At :47, Code of Honor had a find on the right-hand side of Turner Pines. He looked beautiful on his birds. We then took a short cut through the woods to catch the gallery at the Turner Ditch crossing, and the remaining judge with McLean's dog advised he was still to the front when we returned at :49. At :55, Cornelius was crossing to the front at Wilson Dunn. At 1:07, Yukon Cornelius had a stunning find at Mary Scott Pond, with his head and tail held high. He held perfectly for wing and shot. After release, the setter shot across the pond dam and flew to the right into No Man's Land. Both dogs worked cover nicely through No Man's Land at 1:12, and both were to the front at the Ames Road crossing at 1:16. At the Locust Fork Turn at 1:19, both were still to the front. In the field beyond at 1:28, both dogs were still moving on quickly and making strong casts. At 1:33, point was called for Code of Honor near the Big Oak. He looked beautiful on point and stood well for wing and shot. At 1:37, both handlers chose to put their dogs in the harness.

[Brace 11 Saturday afternoon, 1:30 a.m. (due to the potential for inclement weather conditions and the shortened morning brace, Brace 11 was moved up). Miller's King Poast, PM, Lester, and Barshoe Forget Me Not, PM, Allen Vincent. Cloudy, 61 degrees.]

Both dogs were away at a fast clip from the afternoon breakaway. The weather was perfect bird-hunting weather, cool, drizzling, and ever so slightly breezy. The ground was muddy but not miserably so. At :06, point was called for Forget Me Not in heavy cover on the left of the East Pasture. However, when quail were flushed for him, they flew directly into his face, causing him to

mark flight too much. He was thereafter in the harness.

King Poast made a strong cast in the East Pasture and swept on through into the green soybean field beyond. Lester found him pointed in Buster Graves at approximately :20. After flushing, Lester commented that his dog was acting like the birds had flown on him. Even after relocation, the beautiful Poast could not produce any birds. Lester remounted, and Poast rocked along on the right-hand side of the field and repointed at :23. This time, he found his covey, and Lester dismounted and flushed for him. He looked beautiful on his birds, a big, strong, muscled dog with a high tail and classy head.

At :27, Poast had made the loop around Buster Graves and crossed over Ames Road to cast around the Old Mounting Block Field but rounded back to Lester to jump up in the air beside Lester's horse and get a treat from Lester. At :29, he was again seen leaving the Old Mounting Block Field at a rapid pace to the front. At :54, Lester called point for Poast on the right in heavy cover before the Chute. Although Lester flushed in the heavy briars, the quail were apparently running, and the judges did not see them. Lester relocated Poast, and Poast worked the cover thoroughly in the light rain. After some work, birds were produced, which Poast held well for, as well as for the shot.

At :59, Lester pointed out Poast in the Chute, running hard, going away to the front. At 1:08, Poast had a find at the Agronomy Unit, and he looked outstanding on his birds. At 1:15, scout Nick Thompson called point for Poast east of the Agronomy Shed. As we rode up, one of the judges said he saw birds running on the ground in heavy brush and for Lester to shoot, which he did. Quail flew out around the dog in all directions, but Poast stood firm for wing and shot, looking magnificent.

At 1:22, Poast was making nice casts in the fields after the Agronomy Unit. Poast was still to the front at 1:50 and remained that way all the way through Alfalfa and Turkey Bottoms and on up Pine Hill. Point was called for him at 1:56 on Pine Hill. Once again, he looked outstanding on his game.

To the west of the Agronomy Shed, we sighted Poast again at 2:20 to the front. After an extended absence, at 2:59, at John Fason Bottom, Poast appeared to the front. He finished the three hours

running strong.

[Brace 12: Monday morning, 8:01 a.m. Haney's Hurricane Seeker, PM, David Russell, and Coldwater Odyssey, PM, Gary McKibben. Sunny, 22 degrees.]

Weldon Bennett had been drawn as Odyssey's handler, but McKibben substituted for him after Bennett was injured in a horse wreck the week before.

Both dogs were through the Out Front Field and moving on at a fast clip by :02. At :10, McKibben called point for Odyssey at Heartbreak Hill. Odyssey is a wonder to behold on point, a heavily muscled, intense bird dog with a fine, high tail. He held his stance perfectly for the flush, a very mannerly dog, and all was in order for wing and shot. McKibben then released him, and he was away like a shot across Buford Ellington and into Morgan Field.

Odyssey showed to the front at :21, hammering on, before we reached L. B. Avent. Both dogs were then seen to the front, crossing over Turner at 26. Odyssey made a beautiful cast around Turner Field at 31, then struck birds at :33, swinging into a fine point on the far-right side. Again, when we arrived, he was staunch and beautiful on point and held well for the flush and report of the gun. When released, he immediately went to the front again at a fast clip. We next found him swinging through Turner Neck to begin crossing over Turner Levee, but he immediately snapped sideways and pointed again at :40. Once again, McKibben flushed for his dog, and all was in order, Odyssey once again exhibiting perfect manners.

