

Centennial Trials Spotlight Top Performing Hounds

Midland-bred hounds dominate the game, winning fifty percent of the trials.

tors in the relative importance of each of these categories for pack hunting and, by knowing the time that each score is recorded, rejects duplicate scores and factors in *endurance* as well.

All trials reported here involved two days of hunting, and the results tabulated in the sidebars reflect the combined scoring after both days.

AIKEN HOUNDS/FLAT BRANCH FOXHOUNDS

Drag hounds came from packs as far away as Minnesota (Long Lake Hounds) and Massachusetts (Myopia Hunt) to compete in the performance trials in South Carolina hosted by the Aiken Hounds and the Flat Branch Foxhounds. Since the Flat Branch pack hunts live and, therefore, had no hounds entered, Flat Branch huntsman Kurt Krucke carried the horn for the drag trials.

The drag pack hunted well together with good cry, according to Krucke. Aiken hounds dominated the first four placings, with Aiken Namon 1999 repeating his win of the previous season's trial. In so doing, he ratified the performance trial scoring system and answered any doubts as to his outstanding ability.

"Others may pass him, but whenever there's trouble, Namon solves it," said Krucke admiringly. "He's one of those hounds that speaks with every stride," he added.

It was arranged to lay the drag in a ninety degree turn around a cone, and judges were placed there to see who the really accurate hounds were. Namon ran as if tied to the line.

Namon (named after the Aiken drag man, Namon Corley) had a six-pound tumor cut out of him in October and wasn't able to compete in the Wayne-DuPage performance trial for drag hounds that month.

"Obviously he came back strong!" said Krucke.

Long Lake's Piedmont Interest 2002 was named Huntsman's Choice.

"He's another hound that speaks with every stride," said Krucke. "He's a worker—not looking to see what other hounds are doing. He was never any trouble when roading—always turned in to me. I made a real connection with him."

(For more on the Aiken/Flat Branch performance trial and the Belle Meade trial that followed, see "Celebrating the Centennial" by Betsy Parker, page 24.)

Aiken Hounds/Flat Branch Foxhounds (drag)

Aiken, South Carolina
February 3-4, 2007

Chairmen: Edgar Cato, MFH, Linda Knox McLean, MFH
Huntsman: Kurt Krucke
Judges: Dennis Foster, Nelson Gunnell, Laura Sloan, Wendi Wilson

Centennial Hounds

First: Aiken Namon 1999	Sixth: Long Lake King Kong 2006
Second: Aiken Namesake 2006	Seventh: Aiken Naughty 2006
Third: Aiken Norly 2006	Eighth: Long Lake's Piedmont Tinker 2003
Fourth: Aiken Natalie 2006	Ninth: Aiken Nugget 1999
Fifth: Long Lake's Piedmont Interest 2002	Tenth: Aiken Nice 2006

Packs

First: Aiken Hounds (SC)
Second: Long Lake Hounds (MN)
Third: Middleton Place Hounds (SC)

Huntsman's Choice

Long Lake's Piedmont Interest 2002

BELLE MEADE HUNT

Belle Meade Master Epp Wilson, chairman of the Centennial Performance Trial series, arguably has the most experience of anyone in the staging of foxhound performance trials, and it shows. Wilson, his staff, and the Belle Meade members make it a seemingly effortless production as they dispense consistent sport, comfort and hospitality to all comers.

Toronto and North York Bachelor 2003 was the hands-down winner. He was first in every category but marking—hunting, trailing, full cry and endurance. (He placed second in marking!)

Is Bachelor a superstar? Good huntsmen don't like that term. 'If you have one superstar, you don't have a good pack,' they'll tell you.

"I don't have any superstars," said Toronto and North York huntsman Mark Powell. "All my hounds contribute—like a team."

The pack results proved Powell's point. Toronto and North York had three hounds finish in the top ten, giving them first place in the team competition as well.

"I honestly didn't expect to do anything at this trial," said Powell, shaking his head. My hounds have only hunted three times since November 25th!"

