HIGH RIVER, Alberta Canada, FALL TESTS 2022

by Jeff Martin

(L to R) Edie Stelkovics, Mark Peasley, Joe Kelly, Jeff Martin, Gil Dueck, Carver Chamberlain

The Albertans held a wonderful combined SOLMS/AZP/VGP and Zuchtschau over the 9th,10th and 11th of September 2022. Vito Caramia organized the participants and the test paperwork like an old pro while Randy and Linda Blanchard hosted the test at their training facility along the Little Bow River. Linda deserves a special thankyou for allowing her home and front yard to be turned into an RV park for a week over the test weekend. I hope some wine with your two sisters helped soften the memories.

As I've stated before, the field, forest and water grounds that Randy has access to, is par excellence for doing these tests.

Judges for the weekend were Jeff Martin (Penticton BC) with Mark Peasley (San Francisco CA) and the very experienced DD judge Joe Kelly (Boise ID). Mark drove all the way from California and was lucky enough to make it a hunting trip from start to finish. Joe prefers not to judge as much as previously so we were very lucky to have him come up to help out. A practical dog man, he is always a pleasure to judge with, thankyou both.

The VGP was conducted over Friday and Saturday with two entrants. The field work was conducted first while temperatures were mild with a moderate cool breeze. The waterwork followed in reed covered ponds adjacent to the Bow River. The forest work was left for Saturday as that was a one-hour drive west to the foothills of the Rockies. Particularly pleasing were the number of people interested in versatile dogs, come to spectate and see what this German testing is all about.

1: Archer vom Praireflugel (Astor vom Barlager Forst x Tilly vom Kings Crossing) This is a tall 2-year-old male owned and trained by Randy Blanchard. This was a dog that spent too much of its young life neglected in its owners back yard, until Randy had the opportunity to buy him. A dog like this takes an experienced trainer as the basis set during the first year as a puppy was never established. Friday proved too much for the young dog with a smattering of 3 and 4 scores across field and water work but was still very much in the test. The VGP is a very comprehensive test and it's a marathon over two days, not a sprint. Its best to stay calm and keep peddling, its character building to

say the least. To promote versatility, JGHV allow a score of 2 in some subjects and still prize well, with the final prize being determined from the total points from each category. Archer was on his A game on the second day scoring 4's in most of his forest work but had to be called back to restart the blood track which resulted in a 3 score. Interestingly with a breeze coming down the hill the dog completed most of the track 20ft downwind of it, so there was no blood to be found to reassure a nervous handler. Archer scored a very respectable 264-point VGP prize 2. If only his previous owner could see him now.

Vito and Astor at the end of the Blood Track

2 : Astor vom Barlager Forst (Lennox vom Klepelshagener Forst x Matilda vom Geestmoor) Astor is a very experienced strongly built 4 year old male owned, trained and handled by Vito Caramia. This dog ran the VGP last year for a respectable prize 2 and was entered again this year. Now Astor knows he's more than capable but with Vito, like many Italians when it comes to dogs, second is just the first loser. It seemed whatever Vito asked him to do, he did it like an old campaigner with the attitude "leave it to me". In order of testing, his fieldwork was all 4's with a 4h (excellent) for his ground covering, purposeful high headed search pattern. The waterwork followed and again all 4's with a 4h for his comprehensive water search without the duck. It was no surprise as the dog achieved this on a different body of water last year. The only 3 of the whole tests was when the dog had to be called back to do the blind retrieve across the river, Astor was heading to a pond where he found live ducks a few days before.

As per regulations, the 400 metre bloodtracks were laid first thing Saturday and we were able to complete the two dogs in the other forest tests before coming back to the tracks. Astor continued to clock up perfect scores yet again no matter what was asked of him, he was more machine than dog. The very final test was the blood track which held him out of a prize 1 last year. He did as perfect a blood track as I've ever seen, nose down it was like he was on rails, even doing the turns at the wound beds without missing a step and Vito trying to keep up. It's a 400-meter track and by the last 80 metres of this final test Vito's steely veneer started to crack. He put the dog on the down stay twice to look for signs of blood himself. Both times, unknown to Vito, Astor was laying right on it!! Blood tracking is a mandatory 4 score for a prize one and is a team effort that tests the limits of most handlers, as we typically don't do enough of them. Astor was given a solid 4 in what was mostly a 4h track. His various obedience tests were all 4 throughout. Astor and Vito scored a well deserved 309-point VGP prize 1 including two 4h's. In North America with the same day track that is 309 from a possible 312!! Well done.