At Turner Pines at :45, Hurricane Seeker showed to the front, and Odyssey was swinging to the right at the same time. By :49, both dogs were crossing Turner Ditch. At :54, Hurricane Seeker was on the left as we were passing Giovan Hill. He was then next sighted at Wilson Dunn at :56. As we neared the Ames Road crossing, we were sad to see that Odyssey's feet were bleeding from the icy puddles, and he had slowed considerably. McKibben chose to pick him up at that juncture at 1:05.

Once we crossed over into Mary Scott, Russell called point for Hurricane Seeker at 1:06 on the right, but no birds were flying even after relocation. Russell and Mike Lemons, Russell's scout, briefly conferred and appeared to decide to take Hurricane Seeker on further.

However, at 1:08, Russell decided it was time to put his dog in the harness as well, thus concluding the morning brace.

[Brace 13, Monday afternoon, 1:13 p.m. Lester's War Bird, PM, Lester, and Game Surge, PM, Corder. Sunny, 38 degrees.]

Both dogs were moving fast in the East Pasture, with Corder calling point for Surge and then waving it off at approximately :01. Both dogs were then out of the East Pasture by :02 but swiftly returned to investigate an edge or two. At :10, the handlers called point in Jim Miller Field, and when we arrived, we discovered Corder was choosing to flush on the find while Lester chose to accept his dog's position as a back. After Corder flushed for a few seconds, he suddenly said, "There is the bird right underneath the dog's head." It turned out, as he flushed, the bird was tucked up almost at the dog's nose. However, even when Corder flushed and the bird flew, the dog showed perfect manners, remaining motionless, head and tail still in the air.

Upon release, the dogs then shot quickly forward, and we discovered them at :17 at Buster Graves on what appeared to be either a divided find or two separate finds but very close together. Corder went in one direction, and Lester went in the other, flushing.

Unfortunately, Surge was not able to produce any birds even after relocation. However, War Bird worked the cover hard and produced a bird from across a small ditch within approximately one minute.

War Bird then had a find at :25 on the right side of Buster Graves with his head and tail looking outstanding, very intense, and pretty. All was in order from a manners perspective. At :36, point was called for Game Surge on Cedar Hill. Once again, he looked impeccable as he stood there for the flush and report, absolutely motionless with his nose held straight up and his tail straight up as well.

At :52, War Bird scored a nice find in the Chute and handled his birdwork perfectly. Both dogs were to the front at 1:00 at the Agronomy Unit, going around the curve. At 1:11, Lester's scout, Rinehart, called point for War Bird in a significantly overgrown place west of the Agronomy Shed. After relocation and extensive flushing through heavy briars, Lester was able to produce birds for War Bird.

At 1:25, at Lawrence Smith Houseplace, both dogs were pointed, but the handlers chose to go on, perhaps deciding the dogs were backing each other. At 1:29, War Bird was moving into Turkey Bottom at a smooth clip. At 1:47, Corder requested Game Surge's tracker, thus concluding his brace. At 1:58, War Bird pointed again at almost the same location as he had pointed at before, west of the Agronomy Shed. This time, Lester was not able to flush birds for him again, and War Bird suffered an unproductive. He then proceeded at a fast clip, and at 2:07, scored a beautiful find east of the Agronomy Shed. At 2:35, War Bird was on the left, hunting hard at Cox's Ridge. At 2:46, War Bird returned to Lester in John Fason Bottom. At 2:48, War Bird showed nicely at A. C.'s Houseplace. At pickup, War Bird swung into a stylish point at Joe Woody, and he handled his bird work impeccably for one final time.

[Brace 14 Tuesday morning, 8 a.m. Bandit's Hill Avenger, PM, McLean, and Highground Toby, ESM, Steinshouer. Wet, cold, and 31 degrees.]

Both dogs were through the Out Front Field by :02, and out of the second field by :06. By :12, both handlers were out looking for their dogs at the first road crossing. At :15, Toby returned to Morgan Field. Amy Spencer began to handle him until Steinshouer returned, but running remained suspended because the ambitious setter did not stay on course but went in the direction paralleling Kyle's Barn instead. At approximately :18, Toby returned, and Ike Todd requested permission to dismount and hold the setter, which he did. At about the same time, Avenger returned from his outing, and Todd received permission to secure him briefly, too. McLean and Steinshouer quickly returned to Morgan Field, and running resumed on course by :19. By :32, Toby was crossing over Turner Road into Turner Field. At :37, Bandit returned to Turner Neck, and Toby was seen thereafter making a sweeping cast from right to left at the far end of Turner Neck at about the same time. At :50, McLean pointed out his dog casting at the far end of Turner Pines. Shortly thereafter, Toby followed suit.

At :58, Toby came down the path past Tom Hurt, and at :59, Bandit was moving out of Tom Hurt. At 1:10, Bandit was heading into Mary Scott. McLean called point across the dam at Mary Scott,

but he waved it off by the time we got there, explaining that as soon as he yelled the word "Point," the birds flew, so he was taking the dog on. At 1:18, as we rounded into No Man's Land, both dogs were to the front. At 1:22, Bandit had a classy find in No Man's Land on the left, which he handled with excellent manners. However, thereafter, McLean chose to put him in the harness.

