

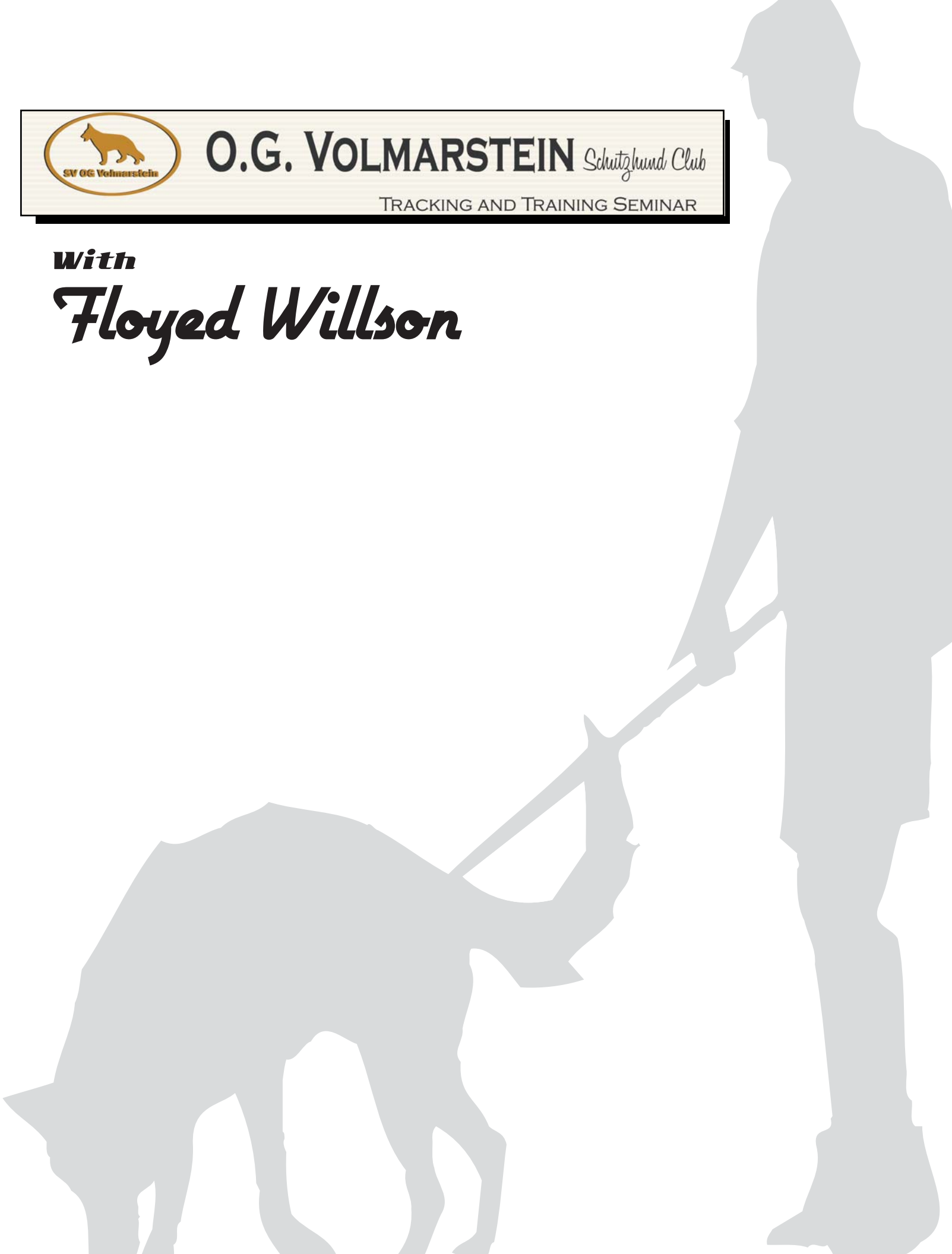


O.G. VOLMARSTEIN *Schutzhund Club*

TRACKING AND TRAINING SEMINAR

With

Floyed Willson





**Training
and
Development**

by Floyd Wilson

Building Blocks: *The Track to Success*

One philosophy that
was taught to me
many years ago was the
KISS! philosophy-
"Keep It Simple, Stupid!"

Over the years, I have been asked to write training articles on tracking. Not knowing where to begin made the task difficult. In this great country, we are fortunate to have many gifted dog trainers who can contribute more to the subject of tracking than I can. But if people ask enough times, they will get an opinion, and that's just what this article reflects: my opinion. Tracking is a long subject, so I have broken my thoughts down into three separate installments.

The first installment is an interview I gave at the conclusion of our most recent North American Championship (1999). That installment gives information that establishes the foundation for two additional articles: one that deals with beginning tracking and a final article dealing with the highest level of training for tracking.

I have been privileged to know many excellent trainers both in the United States and Germany who, in one way or another, helped to develop my training philosophy. I have also been fortunate to participate in many national events, both as a handler and as a judge. These experiences helped shape my attitude. I have had the pleasure of working with many handlers who have gone on to great things. There is nothing more humbling or rewarding than to see someone you have worked closely with over the years knock out a big score at a

World Team event. This makes everything worthwhile-knowing that you helped someone succeed at the highest level of the schutzhund sport. To all of you who have contributed to whatever success I myself have had, I thank each and every one of you.

Review

Let's go back to the most recent (1999) North American, where I was privileged to judge the FH Championship and the tracking phase of SchH3-a total of about 75 dogs. The importance of tracking in our sport was demonstrated when the final World Team selection came from the tracking score on the last day of competition.

Regarding the interview after that event, written by Moc Klinkam: Moc, with this interview and the pictures posted on the North American web site, probably brought more positive attention to the tracking phase than any other person covering a national event. I would ask each person interested in tracking to re-read this interview. It is my opinion that the best place to access tracking is at the end. Hindsight is 20/20. (Schutzhund USA, vol. 24, no. 5, September/October 1999).