Winter comes early to Canada, and the Toronto and North York Masters sent Powell and the hounds down to Aiken for some sport after being frozen out at home. How in the world did Bachelor win the endurance category having missed so much hunting since November? I wondered.

"They're toned," said Powell. "I always keep them light."

Charles Montgomery, who hunts the Live Oak hounds in Florida but grew up hunting with Epp Wilson at Belle Meade, was trial huntsman. He watched Bachelor's outstanding work on several occasions.

"I watched the front runners overrun the line," said Montgomery. "Bachelor was about fifth, but he turned accurately and set the pack straight."

Bachelor's top line is Eglinton and Caledon back to a Portman dog hound. His tail female line is all Toronto and North York with Cattistock and Cotswold blood in the grandparent's generation.

WEST HILLS HUNT

Talk about pack performance and you must acknowledge the performance of the West Hills hounds in their own trial. West Hills won the pack competition with seven of their hounds placing in the top ten. West Hills Fairy 2004 was the high-scoring hound. Santa Fe and Red Rock both had hounds in the top ten, yet the Los Altos Hounds, without a single top ten finisher, placed second in the pack standings. Obviously, many of their hounds scored moderately well, demonstrating depth and consistency in the pack—an attribute sought by all good Masters and huntsmen.

Epp Wilson, MFH writes: "If you haven't hunted at West Hills, you have missed an amazing experience. This high desert terrain is incredibly beautiful and very challenging. At the center of this two hundred thousand acre country is a four mile by twenty-four mile valley. The sides of the valley are small hills then larger hills then small snow-capped mountains. It

Belle Meade Hunt

Thomson, Georgia
February 9-10, 2007

Chairman: Epp Wilson, MFH
Huntsman: Charles Montgomery
Judges: Norman Fine, Dennis Foster, Nelson Gunnell, Laura Sloan, Garrick Steele, MFH

Centennial Hounds

First: Toronto and North York Bachelor 2003	Seventh: Toronto and North York's Midland Kabar 2002
Second: Midland Worry 2004	Eighth: Camden Glory 2001
Third: Belle Meade Creed 2005	Ninth: Flat Branch's Why Worry Falstaff 2003
Fourth: Midland Wendy 2004	Tenth: Toronto and North York Nitro 2000
Fifth: Flat Branch's Triangle Finesse 2002	
Sixth: Camden Gunby 2001	

Packs

First: Toronto and North York Hunt (ON)
Second: Midland Fox Hounds (GA)
Third: Camden Hunt (SC)

Huntsman's Choice

Toronto and North York Bachelor 2003



Belle Meade Field Master Dr. Jim Moncrief keeps a hard-riding field up with hounds.

BELLA VITA FOTOGRAFIE PHOTO

is virtually impossible to ride a horse to the top of these mountains.

"The beauty is indescribable. The difference in reading about it and hunting there is like the difference between looking at a picture of the Grand Canyon and actually looking over the North Rim at sunset. You just have to go there and see it for yourself.

"And by the way, it's the most scared I have ever been on a horse! These are the steepest hills I have ever hunted over. I can honestly say I have never been so scared on a horse for so long in my whole life, and I have hunted for forty-two years... behind some of the wildest and bravest people in the sport... including Mason Lampton on his lightning fast polo ponies and Hardaway himself, when he was still riding hard. So I have lots of experience with being scared on a horse.

"Don't let me scare you away from going there, however. I can't wait to go back with my son, Chase. There is lots of wonderful hunting and easy riding in the huge valley. And the first section of hills are normal to us Easterners. It is only when they get into the next section of hills that they get so steep. And you can always pull up or slow down as you can see for miles.

"Out of six judges, Liz McKnight was the only one to make it to the



by Norman Fine

LYNNE CARLISLE PHOTO

The Centennial Foxhound Performance Trial series concluded with six more trials across the country since our last report. One trial was postponed until the Fall.

Overall, Midland-bred hounds dominated the year's series. Out of ten trials for live-hunting hounds, Midland hounds won two trials and Midland-bred hounds won three trials. That accounts for fifty percent of all winners.