At 1:30, Toby was moving into the Locust Turn. At 1:45, he was moving into the Tennessee Field. At 1:46, Steinshouer determined it was time to pick him up also.

[Brace 15, Tuesday afternoon, 1:08 p.m. Game Star, PF, Corder, and Mauck's Wyeast Owyhee Dallee, ESF, Alex Mauck. Partly cloudy and windy, 40 degrees.]

Conditions were rather harsh for this brace, as it was cold and the wind was whipping well above 15-20 mph, a foretaste of the winter storm about which we were receiving repeated warnings; i.e., that it was bearing down on the plantation for mid-week, with predictions of at least 2-3 inches of ice and snow.

Both dogs left running hard and fast from the East Pasture and exited it by :02. Thompson called point for Dallee in the East Pasture Hay Field at :14. When we rode up to see Dallee tucked under a large oak tree in heavy cover standing beautifully, birds began boiling out all around and under her, but she held her stance perfectly. At :16, both dogs were moving into George Kemp. By :30, both dogs were casting well at the front before the Horseshoe Field. At :44, both dogs were on the hill to the right, hunting aggressively in the cover.

At :45, Dallee was spotted to the left of the Chute. At :46, both dogs were rounding to the east side of the Agronomy Shed. At :49, both dogs were to the front as we passed the Strawberry Field. At 1:01, both dogs were still to the front, hunting hard and fast. At 1:05, both dogs were cruising past Prospect Church. As we were nearing Lawrence Smith's barn at 1:14, both dogs showed well to the front. At 1:16, Dallee suffered an unproductive at Lawrence Smith's Barn. At 1:34, Dallee pointed again at Marshall's Jack Harris with Game Star backing. Even after relocation, no birds were produced, and at this juncture, both handlers picked up their dogs, concluding the brace.

The predicted winter storm did indeed

materialize for Ames, and we saw snow, ice, and temperatures in the low teens arrive late Tuesday and Wednesday morning. The weather continued in the low teens to 20s through Friday morning, so running was canceled on Wednesday and Thursday and did not commence again until Friday afternoon.

[Brace 16 Friday, 1:30 p.m. (delayed from morning due to weather). Mayfield Storm Charger, PM, Vincent, and Lester's Shockwave, PM, Lester. Sunny, 30 degrees.]

Shockwave is a former National Champion, and Storm Charger is this year's winner of the Kansas Prairie Open All-Age and runner-up champion of the Oklahoma Championship. The dogs were away fast in the East Pasture with the handlers calling point on the left at :04, but then both dogs were in motion again, and then only Shockwave slammed into point again with Storm Charger continuing. Upon arrival, Shockwave looked beautiful and held well for both wing and shot. Upon release, Shockwave continued straight on the path and veered right into the East Pasture Hayfield to again point at :08. Again, he looked very nice on his birds, and all was in order for both the flush and the report of the gun. By :09, both dogs were to the front in the green soybean field, and by :16, both dogs were to the front at Buster Graves. At :18, Matt Cochran, scout for Vincent, was calling point for Storm Charger at Buster Graves's Mailbox, and when we arrived, we discovered Shockwave was also there backing. Both dogs looked very classy and handled the birdwork perfectly. The handlers then asked could they continue straight across Ames Drive rather than going backward to make the Buster Graves loop, and the judges indicated that plan was fine. Both dogs were into the Old Mounting Block Field by :20. By :26, both dogs were passing by Cedar Hill to the front.

At :30, both handlers called point for their dogs, and each dog was on point in a different location near the other at the edge of the Horseshoe Field on the right-hand side. Each handler flushed quail for his dog, and all was in order for both dogs. Both dogs moved on after the finds with alacrity, sweeping across the Horseshoe Field and then up the hill past it, heading toward the Chute. At :40, Rinehart, scout for Lester, called point for Shockwave to the right of the Chute. Shockwave once again

looked nice on his birds and stood stock still for the flushing and the shot. As Lester released his dog, Storm Charger moved through the area with Vincent in pursuit. Shortly thereafter, up ahead of that find, Charger slammed into point at approximately :41. Charger looked beautiful on point, also, and he handled his find in a very mannerly fashion.

By :52, both dogs were running hard and to the front by the time we were approaching the Agronomy Shed. At :54, as we rounded the bend to the Agronomy Shed, Vincent called point for this dog, and when we got there, he indicated a rabbit moving, which Judge Bain confirmed, and then Vincent chose to take his dog on without flushing.

At 1:08, both dogs were to the front in Sam's Water Truck, hunting aggressively. At 1:12, as we crossed the Levee, both dogs were still to the front and continued so at Lawrence Smith. Vincent called point for Storm Charger at 1:25 in Turkey Bottom. Once again, Charger's bird manners were impeccable. Charger then stayed to the front after Alfalfa Bottom and continued up Pine Hill while Lester was looking for his dog. At 1:35, Lester's scout, Rinehart, called point for Shockwave, and we accompanied him to Marshall Jack Harris. Upon arrival, Lester pointed out a rabbit and briefly grabbed his dog by the collar as if to remove him from the area. Then, Lester released the collar and flushed in front of him, producing quail. Shockwave handled this without a bobble. At 1:38, Storm Charger suffered an unproductive on Pine Hill, and Vincent elected to put him in the harness. At 1:45, at Marshall's Jack Harris, Shockwave scored his final find, which he again handled perfectly. At 2:04, Shockwave was to the front at Miller's Cove. At 2:26, at the far end of Cox's Ridge, Shockwave was still showing to the front. At A. T.'s Houseplace at 2:40, Shockwave was still running hard. At 2:55, Shockwave was to the front, passing by the Tennessee Field. He moved into Morgan Field at 2:58 and finished the three hours strong.