What went wrong? What went right? Could I have trained differently? Many questions are asked, and maybe some questions have no answer. So let us review the interview, and I will make further remarks from observations of both team members, the dog and the handler.

It was evident that some handlers have not trained properly for unusual conditions.

Training only in the home environment is not good enough if you want to compete for the championship. If a handler is counting on having ideal conditions for the FH Championship, the team really does not need to be there. Prepare for the worst and hope that you'll get the best, including the draw.

Tracklayers play a very important role in the success of any track. At the North American, we had excellent tracklayers. Unfortunately, many handlers do not know how to lay a track or turns. A handler can lay his or her own crosstracks. Scent discrimination should be part of the tracking program. There is no excuse for any properly trained dog taking a crosstrack.

Articles should not present a problem. It is the responsibility of the trainer to teach proper article indications. The trainer should put fun into this exercise.

Conditioning is too often overlooked in tracking training. By conditioning, I mean tracking conditioning, although physical conditioning and tracking condition go hand in hand. Only very long tracks can achieve the needed nose conditioning.

Handlers play a vital role in developing a track-sure dog. Sometimes the handler will create frustration and havoc in the dog by simply not trusting the animal. The only way I know to overcome this handicap is to work with an experienced handler or trainer who can in fact ease your fears. In the long run, time spent with some successful trainer, even though it may be somewhat costly, will be worthwhile.

Suggestions.

With those thoughts on the topics touched on by the interview, let's move now to the training arena. I will offer some suggestions that may help you in your tracking program.

1. Keep a journal.

One of the best things a trainer can do is to keep a log of activities. If you find a great tracker, chances are very good you'll also find a journal. You may be surprised when you later review your log at just what you did or did not do.

2. Develop a training philosophy.

Many people go out to train without a plan and specific goals. Then it is easy to become frustrated and blame anything or anyone in sight for shortcomings.

One philosophy that was taught to me many years ago was the KISS! philosophy—"Keep It Simple, Stupid!" People tend to try to accomplish a million things, all at one time. He who tries to do everything does nothing.

3. Have a plan.

Develop your lesson plan for the day, along with the week and month. Include some testing times. Use how you do on tests to determine the percentage of time you'll spend training in each phase. For example, if you are accomplishing your goals in one area, spend more time on areas that need more work.

Initially, all three schutzhund phases should be given equal time in training. As you move through your training plan, inevitably one area will be stronger than others, and the

As you develop your philosophy and goals, you will learn the Three T's: Teach, Train, and Test.

lesson plan will shift accordingly. Maybe you will allocate 50 percent of your time to tracking, 25 percent each to obedience and protection. The trainer based on the needs must design the individual program.

Instead, what often happens is that we spend 75 percent or more of our training time in protection, maybe 15 percent in obedience and maybe 10 percent in tracking. Then on trial day, many handlers may be heard to say, "I sure hope my dog tracks today." Or, "My dog just didn't want to track today." My question is, what did you do to prevent this situation from happening? Review your journal, and you may find the answer.

To review the fundamentals of our "Building Blocks" program: As a prospective trainer, do you have your journal, or are you going to fly by the seat of your pants or depend on others? Have you established your philosophy (KISS)? Have you set your goals? Do you have an understanding of lesson plans and how to allocate training time?

Proper Equipment

Do you have the proper equipment? To train

as I will suggest you will need a 33-foot tracking line; at least two 6-foot leads; articles of all sizes, shapes and description; four 36-inch tracking stakes; at least 30 washers with orange tape attached; 20 corner markers; a pinch collar, and acres of land.

When you have the equipment together, you must develop your language of tracking, understanding when to use commands such as "find it," "such," "good such," "phooey" and "such platz." That's about all the vocabulary needed to teach tracking.

The Three T's

As you develop your philosophy and goals, you will learn the Three T's: Teach, Train, and Test. At the start of training, you will spend most of your time teaching, keeping what works and discontinuing what does not work until you are in harmony with your dog, forming a team. Be wary of using fear methods. When you are satisfied that your dog is grasping the lesson-one at a time, mind you-then it is time to set up a training program that will encompass your teaching. Finally, the day arrives that you test your work. By testing we mean a test. There should be no corrections. Mentally, you should note the mistakes you and your dog make during the test. These errors will dictate future teaching and training.

Be patient. Success begets success. You must teach and train success in order for you and your dog to develop confidence in each other. Be prepared to re-teach time and time again. Most of all, "KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID." Before blaming your dog for mistakes in the teaching phase, always ask yourself, "what did I do wrong?"

In our next article, we will start at the beginning of tracking training, and go through to the SchH3 North American Championship. The final article will cover advanced tracking through the FH Championship and beyond, finishing with the FH2.

Hopefully you have found an idea or two in this article that will help you in your quest for the championship, whether it is on the local or national level.

• USA

Floyd Wilson USA Judge, Regional Director of the Southeast Region. SchH3 Club 4 times, Master Gold Medal. Participant and Judge at the National level. His dog Zorro was 2nd in the Nation to complete the FH2 with 99 points which is one of the highest in the world.



**Training
and
Development**

by Floyd Wilson

Part 2 . . .

The Building Blocks of Tracking

*In time, through
patience, kindness and
responsibility, a trainer
can apply motivational
techniques to the
compulsively trained dog.*

If you are looking at this, you are thinking about tracking. That's good. That is the first step. But before we go any further, make sure you have read the first and second installments of this article (Schutzhund USA September/October 1999 and November/December 1999). Article One dealt with success and failure at the recent FH and North American Championship in Tennessee. In Article Two, we explored attitudes, work ethic and conditioning and offered an overview of tracking success and failure. We noted that it all boils down to having a program.

When the young lady in the "Tic Tac" commercial is asked the question, "Can you breathe without taking Tic Tacs?" her reply is, "Sure you can, but I wouldn't recommend it." Ask the same girl if you can train tracking without a program, her answer would probably be the same. "Sure you can, but I wouldn't recommend it." It's basic. You need a program to be successful in anything you do.

