

*2009 Boykin Spaniel Society Upland*

# **National Novice Champion, Brandywines Duramizer Chip**

*By Phil Hinchman*

My life has always included dogs and hunting, but I didn't get my first Boykin until ten years ago, even though I had known about the breed since the late 70's. Upland hunting has been my first love. Growing up I hunted grouse in Wisconsin, and after moving to Indiana I hunted pheasant in the northern region of the state and quail and partridge in the south.

When the Boykin Spaniel Society (BSS) started hosting Upland Trials, I was very excited because quartering and flushing game is what these dogs do naturally and it is easy to see how much they love it. This was our third year to attend and it is amazing to see how the dogs and handlers have improved in such a short amount of time.

Brandywine's Duramizer Chip was the male pick of the litter and he was supposed to go to Texas. Luckily for us, we ended up keeping him. Chip has always had tons of bird drive and a very keen nose. His mother, Big Sky's Bessie Wayne, was the Bird Dog Challenge World Champion in 2007, and it is evident she passed on her talents to Chip.

Running rules differ for the classes at the Upland, but the one constant in all three is that the judges want to see the dogs display natural hunting ability. Ultimately, you train for control, or steady to wing and shot in Upland, and it is easy to over-train and make the dog too reliant upon you for direction. You want your dog using his natural abilities to hunt and cover ground, and not rely upon you for constant direction.

In the Novice class, a dog does

not have to be steady to wing and shot so I chose not to steady Chip before the trial. The trial started on Saturday with bright sunshine, moderate wind and air temperatures in the low twenties all day long. The first land series was in an open broom straw field and we were hunting chukar. Gunners winged his first bird and it floated probably 200 yards to the edge of the pine forest. Chip was there when it landed and as it bounced back in the air he leaped up and caught it three feet off the ground. He had another long fly away in the second series and chased it out of the field thru some vehicles parked along the roadway until he lost sight of it, and then he returned to me.

After the bitter cold on Saturday we awakened to drizzling rain on Sunday and the judges took us to the piney woods for the last two series. Chip was quartering big, just to the outside of the gunners flanking the course when he flushed a bird that turned and flew over the gallery. I whistle-stopped him as I could see it would be an unsafe shot for the gunners; Chip displayed that he was under control and we went back to work as he flushed and retrieved the last bird in the land series.

After the dogs demonstrated their ability to find, flush and retrieve game in a variety of cover and terrain the judges conferred and announced their call-backs for the water series. The premise for including a water retrieve at the Upland National is to demonstrate that the Boykin, as a versatile gun dog, can retrieve game wherever it

falls. The Novice water series had the dogs jumping three feet off a dirt pier for a single mark up to 30 yards away. Chip was poised and spring loaded for the retrieve and could have been a contender in a Big Air competition. With water behind us I finished running my other dogs and went back to the clubhouse to await the judge's decision.

In Upland hunting I don't think there is a winning "formula." It all comes down to the quality of your dog, the conditions of the day and how the birds are flying. It had been such a busy weekend that as the ribbon ceremony began I really didn't have any feel for how Chip measured up against the other dogs in his class. I was proud of him and how well we had worked together, but there were a lot of good dogs there that weekend. Winning the 2009 Upland National Novice class is a great start to the year, and I know Chip and I have a great future together.

The Upland event is unique because it is the closest thing to replicating a true hunt, and for many of us the most coveted award is the Gunner's Choice. Voted upon by the two gunners in each class, it is their choice of the dog they would most enjoy hunting over. I had won the Intermediate class several years ago with Brandywines Chocolate Covered Cherry, but I knew we weren't taking home a ribbon in the Open this year. When they announced that Cherry was the Gunner's Choice in Open it made my night.