[Brace 17: Saturday morning, 9 a.m. Westfall's Pioneer Pete, PM, Daugherty, and Erin's High Note, PM, Carlton. Overcast, 29 degrees.]

We started at 9 a.m. to allow the temperature to warm sufficiently for the ground to hopefully thaw. Both dogs swept out of the Out Front Field and the field beyond it by :04. At :09, Carlton called point for High Note at the

top of the hill before Buford Ellington. High Note stood with head and tail high and perfectly motionless for the flush and the shot. Continuing, both dogs were across and in Morgan Field by :13. At :19, Graves, High Note's scout, called point for him in a thicket on the far right side of Morgan Field. Upon arrival, Carlton flushed for his dog, did not produce quail, but pointed out there were feathers and fresh blood at the site. At :26, both dogs were to the front at A. T.'s Houseplace. At :31, both dogs made beautiful casts in Turner Field, carrying the big semi-circle all the way around. At :38, both were to the front going by Turner Pond. Both dogs were then sighted at :45 at Turner Pines. At :53, Pioneer Pete was at Tom Hurt to the front.

At 1:00, at Wilson Dunn, both dogs were again seen to the front. At 1:08, Daugherty picked up Pete in Mary Scott. At 1:15, Carlton called point for High Note in No Man's Land, which second find Note handled perfectly again. However, Carlton decided his dog should not continue and put him in the harness.

Brace 18: Saturday afternoon, 1:09 p.m. World Class Instigator, PM, Cochran, and Dunn's True Reign, PM, Vincent. Sunny, 40 degrees.]

Both dogs were out of the East Pasture by :07. At :16 at Buster Graves, both dogs were to the front. At :21, as we made the Buster Graves Loop, both dogs were spotted ahead. After we had crossed over Ames Road, Cochran pointed out his dog in the Old Mounting Block Field at :24. As we passed Cedar Hill at :29, Instigator was still to the front. At :34, Instigator was moving through the Horseshoe Field. By :38, both dogs were in the Chute. At :44, True Reign showed to the front further along in the Chute, as well. At :49, east of the Agronomy Shed, Reign was still moving fast to the front. At 1:04, Cochran decided to pick up Instigator. At 1:08, Vincent requested True Reign's tracker, thus concluding the brace.

[Brace 19: Sunday morning, 8:37 a.m. Misty Morn Masked Man, PM, Joey McAlexander, and Haney's All In, PM, McLean. Sunny, 32 degrees.]

Both dogs left the breakaway at a rather unusual clip, slipping a little in the frozen mud. However, both dogs are known for their swift field trial pace, and they both quickly found their footing, and All In was not seen again for some time. Masked Man was out of the Out

Front Field and the field beyond it very quickly, clearing both by :03. At :08, we caught another glimpse of Masked Man, but All In was not to be seen. When we crossed over Buford Ellington into Morgan Field, both dogs were present, with Masked Man proceeding to cast well and head quickly toward Morgan Basin. All In headed straight across the far-right end and then McLean got him turned and sweeping forward at :14. At :15, a gallery member warned McLean that All In was headed toward Kyle's Barn. At :17, All In was seen making a beautiful cast across Morgan Basin. At :25, Masked Man was heading toward Turner Road by Avent's Houseplace. At :31, both dogs were sighted in Turner Field. By :38, both were seen to the front at Turner Basin, and at approximately that point, McAlexander called point for his dog before we reached the Turner Levee. Unfortunately, no birds were flying for the Masked Man in the heavy cover, although he looked beautiful on point and held well for the flush.

At :47, both dogs were to the front. At :52, at Giovan Hill, Masked Man crossed over into Tom Hurt, and both dogs were seen there by :54.

At Wilson Dunn, at 1:02, All In returned to the front, and Masked Man was still to the front at that juncture. At that point, McLean chose to pick up All In. McAlexander subsequently chose to pick up Masked Man at 1:08.

[Brace 20: Sunday afternoon, 1:13 p.m. I'm Gallant, PM, Vincent, and Touch's Fire Away, PM, Anderson. Partly cloudy, 54 degrees.]

Both dogs were away strong from the breakaway, exiting the East Pasture by :05. At :10, both dogs shared a beautiful divided find at Jim Miller. They then swept on through Buster Graves and across Ames Drive, with I'm Gallant slamming into point at George Kemp at the edge of Cedar Hill at :28. He looked outstanding on his game and stood well for wing and shot. As Vincent had his dog by the collar and was reaching toward something on his horse, Fire Away swept by, never seeming to see Gallant. Gallant, however, seemed to see Fire Away, and he immediately left Vincent as his competitive spirit seized him. At :49, both dogs showed well at the Agronomy Shed. When we crossed by the Strawberry Field, Gallant showed to the front at :52. Fire Away was at Sam's Water Truck at :58. Vincent pointed out Gallant at 1:00 on the left



Elise and Joey McAlexander after Joey's run of Misty Mom Masked Man.

at Sam's Water Truck. At 1:10, the scout for Fire Away called point for him across from Prospect Church, which he handled beautifully.

