

An Open Letter

DEAR Mr. Cahoon:

While I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, I feel I have known you for many years by reputation and have recognized you as an authority on grouse dogs. In your article in the August 29 issue of AMERICAN FIELD, you publicly criticized the decision that my associate and I rendered in judging the "1958 Pennsylvania Grouse Championship."

It was hardly necessary for you to go to such great length in qualifying yourself to substantiate your opinions. I am sure it is true that you have judged grouse trials before I was born. With this wealth of experience, it is unfortunate that you could not have been at the running of this Championship. Were you there and witnessed the stake first hand, from beginning to end, I feel very confident that you would have arrived at the same decision that was rendered at the conclusion of the stake.

Over the years, you have been particularly adept at glorifying the grouse dog and justly so. You have enhanced the meaning of the word "Championship" and I am sure that to you, the ardent fans of the grouse woods, the members and officers of the sponsoring club, the title "Pennsylvania Grouse Champion" transmits an image of a sterling performance.

I hesitate to get involved in a lengthy discussion nor do I feel any reason to justify this decision. The facts are quite simple. I was there, witnessed the performance of each dog from beginning to end. The Club placed the responsibility for the decision in our hands and there was not a championship performance during the entire stake. The dog having the only find of the stake did not run a championship caliber race. The reporter, William McCarty, is entitled to his opinion. However, judges in this event or any other event should not in any way be influenced by the reporter's opinion, for the reporter is not judging the stake. The awarding of championship titles, be they grouse, pheasant, quail, open or amateur, on the merits of charity, emotion or personality, I feel has absolutely no place in field trials. Mr. and Mrs. Undercoffer, owners of the dog Possessive S, are truly fine sports and a tremendous asset to field trials. For their dog to have won the Championship would have meant a great deal to them, I am sure.

I hope that your article has in no way a detrimental effect on the public relations aspect of grouse trials. While I am an enthusiastic fan of grouse trials, I, like many others, am geographically deprived of the privilege of training in the grouse woods. To those who are reading this letter and have not witnessed a top-flight grouse trial, you have an experience to look forward to. You will not only meet a fine group of dedicated and enthusiastic sportsmen, but will see some great dogs particularly adapt at the pursuit of grouse. The country that the trials are conducted in, is something to behold. I recommend that if you are a one-course field trial enthusiast and have not yet attended a grouse trial, that the first opportunity you have, take a week-end in the woods at a grouse trial. A single exposure, I am sure, will light up an avenue of field trial interest that will forever after be of joy to you.

Mr. Cahoon, I hope we meet soon. Until then, best wishes and good judging.

Sincerely,

ROBERT G. WEHLE