The Meat

At birth, the animal can track. Smell is a survival skill and Mother Nature has already taken care of it. As trainers, we try to mold and channel these inborn skills to our needs. To compel or to motivate, that is the question. To be or not to be. . .hard.

In my opinion, an untrained dog should be worked motivationally through prey/hunger methods. On the other hand, if you have an older, titled, import dog, you can not really know how the animal was trained. More than likely, the import was trained with some form of compulsion. Bottom line: If you train with motivational prey-hunger drive first, you can add compulsion to instill responsibility at higher levels of maturity and training. On the other hand, if you have an animal trained via compulsion, motivational techniques must be introduced creatively and with patience.

In time, through patience, kindness and responsibility, a trainer can apply motivational techniques to the compulsively trained dog. An animal trained with compulsion is not, for the most part, a happy teammate. The animal may have difficulty with concentration, drive, intensity, and problem solving. The dog may frustrate easily and just plain quit. Quitting leads to conflict. Conflict leads to confusion. Confusion destroys the learning curve.

A motivated student is a good student. Responsibility must be instilled, to be sure, but for the best learning results, an environment of motivation, rather than compulsion, is best.

When Do I Start Tracking?

As soon as I get my hands on the animal. That's when it starts. That is, of course, because I use food as a bonding tool. A trainer can imprint young dogs and old dogs

using food. For dogs, sharing food is a critical step in the bonding process. When you start a puppy, you start with a clean slate. What the dog learns is up to you. With an older dog trained by someone else, you must spend a great deal of time bonding, bonding, and bonding some more. Observe your dog during the bonding period, toss some food around, and get accustomed to each other. Make

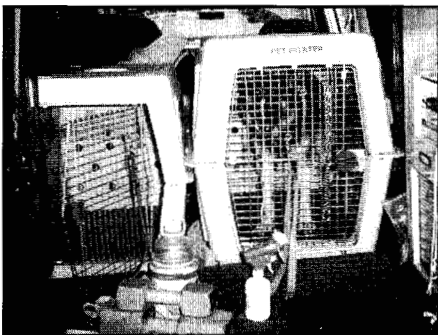


What you need to go tracking: boots, hat, log book, toys, stakes, washer markers, articles, water, snacks, vest, food dish, sardines, and your USA Magazine.

sure you follow up with the person who trained the dog initially. If the dog's got some good scores, you know he'll track. The bond hedges your bets he'll track for you. And most important, he'll respect you enough to let you refine his work without conflict.

You Can't Play the Game Without the Gear

Going tracking is a lot like going fishing. Chances are, you'll have to get up early and you'll have to take a drive to a remote area. You need to be ready to go. There's no excuse. Some people's dogs track better than others do, but everyone can be and



Are you ready? Preparing your dog with water spray, chatter tease, tracking words and tid bits of food.

should be equally ready to go when it comes to the gear.

Markers

You should have marking stakes. I think barbecue skewers make the best marking stakes because they are heavy, they have a sharp point, and you can throw them like a spear. You will eventually become very proficient at throwing these skewers.

You should have marking tape. The marking tape should be orange, which shows up in all conditions. Surveyor's tape fulfills this function well. It is cheap and readily available. Quarter-inch washers can be threaded with this orange tape. Thread the washers with one-foot-long streamers of tape.

Use stakes to mark corner proximity and washers to mark article proximity. To train tracking efficiently, you must use these marking cues to help you prepare for critical training moments during the track. Those moments come most often near corners and articles. When you use these markers you always know where your articles and turns are.

Articles

You should have leather, wood (flat and dowel), carpet, and plastic. In the North American Championship, the articles were a leather pouch with a small bottle, donated beanie babies, bamboo, a plastic guitar, and for the K-9s, a plastic water pistol. Be creative. A good tracking trainer has lots of weird stuff in his article bag. I guarantee it.

Lines

At least one 33-foot tracking line, preferably two, made of parachute cord. You need a line that is light and that dries fast. Avoid the long leather lines. They get heavy when you get them wet, and then they get stiff.

Log Book

Lab books are good for this. Some of them even have graph paper in them. Those are good. Your logbook should be durable because it will be outside a great deal; and it should be easy to use. Get one that has a pencil carrier. (I know from personal experience that ink can freeze under certain tracking conditions.)

Safety Vest

Hunting season and good tracking

conditions often go hand in hand. Wear safety orange during hunting season to ensure you remain clearly visible in low light and early morning conditions.

Utility Gear

Knee-high rubber boots, water and food bowls, water, a sprayer, squeaky toys, a vest with numerous utility pockets, leashes, tennis balls, a portable radio, a sheath to hold marking skewers (2 1/2" x 24" PCV pipe), a canteen, at least two 36" high wooden dowel stakes, and a rain suit or poncho. This stuff is all cheap. Have it, and you will be ready for any conditions your dog will be asked to track in.

Going Tracking

From this point on we are talking about all dogs, whether they be puppies or older dogs.

Trainers must establish an attitude for tracking not only for themselves but for the animal as well. You should develop a scheme that tips off the dog as to what you are going to do, from the time you load up until the time you take the dog out for tracking.

For example, as you load up ask, "Wanna go suching? Wanna go tracking?" over and



Martin teaching his puppy the "find it" command.

over, flashing food, sardines, hot dogs, etc., giving them a little taste now and then. Use the water spray aimed at the nose, saying over and over "Wanna go suching?" Dogs track better when their muzzles are hydrated. Set a routine so the dog can know what is coming. By doing this you precondition your animal to go "such."

Beginning to Track Together

The first command you teach should be "find it." As you take your dog out on a six-foot leash, toss a small piece of hot dog out so that it lands behind the dog. Know exactly where the food is, tell the dog to "find it." Since the food is behind the dog, he will have to turn around to find it. He'll sniff the ground looking for the treat. Point the food out in the beginning to aid the dog in learning. In time, the dog will automatically drop his nose to the ground the moment you say "find it." You should do this routine at least five times per



session, five times a day for one week. This is one of those basic little things you can do that applies not only to the beginning of tracking but to the highest levels as well.