At Lawrence Smith, Anderson pointed out Fire Away at 1:17, and one minute later, Gallant appeared as we began descending into Turkey Bottom. At 1:25, both dogs were casting well into the depths of Alfalfa Bottom. Two minutes later, both dogs were moving swiftly up Pine Hill. One of the scouts then called point for the dog(s) at 1:35 on the off-side of Pine Hill. When the handlers arrived, both dogs were pointing down the side of the hill. Both handlers went on foot downhill into the heavy, wooded, brushy cover, and Judge Robertson elected to dismount and follow them to get a better view. Vincent chose to consider Gallant as backing while Anderson flushed for Fire Away. However, no birds were flying for Fire Away, and both dogs were soon underway again. At 1:40, Gallant had a find at Marshall Jack Harris and looked very nice for both the flush and the report of the gun. As we were moving past Kerry Kimery's Seven Acres at 1:44, Vincent pointed out Gallant moving away. At 1:47 on the left side of Marshall Jack Harris, Fire Away suffered his second unproductive and was up.

At 1:52, Gallant had a beautiful find east of the Agronomy Shed, which he managed quite elegantly. At Jack Harris at 2:03, Gallant was still to the front, and 20 minutes later at Cox's Ridge, Gallant was still hunting hard and aggressively. Ten minutes later, on the far side of Cox's Ridge, Gallant remained consistent in his pace. At 2:23, Vincent called point for him on the side of the hill before John Fason Bottom. As Vincent went in to flush, a flying squirrel and several baby flying squirrels ran up a tree right in front of the dog, and Vincent pointed this out to the judges and elected at that juncture to simply take the dog

on. In John Fason Bottom, Gallant pointed on the right-hand side. Although Gallant relocated, and Vincent flushed thoroughly in the area, no birds were flying; however, Vincent identified a spot where there were a lot of quail feathers on the ground. At 2:38, Gallant was sweeping up the hill out of John Fason Bottom. At the field behind Kyle's Barn at 2:48, Gallant was still moving on and hunting well. At 2:56, Gallant showed nicely on the right hand outside edge of the Tennessee Field. He then finished the three hours strongly in Morgan Field, sweeping up the left-hand side.

[Brace 21: Monday morning, 7:58 a.m. Nighthawk's Rebel, PM, Tracy Swearingen, and Southwind Joy's Resurgence, ESF, Steinshouer. Sunny, 27 degrees.]

At :07, Joy was already at Heartbreak Hill, and Rebel was temporarily out of pocket. By :18, Joy was seen moving around the hill past Morgan Basin, and Rebel was to the front, as well. At :22, Swearingen called point for Rebel at A. T.'s Houseplace but then waved it off. By :25, Rebel was crossing over Turner and moving quickly ahead, and by :30, Rebel was sweeping across the far end of Turner Neck. At :38, Rebel was hustling through the beginning of Turner Pines, but Joy was still out. At :39, Steinshouer and Joy returned to the front. At :46, both dogs were crossing Turner Ditch and moving on with speed. By :49, both dogs were sweeping the Tom Hurt field, making excellent casts on the left-hand side. At Wilson Dunn, we spied Rebel to the front, but Joy was not seen at this juncture with Steinshouer looking again. At 1:02, Steinshouer called point for her dog in a low-lying wide ditch on the left before Mary Scott. Judge Mason dismounted to follow Steinshouer into the cover for the flush. Joy looked beautiful in the dappled sunlight of the shady grove where she stood pointed, and she held there like a picture, head and tail high, for both the flush and the shot, as a large covey flew.

At 1:06, Rebel pointed opposite the levee at Mary Scott, but despite relocation by Swearingen, no birds were flying, and Rebel took an unproductive. At 1:11 in No Man's Land, Steinshouer called point for her dog but waved it off. At 1:16, Rebel had an excellent find in heavy cover on the far-left side of No Man's Land with several quail put in the air. He looked beautiful on his birds and held well for both wing and shot.

Both dogs continued through the Locust Turn and swept on into the Tennessee Field. At 1:37, Steinshouer called point for Joy with Rebel backing. However, no game was produced, and Joy took an unproductive. At this juncture, Swearingen elected to put Rebel in the harness, and Steinshouer followed suit, thus ending the brace.

[Brace 22, Monday afternoon, 1:11 p.m. Haney's Storm Warning, PM, Chris Cagle Sr., and Lester's Storm Chaser, PM, Lefty Henry. Sunny, 60 degrees.]