Since publication of our last issue, Centennial Hounds were chosen at the Aiken Hounds/Flat Branch Foxhounds trials, South Carolina; Belle Meade Hunt, Georgia; West Hills Hunt, California; Harvard Fox Hounds, Oklahoma; Coal Valley Hounds, Kansas; and Arapahoe Hunt, Colorado. The Performance Trial scheduled for March in Virginia, was postponed until the Fall of 2007 due to concerns over an outbreak of the HV-1 virus.

The top ten scoring hounds of each Centennial Performance Trial earned the title of **Centennial Hound** for that event. The winning foxhound in each trial was the one that compiled the highest total of combined points, calculated by a complex formula that uses data gathered by the judges over two days of hunting. Judges scored hounds in four categories: *hunting, trailing, full cry, and marking*. The calculating formula fac-



Edgar T. Cato, MFH, Flat Branch Foxhounds, hosted the Aiken Trial at his Augusta Plantation. The entire series of Foxhound Performance Trials held during the Centennial season was generously sponsored by Cato.

BELLA VITA FOTOGRAFIE PHOTO



Trial chairman Epp Wilson and the performance trial hunt staff presented ribbons to the two youngest riders to participate in the Centennial Performance Trials. Rogan and Audrey Norrell (seven and nine) rode first flight all day, both days, over the demanding West Hills country. Angela Norrell Murray, the proud mom, is a co-founder and ex-MFH of the Fort Carson Hounds and first whipper-in to the Red Rock Hounds (NV). The children's dad, Major Jared Norrell, MFH of the Fort Carson Hounds, is currently serving his country in Iraq.

MIKE ERICKSON PHOTO

end. Her horse tired, and she got off and led him for a good part of the way and ended up with the pack when they accounted for the coyote.

"It was a fabulous day in the worst wind. Yet hounds stuck to the line like there was no wind at all. The whole pack was running in a knot across hills in wind they had to lean into. Their noses were incredible. They not only ran the line for forty minutes in that awful wind, they pushed the coyote and accounted for him. Hats off to those wonderful hounds! They are all champions in my book for providing some of the best sport we have had all year in some of the most challenging conditions."

West Hills Hunt

Los Angeles, California
February 24-25, 2007

Chairman: Mitchell Jacobs, MFH
Huntsman: Tony Leahy, MFH
Judges: Dennis Foster; Nelson Gunnell; Liz McKnight, MFH; Epp Wilson, MFH

Centennial Hounds

First: West Hills Fairy 2004	Seventh: Red Rock Ronnie 1999
Second: West Hills Xylo 2004	Eighth: West Hills Tarbasaurus 2003
Third: Santa Fe Reveille 2004	Ninth: Santa Fe Refund 2005
Fourth: West Hills Express 2004	Tenth: West Hills Jenny 2001
Fifth: West Hills Virgo 2003	
Sixth: West Hills Biscuit 2001	

Packs

First: West Hills Hunt (CA)
Second: Santa Fe Hunt (CA)
Third: Los Altos Hunt (CA)

Huntsman's Choice

West Hills Fairy 2004

HARVARD FOX HOUNDS

Hillsboro Major 2004, a dog hound of pure Midland Crossbred breeding with a pinch of English Cottesmore blood in the fourth generation, compiled the highest score at the Harvard Fox Hounds trial near Tulsa, Oklahoma. Major was drafted to Hillsboro as a puppy.

The hound was so troublesome in his first season that Hillsboro huntsman Johnny Gray used an electronic training collar on him, something he rarely does.

