

Utah Training Days

by Alec Losee



We've all been there, from first time dog owners to guys with 10 dogs and a pile of Prize Ones under their belt; we've all been laying in bed with just under two months to go tossing and turning all night thinking about the drag or the blind retrieve, or some piece of the Solms test. Training days help to put

these thoughts at ease and bring everything into focus.

As someone who has been around hunting dogs but is a first time DK owner it is amazing to see the dedication of this club and its leaders to its members. Testing can be a daunting task no matter how prepared you are and this year it will be even more so for the majority of dogs testing in the Solms. My pup was born last July and from the moment I picked him up we were getting after it, and I had a wild first season with him from waterfowl, to chukar, to sharptailed grouse, but all the while the Derby was in the back of my mind. Many others and I had similar thoughts of using the Derby test to get an idea of how it feels to test, how the DK tests are run and how to deal with that stress both in yourself and your dog. More than anything we wanted to be introduced to the DK testing system with the low stress of the Derby.

Derby got canceled. Thank you Covid. Solms for dogs the same age as mine was this year or never, and it became time to buckle down. Training by yourself and getting a couple days in a week is invaluable, but you can read the Gray Book start to finish and have a list of questions longer than the Gray Book. That is where training days come to the rescue.

For me, training days have been pretty critical in shaping up my pup. I've watched the Derby, watched the Solms, and annoy Tyler Smith and John Heiner weekly with a plethora of questions. But when I have been able to make it to a training day it gives me a clear picture of what needs to become my focus in the following weeks. When you show up to a training day there is a handful of guys there who don't really need to be there, they're there not for themselves or their dogs but to help others succeed.



Tyler Smith's Berlin vom Hochland finishing the Blind Retrieve



Mike Madsen send Piper on the Blind Retrieve

These guys have a knowledge bank from years of training, testing, and hunting that enables them to watch a dog run and they can give you a list of things to go focus on. The majority of handlers can diagnose an issue like "my dogs not steady to shot," or "my dog isn't tracking on drags" but prescribing a fix for that is where these more experienced handlers come in. No matter what, the Solms will be a highly stressful event for first time handlers, especially in a year where they haven't had the opportunity to run a derby first. These training days have given me and

other first-time handlers the tools necessary to go in to Solms with the confidence that they will pass.

Training days are invaluable to first time handlers. It is important though while you're there to make your connections, take mental notes, and go home and put them to practice or it becomes a waste of time. I've seen firsthand how frustrating it can be for those that are giving up their free time to come help to watch people come back the next week with the same problem. Any time I have gone to a training day I have come home with something to work on and every one of those days has brought my dog and I closer to being Solms ready.