Both dogs made beautiful right-side casts in the East Pasture and moved into the East Pasture Hay Field by :10. At the Buster Graves' loop at :18, Warning was with Cagle. At :20, Henry turned Storm Warning toward the Ames Drive crossing and onto the course while looking for his dog. At :29, Storm Chaser moved past Cedar Hill, but Storm Warning was not in sight, although he had made the crossing near the Old Mounting Block field. At :30, Storm Chaser was to the front, headed to the Horseshoe Field with Storm Warning absent. At :37, Storm Chaser was to the front at the beginning of the Chute. At :45, Storm Chaser was making a cast far to the right near the Agronomy Shed (Storm Warning was still not to be seen). At :51, as we were leaving the Strawberry Field, Chaser was still to the front. At 1:06, Cagle requested his tracker for Storm Warning. At 1:13, Chaser was at Lawrence Smith. At 1:38, at Marshall Jack Harris, Henry was putting Storm Chaser in the harness, still not having had any bird contact.

[Brace 23: Tuesday morning, 8:01 a.m. Rester's Johnny Ringo, PM, Eisenhart, and Touch's Shadow Rider, PM, McLean. Sunny, 46 degrees.]

Both dogs were away fast from the Out Front Field, with Ringo out of the field by :02. Shadow Rider was not seen after the breakaway for some time period. At :12, the scouts called point in A. T.'s Houseplace, and we arrived to find Shadow Rider pointing and Ringo backing. Both dogs looked beautiful and handled the birdwork immaculately. Both dogs returned to the front across the back side of Morgan Field. At :23, point was called for Shadow Rider again, this time in the Tennessee Field. Again, he looked stylish on his birds and held well for wing and shot. As we went diagonally back across the Big Oak field to rejoin the remainder of the gallery, Shadow Rider slipped from sight. We

rejoined the gallery and saw Ringo crossing Turner at :28. At :33, Ringo was sighted in Turner Field. At :37, Ringo showed to the front at the far side of Turner Neck; Shadow Rider was still out at this juncture. At :53, Ringo was moving on, across Turner Ditch, hunting hard and to the front, but Shadow Rider had not returned to the front. At :59, Eisenhart chose to put Ringo in the harness. At 1:07, having reached the Mary Scott Road crossing and not having encountered Shadow Rider again, McLean requested his dog's tracker.

[Brace 24: Tuesday afternoon, 1:09 p.m. Miller's Speed Dial, PM, Anderson, and Miller's Blindsider, PM, Jamie Daniels. Sunny, 72 degrees.]

Tuesday afternoon brought us the return of two National Champions competing against each other, Speed Dial winning in 2020 and Blindsider being the 2022 winner. Speed Dial was out of the East pasture by :04, and Blindsider was sighted in the East Pasture Hay Field at :05. Blindsider showed to the front at the far end of the green soybean field beyond it at :10. At :16, Miller's Speed Dial had a find at the actual side of the muddy lane going into Buster Graves with Blindsider sliding in through a great crowd of gallery horses in the crush of the lane to smoothly pull up to a back that had the gallery gasping for a second (sometimes we forget that what is not on our eye level is, however, actually on the dog's). Both dogs handled the birdwork to perfection and stood immobile for the report of the gun as well.

At :28, Speed Dial was moving on past Cedar Hill and breezing through the Horseshoe Field by :33. At :38, point was called for Blindsider on the right before the Chute in heavy cover. When we arrived, he was standing up with head and tail high, looking like the magnificent champion he is, but no birds were flying, and he suffered an unproductive. At :42, both dogs were spotted on the right-hand side of the Chute, hunting hard in the thick growth. At :44, Daniels called point for his dog underneath an oak tree on the left-hand side of the Chute. Again, Blindsider looked beautiful, and birds were boiling out of the brush all around Blindsider when Daniels flushed, but Blindsider stood the pressure well.

At :46, both dogs were sweeping around the curve east of the Agronomy Shed. At :49, Anderson called point for Speed Dial west of the Agronomy

Shed. When we arrived, Speed Dial relocated on his own and firmed his head and tail up, looking magnificent. It was impressive to see that well-trained, intelligent bird dog work game so prettily in the crop field in the bright early spring sun. Anderson, to his credit, let him work and then bumped him forward a couple of times by tapping him on the head until Speed Dial completely locked down. At that point, Anderson flushed and shot for him. Speed Dial handled all of this bird work exceptionally well. During this time, Blindsider had started toward the road running alongside the course, but his scout, Eisenhart, rounded him up and returned him to the course. At 1:03, both dogs were at Sam's Water Truck. At 1:14, at Lawrence Smith, Speed Dial was moving quickly by Lawrence Smith. In Alfalfa Bottom, at 1:21, both handlers pointed out their dogs making nice casts. Speed Dial was still to the front at 1:30 west of the Agronomy Shed, but his handler chose to pick him up at 1:44.

Blindsider scored another find at 1:44 in the same general location as his previous find left of the Chute. He handled it looking beautiful and mannerly again. However, at this juncture, Daniels elected to pick him up.

[Brace 25: Wednesday morning, 8:02 a.m. Como Thunder, PM, Russell, and Como Rain, PM, Brody Byrd. Sunny, 47 degrees.]