Harvard Foxhounds

Tulsa, Oklahoma
March 24-25, 2007

Chairman: Max Naegler, MFH
Huntsman: Mark Powell
Judges: Dennis Foster; Nelson Gunnell; Mitch Jacobs, MFH; Laura Sloan; Garrick Steele, MFH; Epp Wilson, MFH; Wendi Wilson

Centennial Hounds

First: Hillsboro Major 2004	Seventh: Beech Grove Gizmo 2004
Second: Bridlespur Versa 2002	Eighth: Independence Borderline 2004
Third: Bridlespur Cheerful 1998	Ninth: Mission Valley Heardy 2001
Fourth: Mells Taylor 2005	Tenth: Hillsboro Goblin 2004
Fifth: Moingona Nealie 2002	
Sixth: Hillsboro Lilac 2003	

Packs

First: Bridlespur Hunt (MO)
Second: Hillsboro Hounds (TN)
Third: Mells Fox Hounds (TN)

Huntsman's Choice

Hillsboro Major 2004

"He was tough on deer, just couldn't resist the scent," Gray said. "Karen [Gray's wife and whipper-in] had faith in him, so we worked with him. He has a tremendous nose and is the best strike hound. Mason saw him hunting and thought he was the best of the litter."

Toronto and North York huntsman Mark Powell served as trial huntsman at Harvard, and he is in full agreement.

"Major is an outstanding hound," said Powell. "I named him 'huntsman's choice.'"

"Both days, numerous times, at checks he kept casting forward and putting the pack right. That's where he really shone.

"[Judge] Garrick Steele was riding with me. I pointed him out to Garrick two or three times each day. 'Look, I'd say. 'That dog's putting 'em right again.'"

Powell was able to get clear impressions of the hounds he was hunting because the Harvard country is wide open—the sort that huntsmen dream about.

"I was so excited," said Powell. "You could really see when hounds were running. The key to me was you were able to get with hounds and make a cast quickly. In that country you were able to do things at 'Mach one' speed."

Powell admits to a rather disjointed start on the second day, but then things straightened out.

"I managed to get hounds settled on a coyote, and, man, did they ever run! I was on what had been a very fit Thoroughbred, but he had a job to walk by the end of the day. He didn't lose one shoe; he didn't lose two shoes; he lost all four!"

COAL VALLEY HOUNDS

Mells Taylor 2005, fresh from a fourth place finish at the Harvard Fox Hounds performance trial in Oklahoma just a few days earlier, came to Kansas ready to hunt. After two days over the Coal Valley speedways and roller coasters, Taylor emerged the high scoring hound.

Mells MFH and huntsman Joy McCormick admires her endurance. "She had two hard days at Harvard, one day of travel, and another two hard days at Coal Valley."

McCormick had taken her to the Belle Meade trial earlier in the season as a potential substitute, but didn't put her into the pack.

"She's a bit stand-offish," she explained, "and I wasn't sure how she would get along with a pack of strangers. I guess I should have run her there!"

Taylor is a Crossbred bitch sired by a Cotswold dog with excellent English bloodlines, including Duke of Beaufort's Mostyn. Her dam is all Mells breeding going back to mostly Midland bloodlines.

Coal Valley Hounds

McCune, Kansas
March 27-28, 2007

Chairman: Tommy Jackson, MFH
Huntsman: Tony Leahy, MFH
Judges: Norman Fine; Dennis Foster; Nelson Gunnell; Laura Sloan; Garrick Steele, MFH; Epp Wilson, MFH; Wendy Wilson

Centennial Hounds

First: Mells Taylor 2005	Sixth: Bridlespur Versa 2002
Second: Bridlespur Cheerful 1998	Seventh: Mission Valley Jared 2004
Third: Moingona Nealie 2002	Eighth: Fort Leavenworth Monty 2005
Fourth: Fort Leavenworth L.T. 2004	Ninth: Hillsboro Simone 2004
Fifth: Fort Leavenworth Marshall 2005	Tenth: Hillsboro Bismark 2004

Packs

First: Fort Leavenworth Hunt (KS)
Second: Bridlespur Hunt (MO)
Third: Mells Fox Hounds (TN)

Huntsman's Choice

Hillsboro Bismark 2004

"She's been an awesome hound," said McCormick. "She entered easily. Never looked at a deer. Ran up front almost from the start. She really proved herself.

"Her sister is just as good. I was going to enter her in the trial also, but she came in season."

