

REPORT ON THE

RED SETTER

By HERM DAVID

WRITING this annual report on the red setter has become a most enjoyable custom. No small part of the enjoyment derives from the fact that each year there has been definite progress to report. Here are some of the ways this progress has evidenced itself during 1954.

1. More dogs than ever before have placed in competition open to all pointing breeds.
2. I've seen more *mature* dogs deliver thrilling performances than has ever been the case before.
3. More breeders than previously have been placing dogs among the winners.

The nationwide breeding program of the National Red Setter Field Trial Club has again produced juveniles with most impressive win records. Not one this year, as in 1953, but three or four.

Membership activity is greater than ever. The NRSFTC is enjoying its all-time high in membership. Secretary R. C. "Rusty" Baynard reports, however, that he is always happy to receive new applications for membership. In New England, Michigan and Indiana, the contingents of field trial enthusiasts are ever expanding. From Missouri we hear evidences of a reawakened interest. And the Irish Setter Club of Wisconsin held an unrecognized trial this fall. Response to this first effort insures an expanded program in the Dairyland state next year.

But—there is another development we note that bespeaks of progress. Over a period of several years inter-club competition has whittled down some of the barriers of distance, created better understanding and led to the establishment of many warm friendships. This understanding of mutual goals and problems, this friendship and sportsmanship that transcends petty things, forms a better basis for effective teamwork than has ever existed in the affairs of the red setter. Fact of the matter is—some of us have packed off to an Irish setter trial even though we had no entry—just because we didn't want to miss a gathering of so many good friends.

It would probably be appropriate to state where we have been, where we feel we are on the scale of progress, what goal we have set for our dogs, and how we expect to get them there. Records of early field trials seem to bear out the contention that the Irish setter was, for a time, second to none. Then, two things happened. Standards of field trial performance were altered as judges became something more than totalizers of points scored. And the Irish setter became the darling of the show crowd. Only here and there was he bred for field qualities, and even more rarely was he bred with an eye to the class demanded of a field trial dog. It is a wonder that the red setter has not regressed, fieldwise, even more than he has during the past 70 years. Building upon the foundations of such lone stalwarts as Otto Pohl and the late Edwin Berlozheim—along with such back-country stock as could be found unspoiled—today's enthusiasts have, in a large sense, combined their efforts to produce such dogs as I shall subsequently list along with something of their records. The goal is to produce a class gun dog second to none. There is still a lot of "catching up" to be done and we can hardly hope to attain in five years the accomplishment of eighty years of pointer and setter breeding to meet field trial standards.

Only by breeding to the best we can find, testing in trials and then culling unmercifully can we hope to reach our goal in the foreseeable future. Events seem to have proved that the challenge is too great for any one man to master—no matter what his abilities, energy and resources. Now, for the first time, virtually every serious breeder in the United States is cooperating in the undertaking. It is on this basis that we hope to succeed where the hopes and individual efforts of so many good men have been only partially rewarded.

It would not be inappropriate here to express

gratitude to the many persons outside of our own group who have been helpful during the past few years. To no group are we more indebted than to the many fine gentlemen who through their judgments at our trials have exerted a most wholesome influence on our standards of perfection. The NRSFTC has never used an Irish setter man as a judge—but we are proud to note that two of these gentlemen now have Irishmen in their kennels and we like to believe it is because they saw tempting quality.

The management of the AMERICAN FIELD has been most helpful and encouraging and the *Field Dog Stud Book's* championship recognition for our fall classic is a most jealously guarded property. To insure that it would not be lightly awarded we have selected such honored men as Curtis W. Miles, Dr. Richard Jackson, Henry P. Davis and Truman F. Cowles to award or withhold it as they saw fit. That it has been twice withheld does not come as a disappointment, for each year that it goes unclaimed increases its value as a goal to be attained.

I should like to touch here upon a situation that requires a little tolerance. Many of my readers will recall judging a stake in which an Irish setter



WILLOW WINDS DUKE

or another of the so-called minority breeds was entered by a novice to field trials. Too often the result is criticism set to music something like this: "My dog had x number of points—but the judges wouldn't even look at him because he was an Irish setter."

All too often the answer is that the judge didn't need a very long look because the dog lacked any semblance of class. If there is some manner or means of sending such a chap home with an understanding of what did happen—and perhaps even with a desire for class in a bird dog—the sport of field trialing might be enriched. It would be if we could convert a few of these fellows.