Thunder swept out of the Out Front Field and the field beyond it by :03, and moved onto the hill before the Buford Ellington crossing before :10. Both dogs were in Morgan Field by :13. Rain made a beautiful cast in that field at :14, and was moving through Turner crossing at :25. At :28, Como Thunder was crossing over into Turner Field. By :32, Russell was calling point for Thunder on the left side of Turner. As he went in to flush for his dog, quail flew in all directions, but Thunder held firmly for the flight of the birds and the shot. Both dogs were then sighted at the far end of Turner Neck at :40. At :46, Como Thunder showed well to the front at Turner Pines. Rain also showed to the front at the end of Turner Pines at :49. At 1:02, point was called for both dogs at Wilson Dunn, and both handlers shot for their dogs. At 1:14, both dogs were to the front at No Man's Land, and at 1:18, scout Lemons called point for Thunder in the far-left section of that area in heavy cover. Once again, Thunder looked beautiful on his



Judge Rich Robertson, NFTCA Vice President Joey McAlexander, and Judge Bill Mason watching the winner announcement.



Judge Bill Mason and handler Luke Eisenhart at the win ceremony.



The judges and handler Luke Eisenhart with newly named National Champion, Erin's Perfect Storm.

birds and held firmly for wing and shot. We were then proceeding to return to the gallery through Edward Clark South when Russell called point for his dog again at 1:22. As the judges came around a curve, they did not see any birds flying, but Russell shot for his dog. Ryan Braddock, the marshal, who had been riding ahead with Russell, advised the judges that he had seen the birds lift, apparently when the birds heard/saw riders approaching before anyone even dismounted. We then proceeded again to return to the gallery and eventually caught up with the gallery at the opening of the Locust Turn. Upon exiting the Turn, we crossed into the Tennessee Field, and at the crossing, at 1:40, Byrd indicated he was picking up Rain. At 1:43, Russell called point for his dog again in the Tennessee Field. As we approached, this reporter saw a bird lift and settle behind a cedar bush on the far side of the hedgerow, approximately 15 feet in front of Thunder. As Russell flushed without producing quail, I briefly advised Russell of what I had seen, and he replied affirmatively. At about the same time, a rabbit jumped from cover into sight approximately 3-4 feet in front of the dog. Thunder then relocated on his own and pointed again. Shortly thereafter, Russell picked Thunder up, thereby concluding his brace.

[Brace 26, Wednesday afternoon, 1:09 p.m. Lester's Front Porch, PM, Siebels, and Touch's Midnight Rider, PM, McLean. Sunny, 75 degrees.]

Both dogs were away fast from the breakaway, with Front Porch in the East

Pasture Hay field by :06. Rider was seen making a beautiful cast in the soybean field past the East Pasture at :08. Point was called for Front Porch at :12 in the East Pasture Hay field, but no birds were flying. Both dogs were then seen moving at a fast pace, so they reached Buster Graves Loop at :21. Siebels then called point for Front Porch in the Horseshoe field at :32 but then waved it off. At that point, McLean was out looking for Midnight Rider. At :33, Front Porch made a beautiful cast in the Horseshoe Field. Both dogs were spotted on the right before the Chute in heavy cover at :36, hunting hard. At :39, Rider was to the front in the Chute. Front Porch then showed to the front to the far right across the big green field at :46 near the Agronomy Shed. As we were approaching the Strawberry Field at :48, McLean pointed out Rider to the front. At :56, at Sam's Water Truck, both dogs were to the front. At 1:00, both handlers chose to pick up their dogs, neither having had any bird contact.

[Brace 27, Thursday morning, 8:09 a.m. Westfall's True Grit, PM, Daugherty, and Whippoorwill Vette, PM, Larry Huffman. Sunny, 50 degrees.]

Both dogs were fast leaving the breakaway and were out of the Out Front Field by :03. At :07, both dogs were to the front at Heartbreak Hill. At :13, True Grit was moving at a blistering pace in Morgan Basin with Vette showing on the far right in the same area at :14. As we were circling the hill at A. T.'s Houseplace at :22, True Grit showed to the front. At :24, both dogs

were crossing over Turner.

At :32, Vette made a perfect cast all the way around Turner, but True Grit was no longer in sight. Judge Robertson thus remained behind with Daugherty, who was out looking for his dog. At :43, Vette was heading toward Turner Pines, but True Grit was still not to be seen. At :45, Judge Robertson returned to the gallery, reporting that Daugherty requested the tracker for True Grit. At :52, Vette was to the front at Giovan Hill. At :59, he was moving quickly across Wilson Dunn. At 1:06, at the Mary Scott crossing, Huffman put his dog in the harness.

[Brace 27, Thursday, 11 a.m. (moved up to facilitate the timely announcement of the Champion). Superstition's Jake, PM, Brody Byrd. Bye-Dog. Sunny, 59 degrees.]

Jake was away fast in the East Pasture and moved with a fast clip through the green soybean pasture beyond it, out of it, as well, by :11. However, he had not struck birds by the time we went through the Buster Graves Loop at :21, and his handler, Brody Byrd, after conferring with his owner and scout, Ric Peterson, made the decision to pick him up at the first road crossing, thereby concluding both his brace and the 2025 National Championship.

