



NEWSLETTER

OUR GOAL: To Promote, Preserve, and Experience One of the Greatest Southern Traditions Known... Quail Hunting.

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Chasing the UFTA National Championship

By: Kenny Armstrong –AQH member

If you ever wanted to know what a National event is all about, then wonder no longer. Here is your chance to go behind the scenes (for an up close and personal look), with Team GunRunner as we chase the 2008 UFTA National Champions Trophy!

It was Feb. 2008 and 300 of the best bird dogs in the country have descended on Town Creek, Alabama for the UFTA Nationals. The host for this event is the prestigious Double Head Resort located on the banks of Lake Wheeler in North Alabama. These four legged competitors have come from

as far away as Canada to compete in a week long battle, that when finished, will crown National Champions in six separate divisions! In each event a man and his dog will compete against the clock and the rest of the field to see who can earn the highest score with the fewest deduction amounts. Simply put, the teams with the highest combined overall score for their two fields wins National Champion Status! A call just came down for me to make my way to the field for my final run. "My turn again already"? No matter how many times I compete, this top 20 run off always seems to make me a nervous wreck! As I make my way up the hill, I pause for just a moment to gather my composure and reflect on the events of the past week. Just two days earlier I began this Open Class event with 120 of the best bird dogs in the country. To make it into the top twenty (from a group of 120 dogs) is an honor. But, to make the run-off with two separate dogs is truly an amazing feat! Now, everything has come down to this final run. All the long hard days in the field and the thousands of shells I have poured through my gun have led me to where I stand right now!!

When I reached the field, I was caught off guard by the crowd that had gathered to watch the final couple runs. It seemed as if the entire resort had turned out to watch the end of this event. I couldn't help but wonder how all the added distractions were affecting some of the players? Would I be able to rise and overcome my own nerves or would I do like others had done and make a

bone head mistake that would cost me a National Championship?

The field Marshal just instructed me to take my place in the holding blind. For the next few minutes I sat there and listened to the familiar sounds of an ATV as my three bird sequence was being set. I quickly cleared my mind and decided on the direction I would take when I left the gate. The bird planter radioed the judge that my field was ready. He then instructed me to take my place at the starting line. As I made my way there, I could feel all

eyes were on Rowdy and me. I'm not sure if anyone was watching us but pressure always tells you that you're under a microscope even when you're not. I took a deep breath and tried one last time to clear all the thoughts from my mind. Then, I looked down and noticed my partner was shaking like a boy on his first date. Was he nervous too? I knelt down beside him, whispered easy boy and reached out to stroke his neck. To my surprise, when he felt my touch he immediately stopped shaking! At that very moment, I realized that even though we were both shaking, only one of us was actually nervous. Rowdy was only shaking from the pure excitement and the anticipation of the upcoming hunt!

The judge informed me that the clock would start at the sound of my whistle. I surveyed my 15 acre field one last time and slid 3 shells into the chamber of my Browning 12 gauge shotgun. As the bolt slammed shut a simultaneous blast sounded

from my whistle, thus initiating the start time of my sequence.

Rowdy left the line like a man on a mission and I kept to my original plan and stayed to the right side of the field. Almost immediately Rowdy slammed on a rock solid point! The judge then counted aloud one, two, three- good point, thus signifying to me that it was ok for me to move in and flush the bird. I located the quail and it flushed straight away. I raised my Browning Gold, fired a single shot and it dropped into the knee high broom sage. Rowdy made a good mark and immediately we were off looking for our second bird. At the opposite end of the field he went on point



again but this time the bird was up walking. I hurried and just barley managed to get the quail into the air before it walked out of bounds. The bird flew well out of bounds but a well placed 40 yard shot brought it down before it could make the tree line. Rowdy was there when the quail hit the ground, setting us up for another flawless retrieve. Wow; for once everything was finally going as planned! We were only 3:00 minutes in and we already had 2 of our 3 birds tucked safely away inside my hunting vest.