I'd like to get real brave now and list what I believe to be the best Irish setters I've seen. There is no significance in the order listed. The first three dogs are deceased.

WILLOW WINDS MIKE—a great fire-in-his-eye competitor. He was a slashing, horizon hitter with a better than average way of going. Hunted every minute he was down.

WILLOW WINDS RUSTY—if anything, wider than Mike. (This makes him the widest red dog I've ever seen.) This may have been due to his having the opportunity at an earlier age. Didn't have as much style.

WHEELER'S RED BOY—a small compact dog that was already far past his peak when I saw him. His greatest accomplishment was as a sire, for he was never campaigned heavily. His get never suffered by what they got from their sire's side.

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WILLOW WINDS HOB0—last year's wonder dog. Already holds more wins than any Irish setter known to my record books, despite the fact that he has had little more than one year of campaigning. Under the tutelage of Gene Lunsford he's being readied for all-age and class gun dog competition. He won't be hurried at the risk of losing the spark of greatness he seems to hold.

WILLOW WINDS DUKE—this year's winner of the National Championship Irish Setter Stake. Although the title was withheld, Duke distinguished himself by boring into the cover, a well-sustained one-hour heat and an extremely stylish find. Also has two open wins this year.

RUSTY'S JINX—the outstanding sire of this year and last. Product of a three-legged mother, Jinx holds a number of open wins—but they're virtually all on native quail. He's eleven now—and he's still a threat in half-hour gun dog heats on quail. Would probably need at least a week to rest up.

HIGHPOINT CAPTAIN McKERRY—waited until he was nine years old to deliver his greatest performance. Tore the course apart at Strongsville, O., in 1952. Had a perfect, stylish find. Under championship conditions, he might have been a fully-recognized champion. But, alas, he was one year too TWO—REPORT ON THE RED SETTER—XMAS early for FDSB sanction and he was too old to wait another year. Archer Church retired him from competition and he is the "assistant squire" of Highpoint Acres.

TYRONE'S MAHOGANY MIKE—he's such a beautiful sight moving that I've seen judges refuse to check their watches until after they've seen him on birds. I'd guess most any judge would hate to lose him. Al Pilon wrote of him: "a fine and upstanding example of the breed . . . a brawny and well-conformed dog with plenty of chest and powerful muscled legs to carry him along swiftly and smoothly. To best describe this one's gait, it would appear that one could almost place a cup of water on his back and have Mike run a hundred yards without spilling a drop, so smooth and even is his running gear. A high-headed and high-tailed dog to boot. His race was fast . . . sustained . . . hit scent hard." Ed McIvor, president of the Irish Setter Club of Michigan, is the proud breeder-trainer-owner-handler.

RUFUS McTYBE O'CLOISTERS—only two Irish setters have ever really hit the championship bracket. One of them was Joe Jr. who defeated the best there was in 1875-76. Rufus is the other. He was named runner-up in the National Amateur Pheasant Championship of 1950. Many of us feel it was a pity that Edwin Berlozheimer died shortly before this notable triumph. Two of Rufus' sons and a daughter will appear in this list, evidence enough of his prowess as a sire.

RED VELVET'S DUKE—he was just a youngster on the day I was braced with him. I had thought I had a wide dog. He was so far outside of my dog that I decided my dog had either shortened up with age or was simply outclassed by the latter-day competition. I never ran my guy again, but Duke goes on his stylish way.

IKE JACK KENDRICK—a son of Askew's Carolina Lady, Jack seems to be just now coming into his own. One more season and he should be handling kindly enough to show the judges all of his cover-ripping course. He has all of the rest of the ingredients of a superb shooting dog. He has had five wins this fall, one last spring, one the previous fall.

AUTUMN MIKE—this is a son of Rufus—and a real good one. Might have gone all the way in the championship event at Kelley's Island last year, but the abnormal pheasant population was too much for Dr. F. A. Shuffelton's quail dog.

RUST KING O'TOOMEBRIDGE—here's another quail dog we'd like to see in country more familiar to him. Positively the friendliest, most personable animal—dog, cat, horse or lovebird—that I've ever met.

HIGHPOINT FLEET—here's a dog that has beaten the best, might do it again on any given day. Lots of style.