In a trial, the tracklayer has to go on the field somewhere. He walks off a road, or wherever, and proceeds out into a field to begin laying your track. The footprints he makes out to your scent pad are known as a "tail." When your dog knows the "find it" command, you can use this tail to your advantage. You will learn to make the tail an important part of your training. Because you cannot give an obedience command within one meter of the scent pad, you use the tail to put your dog in drive before he gets to the scent pad. It's not illegal. You are just using part of the natural surroundings to prepare your dog for the track. Your graded track starts one meter from the flag. Your dog's track can start at the tail, if you have your "find it" command preconditioned.

Hitting the tail

Take your dog up where you think the tracklayer went out, sit your dog, line under front leg, say "find it." You now have your dog in drive. In fact, when your dog hits the scent pad, he is already tracking. If your dog gets lost on the track, you can use "find it" to reinforce the track

without confusing your dog or creating frustration. It's a quick way to communicate to your dog, "Hey, start sniffing out there."

In teaching the dog motivationally with food, we are using the dog's prey/hunger drives. To be successful, the dog obviously must be hungry. I think the best way to stimulate a dog's hunger drive is to under-ration, rather than skip rations. The lightly rationed dog is always ready to eat. When you compile this readiness to eat with a little trash talk and food tease, you have a dog very driven to find some food.

Drive-building and repetition will help you

With, across and angle grain.



Angle grain

master the "find it" command. You are then ready to start testing for tail recognition.

Building the tail

Place a skewer in the ground, walk a straight line 10-15 paces, dropping the food at random. When you reach the end of your 15 paces, place another skewer in the ground to



Dog tracking with grain.

mark the end of the tail. Place four or five pieces of food at the end as well. Finding the big meat at the end of a track fits nicely with a dog's natural drive to seek and hunt. Wait 5 to 10 minutes, and in the meantime start talking trash to your dog. "Wanna go suching?" Give him a little taste of food. Pump him up to the point where he is ready to go. You will know when it's right.

When the time comes, take your dog to the flag and tell him to "find it." When the dog successfully finds the food tell your dog "good find," nothing else. Most handlers talk too much. Dogs cannot read or write, nor do they understand sentence structure. Most dogs are happy to hear a quick happy tone such as "good find." Lay at least three of these straight 'tails,' and when you are convinced your dog knows the "find it" command you are ready to move on to the next phase.

Precision Tracking

If you are going to compete in schutzhund you must teach footprint-to-footprint tracking or you will never be in the points. In the beginning, I believe soft dirt is the best for teaching footprint-to-footprint tracking. If you cannot find dirt, then short golf-course cut grass will do.

By now, you should have your dog doing straight tails perfectly with the "find it" command. Now you are ready to work on the "such" (track) command. Don't worry, it is no big deal for you to go from "find



Some distraction, a plane landing over the serpentine.

it" to "such." All components of the track are taught separately and then joined together in the testing part. I prefer to refer to what we will be doing here as "precision tracking."



Serpentine area 5 scent discrimination.

Lay your tail as before, with a skewer at the start, your tail, another skewer beside your left heel. Now flatten a 24" x 24" square with food at all corners and one piece in the middle. It is extremely important that your dog search the scent pad well. This is the scent that must stay with him throughout the track.

As you depart the scent pad to begin laying your track, try to dig your heel in each step (the reason for soft dirt or short grass). Place food in the heel print. If you dig that heel in effectively, the dog's nose should go into the heel print for the food, across the foot, and over to the next heel print, and so on, until you have completed your objective.



Serpentine area 4 long leg.

Lay three tracks about 30 paces long and at least 15 paces apart. All three tracks should have a tail for the "find it" command, a scent pad with five pieces of food for the such command and 30 paces with food in each heel print.

You should use your six-foot leash for guidance, not corrections. At this level you may want to lay your tracks along natural vegetation lines, such as ditches, edges of low-high grass, and indentations in the soil. You should keep working at this level for as long as it takes to be fundamentally sound.

After your three tracks have aged 5 or 10 minutes, bring your dog out. Make sure you let the dog relieve itself before taking it to the tail areas. This done, bring your dog to the first tail marker. Sit



Serpentine area 3 - corkscrew

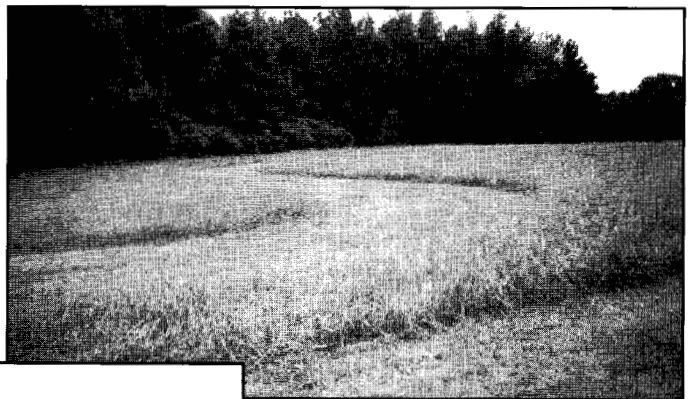
the dog, place the leash under the dog's arm, give the "find it" command, praise with "good find," get to the scent pad, give the such command, guide the dog from heel print to heel print, praise with "good such," nothing else. When you approach the end of the track your dog will find a few extra pieces of food. You should give much praise, but only with the "good such" command.



Serpentine - another side of area 2.

When the track is completed, you should sit your dog, take your leash out from under the dog's right arm, and heel counter-clockwise to the second tail, run your track, and repeat the same procedure on the third track.

