

SOLMS and VGP High River, Alberta, CANADA 2021

by Jeff Martin

The DKGNA held two fall tests over the 17-19th September 2021 and to the best of my knowledge were the first of these tests ever conducted in western Canada.

Vito Caramia an experienced NAVHDA participant in his previous life, did a great job on the never-ending details needed for hosting successful tests. Well known professional trainer Randy Blanchard and his wife Linda generously provided their house as the test base and provided some of the best field, forest and water grounds anyone could ask for.

Judges for the event were yours truly Jeff Martin, Mark Peasley and emergency judge Edie Stelsovic. Covid protocols stopped Brandon Park from Utah crossing the border last minute and Edie capably stepped in to help us out. Brandon recently achieved a 330-point VGP with totverweisen so hopefully he can be coaxed shortly to provide a training article on his experiences.

The VGP entrants were

1: Astor vom Barlager Forst (Lennox vom Klepelhagener Forst X Mathilda vom Geestmoor) a 26-month-old male trained by Vito Caramia.



Astor was rock solid throughout the two days achieving a 299-point prize 2 including a well deserved 4h or outstanding water search without the duck, it was textbook. The VGP is a marathon and is a lot of pressure constantly asking the dog to change gears over two full days of testing, very trying for both dog and handler. In Germany only about 5% of versatile dogs bred ever attempt it . Astor had one call back on his bloodtrack resulting in a 3 score that kept him out of a prize 1.

Astor also received a V conformation rating in the Zuchtschau.

2: Claire vom Hugel-Hafen (Payton vom Kings Crossing X Anna vom Hugel-Hafen) a 29-month-old female trained by Randy Blanchard. Claire did a great job scoring well in her field and waterwork and for the most part her obedience. She was withdrawn from the bloodtrack on the second day by her handler which ended her testing otherwise she was in the hunt to prize well to that point. The bloodtracks were in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies and the conditions were

abnormally dry because of the widespread drought but given the tree canopy it was considered a fair test.

3: Payton vom Kings Crossing (Zunder vom Kings Crossing X Daisy vom



Hollvoght) an 8 year old male ably handled by 16 year old Hanah Marthaller. Yes that isn't a misprint and while its true Payton has achieved a VGP 1 previously, its an absolute achievement for someone so young to attempt it and be successful. Hanah is a natural with hunting dogs and handles them with the experience and confidence of someone way beyond her years. I am sure we will see her at more tests in the future.

Payton was rock solid across both days, doing everything with the attitude of an old campaigner asking, "how many times do you want to see me do this ???". He achieved a very creditable 288 prize 3, again only the bloodtracking score reducing his prize category.

4: Blair vom Riverwoods, (KS Venus vom Neuaenberg X KS Brooke vom Riverwoods) handled by Randy Blanchard. She is a six-year-old female bred by Herman Schomakers in Germany.

Blair had to be run as the last dog in the group because she had come into heat the week prior. She had solid scores across the field, water and obedience categories but after having 3 recalls on the 300 metre bloodtrack could not prize in this test. I have seen her in a previous VGP test in 2019 scoring multiple 4h scores but I think she was affected by a multitude of circumstances including her heat cycle.

Blair achieved a V conformation rating in the zuchtschau.

SOLMS/AZP entrants

1: Claire vom Hugel-Hafen, trained and handled by Randy Blanchard. Claire had previously tested the VGP test in the 2 days prior. It's a lot to ask a dog to test on 3 consecutive days, I have seen it done but I would be the last to recommended it. I have seen Claire perform flawlessly in her spring derby but the pressure simply got to her and the handler chose to withdraw her from the test.

2: Nova vom Thuringer Zipfel (Don vom Klepeshagener Forst X Fee 11 vom Thuringer Zipfel) a 30-month-old swarzschimmel female trained and handled by Rebecca Woodman. I had previously seen this dog test at the derby this year because of covid limitations throughout 2020. She achieved a well-earned Prize 1 and V conformation rating at her derby.



Rebecca is originally from Switzerland and this is her first ever DK and testing experience. It was great to see a rookie continue with her dog to this level and I am sure she learnt a lot by participating. As a side note Rebecca had to deal with multiple fires throughout the summer and moving cattle to safety which made getting to this AZP even more special.

Nova performed with enthusiasm at whatever was asked of her throughout the test but particularly memorable was her superb field search. It was expansive, high headed using the wind at all times with one clear desire to find game, scoring a well deserved 4h or outstanding. Nova was unsure what was required at the live duck search which resulted in her Prize 2.

At the Zuchtschau another dog **Aria vom Prairieflygel** (Astor vom Barlarger Forst X Tilly vom Kings Crossing) who didn't test, achieved a V conformation rating.

Mark Peasley who had driven all the way from California and myself were hosted by Vito to a couple of days hunting in southern Alberta following the tests. It was nothing short of unforgettable with mild weather and the beautiful fall colors. We had excellent hunting of Hungarian partridge in the fields, ducks in the potholes and Marks young dog doing a beautiful track and recovery of a wounded jackrabbit.

I couldn't help but think this is what this testing and training is all about, wonderful versatile dog work, comradery and of course the tall stories in the evening.

Good hunting, Jeff Martin