RUFUS KILLARNEY O'KERRY—another son of Rufus. He's a Sunday campaigner because owner Al Kipp is tied to a small town drug store, but in those tough shooting dog trials in western Ohio he is a respected threat. Has two open, three Irish wins this year.

UNCLE NED R'S PAPPY—I'm basing these comments on what I saw on owner John Van Alst's farm early this fall. Pappy hits the cover, covers the ground and finds birds. Moreover, he looks good doing it. Mark him down as a comer.

JACKSON BROOK ANGLER'S RUSTY—capable of meeting all comers in his native New England cover. Has piled up a most appreciable number of wins. Has, I believe, more all-age and shooting dog wins in open competition than any other Irish.

THOR—died in a tragic training accident just before the start of the current season. Wish we had

had an opportunity to see what he would have done as a mature dog. But, then, so does his owner, Ted Stronski.

OXTON'S SHOSAPH—he has, I believe, beaten every Irish setter he has ever competed against. Unfortunately, these include only one or two of the other dogs on this list. Too many miles between this class dog of California and those on the other side of the Great Divide. Saw him once, at Tipton, Ia., and know him to be a good one.

GROUSE OF BROGAN—a most vivid memory remains of this flowing, little, deep mahogany colored dog. He is the only imported dog on the list. We had hoped to see this sparkler again, but he suffered a near-fatal heart attack while being conditioned for the Kelley's Island trial and his active days are over. There's one other imported dog that might have made the list. Wish I had seen that one before he was broken to an elderly gentleman's foot range.

WILLOW WINDS PAT—this youngster had ten wins at last count, half of them in open competition. He's still a puppy, but four of his wins have been in Derbies. He has all of the marks of a real good one.

But all of the good ones are not males. Here are some of the charmers of the female order.

ASKEW'S CAROLINA LADY—discount everything I say about the Ladybug for I am madly in love with her. Here is the stylist supreme. This birdwise old gal may be a little swaybacked from carrying successive litters about, but that high tail of hers'll tell you they are in front of her, and her nose will tell you exactly where to look. All honor to this grand old girl who has piled up ten wins between and whilst carrying her litters. She won first in the championship stake at Kelley's Island, title not bestowed.

WILLOW WINDS SMADA—this old girl has at least her share of wins, but she's on my list as a producing matron. I'll predict that in the short space of a few more generations of dogs the records will reveal that she has been the foundation bitch behind the best of them.

TIPPY TIPPERARY McKERRY and WILLOW WINDS BESSIE—I've put this pair together because they had so much in common. Not possessed of the full, flowing gait of potential champions, but they were always a joy to watch in action because of the marvelous teamwork they offered when handled by their owners. Each of these girls was hopelessly, possessively in love with "her" master. Neither was really wide, but you'd have to beat them because they'd always find and handle birds. Tippy was killed on the highway late this spring and old "Hippity-Hoppity" has been pensioned.

WENDY McTYBE O'CLOISTERS—she was a sick dog the day I saw her, and even if I hadn't known that I'd have to rate her highly. She is the product of a kennel with a proud history and she should add some brilliant chapters of her own.

UNCLE NED R'S GINGER—even without training, she was a threat as a youngster. She was bred to Rusty's Jinx, raised one of the greatest litters of Irish setters ever bred—and then was lost to us. She makes the list because she was the dam of—

VAN'S RED, VAN'S GINGER and WILLOW WINDS CATHY—you pick and choose from among them. Cathy had at last count, and while still in her puppy season, sixteen wins, eleven of them in open-to-all-breeds competition. Yet the only time I saw these three sisters in a puppy stake, Cathy was standing between her sisters for the placement picture. If Cathy's record is better (I doubt if any puppy of any breed can match her eleven wins this season) it is because she has been campaigned more heavily and because her training started earlier. All are at least partly broken and they promise to keep a lot of Derby hopefuls honest next year.

SHARON—pheasant, quail, natives or planted, heavy cover or rolling country, it doesn't make any difference to this girl. She's going to find birds and handle them. If you're out to beat her you'd best find some way other than running up a bird score. Sharon, as I know Tom Ward would agree, can be outranged, outlucked and outstyled, but, there's no pair I know of today that can match the teamwork of Tom and Sharon.