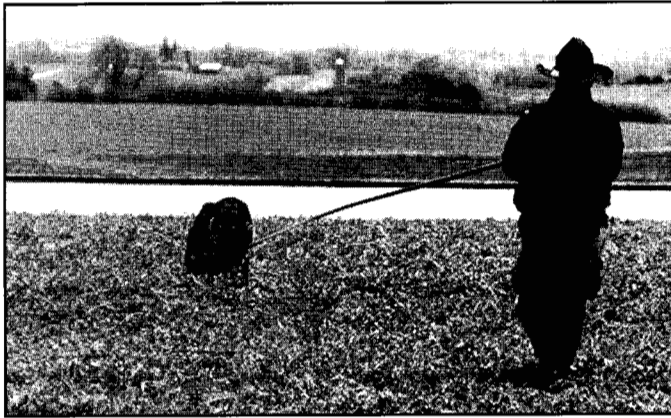
When you complete several training periods using the three-track method, extend the second track to 40 paces and the third track to 50 paces. Lengthen the tracks accordingly with each new training session. The longer you make the third track, the shorter the first track becomes, until you eliminate the first track altogether. After much success and by the time your third track reaches 200 paces, you can eliminate the second track.



Serpentine Area 2

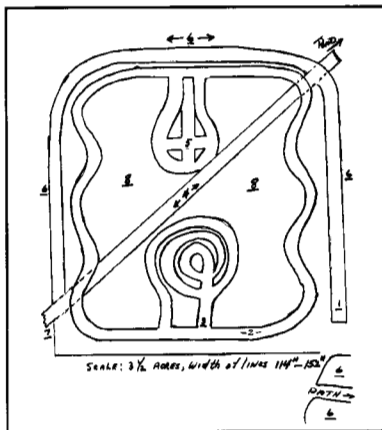
Work the basic three-track drill in all kinds of weather, wind, and variable conditions. You should track with wind from the rear, front, cross winds from the right and left side. You should study the geography of the land and determine the grain. Grain of the land refers to the way the farmer plows or harvests the crops. So, you will practice with the grain, across the grain, and with the

angle of the grain. The angle is where the farmer turns the machine around. If you are a serious trainer, you will know the conditions throughout the year and train accordingly. These tracking revolutions should be done on a single field. This will be your training field, as opposed to your testing field.



Floyd and Zorro off on another track - Madison, Wisconsin - 1997 FH Championship

In the Raleigh area, we are fortunate to have access to more than 80 acres at the Louisburg Airport. In this one environment we can, at different times of the year, train for almost any conditions we may encounter east of the Mississippi River. The only exception is the so-called "moon dust" found in some parts of Florida.



It is at this training-tracking field that we began to work with the serpentine track. We use the serpentine to teach and train the basics. All corrections and stressing takes place on this, our "serpentine field" (Figure 1). Testing takes place somewhere else, under trial-like conditions with no corrections allowed. One must make mental notes of deficiencies and

correct on the "serpentine field." I feel by doing it this way, the dog does not have a bad experience on the trialing field.

Figure 1 legend: In order for you to understand the serpentine concept better, I have placed numbers on the chart. What do these numbers mean?

1. A cut around the entire 3+ acres where spectators may observe, four-wheelers, etc.
2. The serpentine, we do not teach turns as such. We teach a dog to follow the track. If your dog will follow a trail, then turns are easy.
3. The corkscrew. If you think your dog can track, let him get in the corkscrew.
4. The long leg, which comes off the end of the runway. You should always have a long leg to begin or finish with.
5. Where we test for turns and scent discrimination.

6. A forest surrounds the entire field.
7. Leads to the runway.
8. You will find anything that grows.

We are fortunate in that we can get this cut three to four times a year, which partially prevents seeds from forming. All cut areas are as low as we can possibly cut them. This in my opinion helps the dog to develop a deep nose. It also helps you see when the dog has a high nose and is not tracking footprint-to-footprint. The handler must know where the training track is 100 percent of the time. There is absolutely no reason why a handler should lose a training track. There is also no reason for a tracking trainer not to know all the terrain features available on the training-tracking field. Know it. Chart it.

In the environment of the serpentine track, we teach the step-off, saw-tooth, discrimination within 1" and hopefully a 100-point happy working dog with precision.

Finally, after the dog is fundamentally sound in all phases, we teach the "such platz" in the serpentine. Refer back to the "find it" command. This is the same technique used to teach the find it command, except that the leather article has replaced the food. You will need at least 20 leather articles. Again use a six-foot leash and instead of tossing food around, toss a leather article out behind the dog and repeat the "find it" command. As the dog starts to sniff the article repeat such platz. When the dog downs with nose on the article repeat, "good such platz." When the dog is reliable with the find it and such platz command go to one edge of the serpentine and place 20 articles five paces apart. At this point do not use food. You are replacing food with the article. Eventually you will train your dog to track from article to article. As you and your dog become more proficient with the such platz, you will gradually put more space between the articles. You are striving to teach your dog to track from article-to-article, whether they are five feet or 500 feet apart. When you have completed this segment of tracking, you and your dog should be well on your way to your first trial and 100 points.

Furthermore, if you follow the plan you should be prepared for a SchH1, 2, or 3 track and, who knows, maybe an FH track. After all, using this technique to teach my dog, Zorro, we did a "B" to qualify and then an FH before ever doing a SchH1. After the FH, Zorro completed the SchH1, 2, and 3 in succession.

There is nothing random about tracking training. Have a place, have a plan without too many moving parts. Make things simple and repeat them. This, I feel, is the way to train tracking. You end up with a responsible, reliable, happy teammate on the tracking field. And that equals enjoyment and clarity of the tracking goal.

Remember the 3 T's: Teach, Train, Test. Be patient; success begets success. Be prepared to go back and re-teach. Make a plan. Make it happen.

• USA

Floyd Wilson is a USA Judge, Regional Director of the Southeast Region, 4-time member of the SchH3 Club, and a Master Gold Medal holder as well as a participant and judge at the National level. His dog Zorro was 2nd in Nation to complete the FH2 with 99 points, which is one of the highest FH2 scores in the world.