Now, if I could only manage to find the last bird quick enough, we might actually have a chance of winning this whole shooting match. Since I pulled one bird up front and one bird in the back I knew there was a good chance my last bird was somewhere in the middle. I blew my whistle to get Rowdy's attention and directed him to the center of the field. Suddenly, he slammed on the brakes, swapped ends and was standing motionless on his third point. The judge counted one, two, three for the final time and I moved in and kicked my third bird into the air.

The bird flew like a rocket and when it cleared the judge's cart a shot rang out and my third and final bird dropped into a wide open cart path for an easy retrieve! I grabbed Rowdy's collar and yelled "Time", thus stopping the time on the judges stop watch. The judge informed me that the 5:36 time we had just posted, was one of the fastest runs of the day. The million dollar question was, would our time be good enough to win?

We loaded up into the judge's cart and slowly made our way back up the field to the gallery area. I signed my card gathered my coat and gear and made my way back through the crowd. Everyone congratulated me and some even went as far as to tell me that they thought

I had probably just won my first Nationals. I knew it would take an exceptional run to beat our score but growing up with a sporting background had taught me to never count my chickens before they have hatched. I told everyone it wasn't over yet and that there were still a couple of guys that could still better my time. Team after team ran. But, one by one, they all fell victim to the clock. Now with only a few competitors remaining, I was feeling better about my chances of winning.

Sometimes the hardest part of any field trial is the waiting game you are forced to play when you have the highest score. I know I have a bulls-eye on my back now unlike when I ran. And everybody pretty much knows the high score they need to beat! There is nothing I can do to better my time, so I just decided to retire to the truck and wait out the rest of the trial there. I know when, and if my time is beat someone will let me know.

About an hour has now passed and rumors are starting to circulate through the gallery that there is going to be a run off for the National title. Well, as luck would have it, the rumors where all true and I was just informed that I needed to prepare Rowdy for a one bird run off. This years Nationals had shaped up to be the type of finish that every sporting event hopes for a head-to-head battle for the National Champions title!

One bird will be placed in the same general location for both hunters and whoever finds the bird the fastest is declared the winner. I am not a big supporter of this type of runoff. To me, this way of deciding a champion is to subjective to luck (with only one bird in the field) and more times than not it is usually the luckiest dog that wins. Both teams are rounded up and stuck in a cargo trailer so neither of us can hear nor

see the upcoming bird plant. I draw second so I have to wait until the completion of the first run before I can take the field. I shuffle all the gear around in my vest in an attempt to free up some space. Suddenly, I hear a shot and immediately I think to myself, "Wow that was fast". I'm not sure of the time but it was pretty dang quick. A few minutes later, I hear a knock at the door and I'm told it is my turn to take the field. I placed Rowdy on whoa and loaded a single round into my Browning shotgun. If it takes me more than one shot, I'm beat. If I only load one shell I'm not temped to shoot twice. I blow my whistle and decide to take my chance in the center of the field. After about

5 minutes I realize my chance for a National Title was quickly slipping away. A few minutes later the judge informed me that I had lost. I called Rowdy's name, leashed him up and headed out of the field. We didn't win but we gave it our all and second place out of a field of 120 competitors was still a major accomplishment. If anything, all this second place win did was make me want a National Champions title that much more. Maybe next year will be my year to win!!

Editors Note-

We are happy to announce the following year Kenny finished 1st in the Amateur and Doubles division and placed 5th in the in the Open division.

Shoot 'N Shout

Clays Shoot & Family Dinner

at Southern Skeet & Trap
Irondale, Alabama

Save the Date!
More Information
Soon

Questions? Wish to Volunteer?
Scott Gilpin 205 529-1983

Thursday, September 2, 2010
3:00 to 9:00 in the evening

Treasurer's Desk

Look at your AQH Newsletter mailing label. If "12-10" does not follow your name, my records show that you have not yet paid your 2010 dues payable to all AQH members on January 1st. Please mail me your check made out to AL Quail Hunters, 1901 Morgan Road SE, Bessemer, AL 35022. Your annual \$15.00 dues are income tax deductible. If I have made an error (and I DO make errors), email me at coalcarr@bham.rr.com or call me during office hours at (205) 424-1381.