Grand Junction, Tenn., February 10
Judges: Greg Baln, Bill Mason,
and Rich Robertson Jr.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP [Three-Hour Heats]
– 51 Pointers, 5 Setters, and 2 German Shorthairs
Winner-ERIN'S PERFECT STORM, F1692323, pointer male, by Chelsea's Thunder Bolt-Erin's Bet On Me. Brad Woodie, owner; Luke Eisenhart, handler.

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2025 National Field Trial Championship

February 27, 2025, the final day of the National Field Trial Championship, began with sunny skies and cool temperatures. By the end of the competition Brad Woodie's orange and white ticked pointer Erin's Perfect Storm had captured the 126th championship title with handler Luke Eisenhart of Albany, Georgia. "Colt", as the five-year-old dog is known, was running for the second year in the trial. He won the Master's Open Quail Championship and the Missouri Open All Age Stake to qualify.

Eisenhart's mount for the trial was DMF BAD COMPANY. His ride entitled him to a \$500 check from the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association. TWHBEA provides this incentive to the winning handler who rides a registered Tennessee Walking Horse.

Eisenhart is no stranger to bird dogs and championships. He grew up in Pennsylvania, where at age seven, he began learning from his grandfather Gerald "Pap" Tracy, and his uncle George Tracy – both members of the National Bird Dog Museum's Field Trial Hall of Fame. By the time Eisenhart was fifteen, he was training dogs on his own after school, and eventually he took over the business from Pap. He has won more than 100 championships since then and is a multi-time Purina Top All-Age Handler. This year's win was Eisenhart's second National Championship as a handler.

The Championship is run each year at the Ames Plantation in Grand Junction, Tennessee. Dogs qualify to compete by their placements in qualifying events throughout the United States and Canada. Thousands of field trial enthusiasts attend the championship.

The Tennessee Walking Horse is the horse of choice for most field trial handlers, scouts and gallery members, and TWHBEA is proud to promote the versatility, smooth ride, and surefootedness of the breed in field trials.

BY MARY BETH PRUETT

A CHAMPION WIN WITH "BAD COMPANY"



THE VOICE OF THE TENNESSEE WALKING HORSE

AN UPDATE FROM THE NATIONAL FIELD TRIAL CHAMPIONSHIP ASSOCIATION

Dr. Stan Wint, President | Grand Junction, Tennessee | June 5, 2025

The National Field Trial Championship Association develops all policies and procedures relevant to the running of the National Championship. Our goal is to continually evaluate and make improvements to the National Championship to maintain its rich tradition and history. We deeply appreciate the input and support of the field trial community and wish to keep you up to date on happenings that pertain to the National Championship.

The board is made up of 11 respected individuals from within the sport of field trialing. The directors are Dr. Fred Corder, Larry Garner, John Ivester, Matt Rhea, Tom Shenker, Dr. Terry Terlep, David Williams, and Keith Wright. Ames Plantation Manager Matt Backus serves as Secretary, Joey McAlexander is the Vice President and Dr. Stan Wint serves as President. Our Association would like to share with you some answers to questions we have been receiving about the 2026 National Championship.

• **What are the qualifications for the 2026 National Championship?**

A maximum of 42 dogs will be accepted for the running of the 2026 National Championship. Past National Champions are qualified for life and will receive the highest priority for entry into the event. Priority will also be given to dogs with a first-place win in a qualifying event in their lifetime and those appearing on the current Joe Hurdle Award List. If more than 42 dogs meet this criterion, they will be chosen in descending order of points. If fewer than 42 meet this criterion, the NFTCA



will invite additional dogs from the Joe Hurdle Award List in descending order of points until the field is full.

• **Will the courses be the same as last year?**

The goal of the Ames Plantation and the National Championship Association is to return the Ames Plantation to a successful and sustainable wild bird venue. Tall Timbers Plantation has graciously agreed to help with this restoration. Because of the extensive habitat work that must be done, we will only have one course available to us for the next few years. In 2026, the course previously referred to as the "morning course" will be the course on which all dogs will run.

• **What effect do you think these changes will have?**

These changes should result in 1) the most highly qualified field of dogs and 2) those most currently active in field trialing. This should also increase the number of dogs in qualifying trials by encouraging those who wish to qualify to remain active in trialing.

The habitat work on courses should help us reach our goal of returning to a wild bird venue with a more than adequate number of birds. Plentiful bird work will give all dogs an equal chance to shine and will be much appreciated by owners, handlers, and judges.

• **Have Judges been announced for 2026?**

The judicial team of Greg Bain, Bill Mason, and Richie Robertson will be returning for duty in 2026.

• **Are there other areas of focus for the upcoming year?**

Some of the things to look forward to in the coming year include the completion of our 501(c)(3) status, the enhancement of our electronic and social media footprint (to help attract sponsorship), and improvements to our social functions and event calendar.

• **What changes might be on the horizon?**

One of our goals is to eliminate the certificate fee and dog tax to reduce the financial burden on those putting on qualifying trials. We also hope to be able to increase the purses, which should also attract more dogs and handlers to open all-age trials.

There are many other options also being discussed. But for now, we remain committed to consistently putting on the highest quality event for owners, trainers, handlers, and the bird dog world. It is what they expect and deserve in the running of our National Championship.

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