**Training
and
Development**

Part 4

by Floyd Wilson



Tracking --

Building Blocks and Beyond

This article represents the fourth installment in a series of five. All of the articles should be read in sequence. Once

read, the articles should be reviewed frequently. In that spirit, let's quickly review the first three installments.

Article 1: *North American FH Championship; question and answer format discussing the finished phases of high-level championship tracking.*

Article 2: *Philosophy, Goals, Attitudes.*

Article 3: *Groundwork for Training precision Tracking.*

These three articles represent the foundation of knowledge one must possess in order to apply the concepts and techniques outlined in Article 4. Make sure you know all of the information and have applied all the techniques outlined in the previous articles before moving on.

There are no short cuts. So, if you're reading this article for short cuts, you can stop reading here. Now that we're dealing with the front of the class, let's get down to some serious, competitive training.

I have been training dogs to track in schutzhund for two decades. That qualifies me to say I'm still learning. One of the things I must relearn everyday is that training precision tracking takes time, a great deal of it, commitment, a great deal of it, and focus, a great deal of it.



There are no short cuts. I'm pretty sure of that after 20 years. So, if you're reading this article for short cuts

**Article indication--
dog must be on the
line of the track**

and quick tips, you can stop reading here. That's a quick tip I can offer. Now that we're dealing with the front of the class, let's get

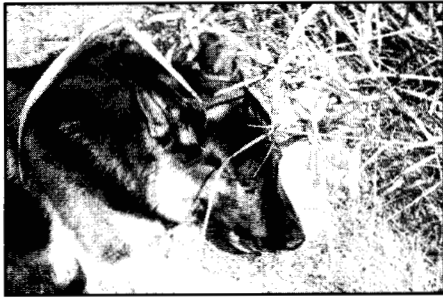
down to some serious, competitive training.

Building Blocks and Beyond

We begin the applications outlined in this article when your dog is doing a very precise article indication (*such/platz*)-



**Article indication - from
the front; dog must be
on the line of the track**



Also good to teach vinyl and plastic.

-the dog will precisely indicate with the article squarely between his front legs. Articles of all types should be sure and without fault in the *such/platz* position. (3" x 4" articles of leather, wood, textile, and vinyl.)

If you are preparing for an IPO, a different article will be needed. Read the rules regarding tracking before doing an IPO.

We will be replacing the food reward with article reward in this phase. We'll be weaning the dogs off the bait, so keep that in mind. Wean gradually; don't just eliminate the food all at once.

Corrections

We will be doing no correcting from the rear in the first phase of our applications here. Correcting a dog from behind creates a hectic, insecure tracker. We will be building a problem-solving, "thinking" tracker. If your dog gets off the track, down the dog, remove the leash, bring the dog to heel. Heel back down the track in obedience drive. Sit the dog at the restart point. Re-attach the tracking line. Restart



Working on homework to "find" his food.

the dog. You'll be surprised how much this will release the dog. You're going to be re-placing the dog in drive. He will

face the problem again in a spirited, happy way. This is very important to us at this particular phase in teaching precision.



Released to enjoy the 'find'. While the dog is in drive do a recall.

A great deal of our training will take place in the serpentine, where we challenge, where we teach, and where we correct.

forward. (Handle yourself just like you handle your dog. When you hit the wall, just move obediently back to a more successful exercise and work your way forward once again.)

Before we begin, as always, it pays to review briefly in order to be clearly focused;

In the beginning we teach "Find it", "such", "praise" on the tails. When the first tail exercise is run, praise, then get your dog to heel, heel to the next flag, and begin once more.

I will interject a fundamental here. The "hookup" (where and when you attach the dog to the tracking line) is very important part of the track and training. It should be consistent so the dog becomes conditioned to what will follow.

Heel your dog to a point somewhere on the tail. Sit your dog. Place your tracking

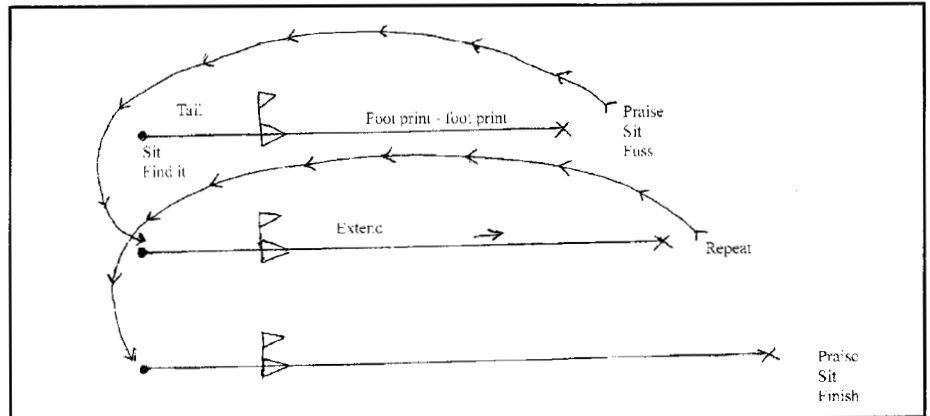


Figure 4:1

As you train and become creative within the serpentine, always remember to finish every track with a straight leg. If for any reason you do not progress through an exercise successfully, back up to the last successful exercise and work your way



Finally found lunch.

lead on the dog. Raise the dog's right leg and pass your line underneath so that it comes out from under his right armpit. You can even make a game out of this. Rubbing a dog's chest will usually make them raise the leg closest to you. The right leg in this case. Many dogs love it and will raise their leg for the handler to pass the line underneath in anticipation. Develop this. It's an excellent indicator of your dog's drive level. When they're raising their leg for you to hurry up and put that line under, you know they're pushing you to track. When your dog manifests this behavior on a tail at trial time, you'll like it, I guarantee.