Longreen Foxhounds (TN), a small hunt with all amateur staff, was one of ten hunts that competed in the Coal Valley trial. Several of their Penn-Marydels were scored by the judges for good work, prompting Master and huntsman Susan Walker to offer a short speech of thanks and appreciation to the MFHA leadership in organizing these Centennial activities.

Her voice trembling with emotion, she closed by saying, "Thanks for letting me play with the big guys." Mindful of MFHA President Mason Lampton's desire in this Centennial year to pull together hunts from across North America into one family of foxhunters, Walker's sentiments, it seemed to this reporter, was what this Centennial was all about.

ARAPAHOE HUNT

Hounds from the West Hills Hunt (CA), Caza Ladron (NM), Knoxville Hunt (WY), Arapahoe Hunt (CO), Bijou Springs Hunt (CO), and Grand

Huntsman Tony Leahy, MFH collects hounds during the trials in the Coal Valley Hounds country. (l-r) Judge Garrick Steele, MFH (armband), Leahy, and Coal Valley MFH Wes Sandness.

RAY ORTH PHOTO



Judge Garrick Steele keeps in touch with hounds in the wide-open Arapahoe country.

REBECCA PATOILE PHOTO

Canyon Hounds (AZ) competed in the Rocky Mountain District trials hosted by the Arapahoe in their country.

Marc C. Patoile writes: "If you [followed hounds at this trial], you certainly faced evils nearing the shadow of death. At least that is how this correspondent felt after more than six hours in the saddle.

"To say it was fast and furious would be an understatement. The Arapahoe territory is nearly thirty-thousand acres of wide-open, rolling country. The coyotes take off like rockets, leading the field on long gallops.

"Tony Leahy, MFH, carried the horn and showed good sport for the large fields of seventy or more each day. Many, if not most, managed to keep up, since the action was too great to miss. That is, if you made it through the sometimes treacherous valleys fast enough, as the pace was furious.

"For me, this was the best performance trial of the season," said Arapahoe whipper-in (honorary) Chris Towt, who has become the computer guru of the judging staff. "We had six hunts that entered hounds into the blistering fast, coyote laden, two days of competition. It was certainly the fastest, and I mean speed-wise, trial I've participated in. The West Hills hunt in Los Angeles was a close second, but they had large hills mixed into the equation, which slowed the horses down a bit, but hardly slowed the hounds."

"It was Grand Canyon's Rose Tree Ox 2003 who took home more ribbons than his huntsman could comfortably carry. Knoxville Hunt won the pack competition. Both hunts were formed just recently (2005), which bodes well for their followers.

"Trial huntsman Leahy chose Arapahoe Indy 2004 as the Huntsman's Choice, commenting that Indy was 'tireless and kept trying all day. Both days, he showed real drive and drew very effectively.' Leahy continued, 'It is always fun to hunt different hounds in new country, but the open country always makes thing so visual at the Arapahoe.'

"Grand Canyon Ox was a good solid hound during this competition," added Leahy. "He marked well and his voice was truly remarkable." ■

Arapahoe Hunt

Denver, Colorado
March 31-April 1, 2007

Chairman: Dr. G. Marvin Beeman, MFH
Huntsman: Tony Leahy, MFH
Judges: Dennis Foster; Nelson Gunnell; Mitch Jacobs, MFH; Laura Sloan; Garrick Steele, MFH

Centennial Hounds

First: Grand Canyon's Rose Tree Ox 2003	Sixth: Bijou Springs Mavis 2005
Second: Knoxville Forrest 2005	Seventh: Knoxville Ferris 2005
Third: Arapahoe Indy 2004	Eighth: Arapahoe Ink 2004
Fourth: Knoxville Flintlock 2005	Ninth: Caza Ladron Hickory 2006
Fifth: Grand Canyon Stanley 2005	Tenth: Arapahoe Haggie 2003

Packs

First: Knoxville Hunt (WY)
Second: Grand Canyon Hounds (AZ)
Third: Arapahoe Hunt (CO)

Huntsman's Choice

Arapahoe Indy 2004