Thank you,

Bob Carr,

AQH Treasurer

Welcome To Our Newest Members

Jamie Higdon from Calera
Courtney Higdon from Calera
Keith Taylor from Hueytown
Zac White from Alabaster
Lacey White from Alabaster

Cullman Lease Update

During the early spring 1/3 of the property experienced a controlled burn. Several areas have been sprayed to kill the fescue. Partridge peas have been planted in a few food plots. The dove field has been planted with millet.

Harold Ridgeway, Bill Warren, Jim Watkins and Steve Lecroy have been generous in loaning us equipment.

In order to have a successful hunting season in the fall work will be on-going all summer. There are several small jobs that can be done anytime someone has time. Contact Frank or Bob to volunteer.

HEY FOLKS

Annually, Alabama hunters travel for 14 hours or more to hunt in the western and the mid-western states. The initial wave each fall is to hunt pheasants in South Dakota. The second wave pursues quail with hunters traveling to Kansas or Texas. A few hunt blue quail but most pursue the bob white quail the ones that are identical to the wild quail we had in Alabama years ago.

A typical trip includes a one night stay on the road going to the destination and a one night stay on the road when returning home. Hunters usually stay for three or more days, purchasing each meal as well as each night's lodging. While the bulk of the needs are already owned or acquired prior to the trip hunters still have to purchase some supplies, fuel and licenses. In some emergency situations veterinary services may be needed. A typical hunting trip usually cost over a \$1,000 and that is a huge stimulus boost to some western state's economies.

I asked one hunter, "What motivates you to travel that distance to hunt quail?" He explained that Kansas offers walk-in hunting areas. These sites are open to the general public for the cost of a license. It is private land with public access. Wild quail populations thrive in Kansas. This hunter explained that the thrill of hunting and shooting into a wild covey cannot be matched with pen-reared birds. The private land opened to the public to quail hunt, run your dogs and shoot wild quail are similar to the experiences he came to know growing up in Alabama.

Another hunter explained that upon arriving in Kansas and checking into his motel, he booked his rooms for the next hunting season.

He indicated that a dozen covey finds in a day were obtainable. Similar numbers of quail cannot be found in Alabama. He loves to follow his dogs through the field, as they smell everything in reach in search of a covey. The excitement builds as he approaches a pointed dog with hopes of shooting into an explosive covey rise.

Hunting in Texas is on a big scale, as is everything in Texas. Most hunting opportunities are through leases on private land or ranches. Native plants like blue stem and ragweed are conditioned to live on low rainfall. The ground is rough and covered in thorn-full vegetation, all easy to identify after one encounter. The fields are large enough for dogs to run big and to hunt from an ATV. This area is also good to train big running field trial dogs for competition. One AQH member has found in excess of twenty coveys per day hunting in Texas. To do this type hunting requires travel, lodging, supplies and meals all costing money. This is revenue that needs to remain in Alabama.

Studies indicate that hunting license sales in Alabama are declining. How long can Alabama afford to allow wild quail populations to deteriorate and hunters to leave the state taking much needed recreational dollars with them?

Whatever we are doing, certainly is not working. It appears that some politician(s) would pick up the banner for Mr. Bob White solely for the positive economic impact to Alabama.

Frank,

President

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone (____) _____ Office Phone (____) _____

Cell Phone (____) _____

Email Address _____

New Member

Renewal

2010 DUES – \$15.00

Check Payable to "Alabama Quail Hunters"

For more information call N. H. Holt @ 205-936-6293 or contact:



1901 Morgan Road S.E. Bessemer, Alabama 35022



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