Back to **Figure 4:1**. If at any time your

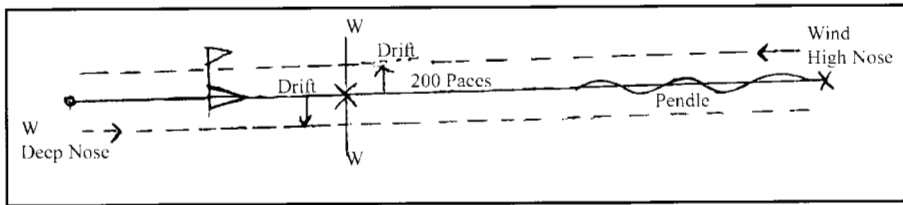


Figure 4:2

dog balks on Track 2 or 3, bring your dog to heel and heel back to your vehicle. Tracking is over for today.

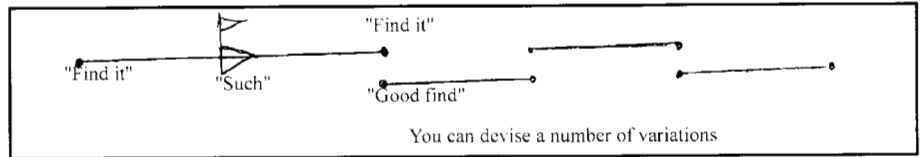


Figure 4:3

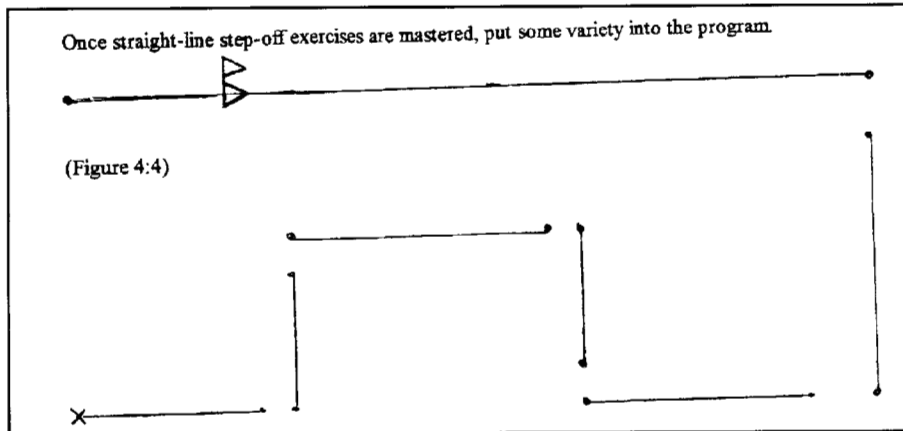


Figure 4:4

Keep your journal up to date with each day's training. Know where you've been and be able to refer back because things are going to start getting hairy here. Once straight-line, step-off exercises are mastered, put some variety into the program.

Notice you have a straight leg in the beginning for concentration. You may add articles to the leg to develop drive. You can vary this thing in many ways to challenge your dog. You are only limited by your imagination, as long as your

Gradually eliminate one of the three tracks as you extend your other tracks. Extend until you end up with one track of 200 paces. Now that we're down to one straight track, let's refine that line until it is flawless. We will use the wind to challenge the dog. The wind on a track can come from behind, from the front, or from either side of the dog.

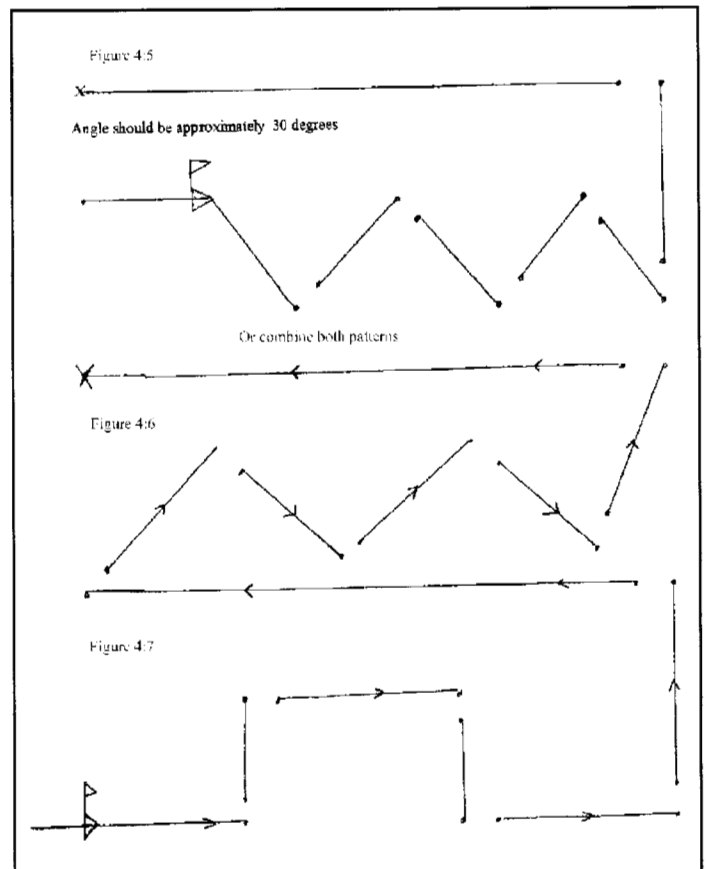
- ▶ Wind from the rear of the dog should produce a deep nose.
- ▶ Wind from the front will produce a higher nose.
- ▶ Wind from either side will produce drift.

Concentrate on the track in **Figure 4:2** using the wind to create your challenges. This track proves the heel-to-footprint tracking methods. If you encounter problems in this phase, some fundamental has not been covered. Figure out what that fundamental is, recover the fundamental, then move forward once again.

Once you've mastered the wind, we move back to the serpentine and work the step-off track.