SHELLEY'S RED SUGAR—she's the surviving half of the Sugar 'n Spice act that until this fall would first thrill us with searching, beautifully patterned races displaying style and snap all of the way—and then act the fool in the birdfield. Spice is gone now and Carl Schollenberg has reached a firm understanding with Sugar—to the point where she is delivering on all of the promise she had shown earlier. With things breaking her way she could place in any shooting dog stake I've ever seen. She already has open wins.

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CEDAR BLUFF PADDY—the most consistent
winner in NRSFTC stakes. She can be depended

upon to find and handle birds in acceptable fashion.
She's at least as wide as you'd want a shooting dog
in the hilly area around her native Allentown, Pa.,
where she has accumulated her share of open wins.

PRIDE OF MILLIS—you may know her as Pride
of Erin. By either name she is a good one. Named
runner-up in the recent championship event. She
surprised me for I'd expected to see a little New
England cover dog. Instead she hit it out high, wide
and handsome and was rewarded with the highest
bird score in the stake. She drew a brace that ran in
the heat of the day. Had she been a little better
conditioned for the hour heat, she might have gone
even higher. She is a stylist on point and a graceful
mover.

TWEED HALL PAT—has the shortest natural
tail I've ever seen on a setter. Still, she shows you
all of the intensity you might desire. She was good
enough to win the shooting dog stake at the recent
NRSFTC trial.

BYRDFIELD KATE and BYRDFIELD ZET—
these are litter mates of Hobo. Both, as does litter
brother Double Jay, hold open Derby and puppy
wins. A better analysis will have to wait until we
see what they can accomplish as mature dogs. They
have all shown the range and style, plus the bird
sense. Time, training and trials will have to tell the
rest of the story.

Let me say, again, that the opinions expressed
above are entirely my own. There a couple of other
dogs that I might have included and there must be
at least one worthy Irishman that I've missed for no
good reason. I wouldn't want to call any of these
the best in the country, but they're the best I've seen
running in trials and, as Carl Duffield says, "Records
live, opinions die."

If they're not entered, we won't ever be able to
evaluate them.

Now, before closing this report, I'd like to put a
few random thoughts down for the record. One of
them concerns John Van Alst, a retired telephone
company executive. John helped in the formation of
the NRSFTC, although he'd had no previous expe-
rience with trials. He had been a lifelong admirer
of the Irish setter. He has given most generously
of his ability and his time, grabbing hold of what-
ever job needed doing. His dogs, while talented,
were under the double handicap of no training and
a handler unable to ride. Still, John supported trial
after trial with his entries and his labors. Until this
year! Now, with Van's Red, Van's Ginger and Uncle
Ned R's Pappy, he is a respected threat all through
the East. John has engaged a professional handler
and is enjoying the double thrill of being a breeder-
owner. What better reward could you wish to befall
such a fine sportsman? But that isn't all. John has
been cagy. To display the Irish setter's prowess
where it'll do the Irish setter the most good, he has
placed several of his best prospects with private
shooting clubs.

Another tribute is due the fine sportsmen of the
area around Dover, Delaware, and to the Fish and
Game Commission of that state. Together they have
made the Petersburg Game Management Area into
one of the finest and most attractive quail grounds
in the nation. Members of the Delaware Setter and
Pointer Club have, with their own labor, built a fine,
large and comfortable clubhouse, even to an upstairs
veranda overlooking the birdfield. When the Federal
government returns the area to the State, the club-
house will be deeded to the State of Delaware by
those who built it.

The hospitality, extended over a period of years,
by the Irish Setter Club of Indiana should go no
longer without public acknowledgment. The ladies
feed their guests like kings—and such pies! The
men display a brand of sportsmanship that almost
makes me wonder if they wouldn't rather have
their guests do most of the winning. The weekend
spent at Indianapolis always seems much too brief.

And finally, a word about a sparky little lady from
Missouri. Mrs. G. Wood Smith of Kirkwood has
wangled authority from the NRSFTC officers to
offer a trial over the far-famed Weldon Spring
grounds next April 2 and 3. The club had been over-
due for a more westerly trial—and the event couldn't
be in more determined hands. Whether there will be
enough Midwestern entries to compensate for the
Eastern dogs unable to make the long trip is a ques-
tion that will keep us all on edge until the night of
the drawing. But we'll never know until we give it
a real try. After all, winning with red setters hasn't
been a job for men who like to do things the easy
way.