The SOLMS was conducted on Sunday with three entrants plus a single AZP entrant. It was pleasing to see some derby entrants from the spring, come back to run the SOLMS as they should. It's a big step from derby expectations to a SOLMS, but it is a pivotal test of the DKV system. It establishes where your dog is at in its training, the abilities

inherited from its parentage and indirectly, the quality of support you are getting from its breeder. It is essential to do the SOLMS test and not get wet feet in the last week. In order of running.

Carter & Bella

1: Bella vom Prairieflugel (Astor vom Barlager Forst x Tilly vom Kings Crossing) a strongly built 16-month-old female owned by Carver Chamberlain. It was particularly pleasing to see this first-time handler, back with a determination to correct his derby 2 in the spring. Carver quietly and confidently racked up perfect 4 scores across all categories, searching and pointing, blind duck retrieves and live searches in water and blitzed the long fur and feather tracks which most people have trouble with. This is exactly what the SOLMS is about and as a team they made it look easy, well done. SOLMS prize 1.

2: Diva vom Soesental (KS Gerry vom Donauland x Willow vom Trocken Bach) a 16-month-old female owned by Gil Dueck. This is a mildly mannered, small to medium sized swarzchimmel female. She scored mostly 3 and 4's across the whole test. When training for this test with a young dog you have to have a clear, step by step approach, building on the foundations of the previous correctly learnt lessons. The foundations have to be perfect before moving on. In this case the dog would do the work just fine but either drop or not sit to deliver game, which hurt her scores at this level. Sitting, holding and releasing on command is a critical foundation stone which is trained, a dog is not born with the knowledge. As I say, running a dog test is character building and intended to make us better handlers, don't avoid the experience.

Diva is a beautifully constructed female and a superb feminine head. At 59cm she is 1cm over the minimum size but well worthy of her V rating at the Zuchtschau.

3. Basil vom Hochland (Payton vom Kings Crossing x Jinx vom Keljer) this is a 4-year-old brown roan female owned by Tyler Smith and trained by Randy Blanchard over the summer. This was a dog that preferred to run than settle down to versatile work. It left the rabbit track to search an adjacent field which resulted in a 3 in the fur drag. The very next test was the blind retrieve across water and the dog found the dead duck but again spat it out to go run. Retrieving expectations at this level is that the dog picks up game and returns without further commands, other than "fetch and give". Praising with the dog returning correctly is most definitely allowed and it was great to see most handlers doing this, this year. At the moment the dog left edible game, this was an automatic failure of the test.

4.Lord vom Adlerberg (Henk vom Bockhoft x Danica vom Adlerberg) This was a tall 2-year-old swarzchimmel male. This dog ran its derby at six months old in 2021 and it was good to see how it had developed bodily and with further training. The dog did the same beautiful nose driven, high headed search, cocked into the wind at all times, for a

4h in both nose and search scores. I have judged and hunted over numerous dogs derived from the Klepelshagener Forst D litter (KS Darko, Don and Dana) that all have this driven search and use of nose in the field, looking for game at every step.

The dog's retrieving was its let down, not sitting to deliver and dropping some game. Edie snatched the first retrieve, the rabbit for a score of 3. As it turned out this was clever handling as the retrieving score is averaged towards the fur retrieve. An overall retrieve score of 3 allowed the dog to achieve a SOLMS prize 1.

The dog is overall very nicely built with excellent ratings in many attributes to warrant a V conformation rating, well done.

As is becoming the norm, it was an excellent run test, on excellent grounds with well presented dogs. Thank You to all the people that made it possible.

Good Hunting,
Jeff Martin