The purpose of the step-off exercise is to teach your dog to problem solve. If you do not teach your dog to problem solve, your competition scores will vary as much as 40 points. (Example: from 98 to 58. What the hell happened?) Dogs that do not problem solve tend to have very religious handlers. Do the following exercise, and you'll be able to spend more time praying for world peace, and less time praying your dog hits that corner coming up.

The step-offs will look something like the diagram in **Figure 4:3**.



Figures 4:5-7

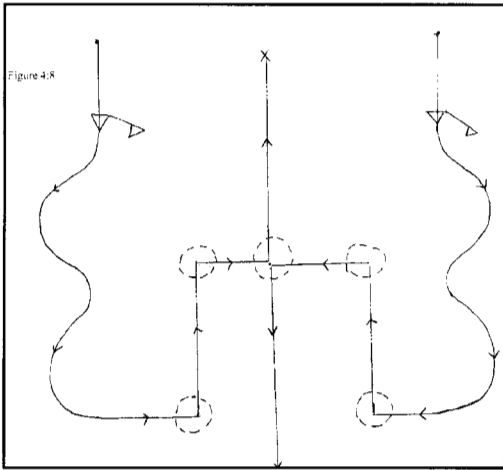


Figure 4:8

any given exercise, any given day, you're ready to move to scent discrimination.

Scent Discrimination

For the competitive tracker, scent discrimination is critical. **Figure 4:8** shows a typical scent discrimination problem we give our dogs to solve. The circles represent turns, (complete

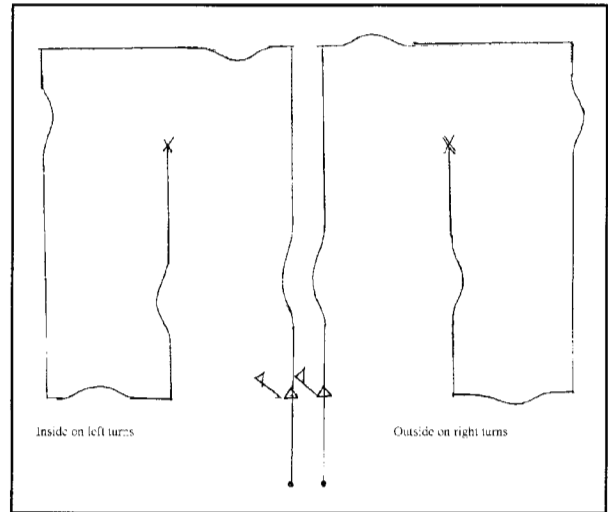


Figure 4:9

imagination stays within the guidelines of what we are doing here: step-offs.

The Saw-Tooth

In **Figures 4:5-7** we incrementally challenge the dog once more with saw-tooth angles of 30 degrees.

Once your dog can complete these exercises in any combination, from basic **Figures 4:3** to **Figures 4:7**,

circles really) laid over the original turns in the track. Start with 20 minutes on your cross tracks and refine the discrimination down to 5 minutes. (Five minutes is about as good as it gets for most dogs, and it's more than good enough for competitive tracking.)

By now, your articles have become the signposts, the goals, the rewards, the everything for

Say the phrase before you start training, and say it afterwards.



The dog must be trained to master all obstacles including water.



Look for the changes in terrain.

By now, your articles have become the signposts, the goals, the rewards, the everything for

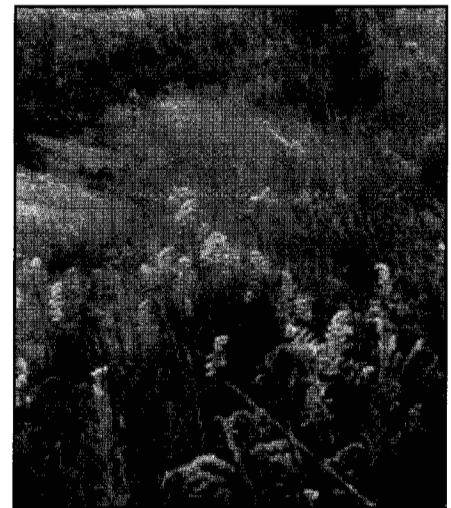
your dog. The article is, after all, why the dog is being

Train the dog to go through obstacles - not around



asked to track.

At this point, the drive to find the article should be profound. If it is not, back up, read your journal, and figure out where you need to review. Know this: if you have a problem at this point, it is not a mystery, it is a fundamental. Find the fundamental, fix it, and then move forward once more. Repeat after me, "there are no mysteries, only fundamentals."



More difficulty to look for in your track.



The dog must also master various terrain.



Continuing to work through the obstacle.



More obstacles the dog must work through.

Refining Over-all Track Performance

The tracks in **Figure 4:9** are difficult to lay. You must know where every part of the track is in order to carry these off.



Here the dog is working through a 'valley'.

The tracks in **Figure 4:9** are always laid one way or the other. Dip left when working left turns, dip right when doing right turns. These tracks are a great tool in analyzing and training your dog's turning abilities in a fixed environment. Fixed is the key here. Do right turns one day, left turns the next.

Keep in mind at this point you are acquiring a pretty nice repertoire of tracking exercises. As a result, you can use

any of the above exercises on a given day if you don't feel up to the challenge of moving ever forward. It is also a good policy to go back and review the exercises with your dog. Stay "qualified" in all the fundamental exercises.



More terrain obstacles.

Tracking through Obstacles

While judging at our recent North American Championship (1999) I could not help but notice some dogs would go around obstacles rather than tracking through them. As a result, some would miss articles, some would miss turns, and all would lose points. Obstacle training is where your creativity becomes really important.

Look around for terrain features that offer realistic problems. Water crossings, ditches, craters, downed fences, logs, high



The obstacles shown are from an actual track that 'Oller' ran and he received full points on the valley obstacle. Here he is coming up the other side.



The dog must be trained to cross various roads. Once you start this training, you must continue.

grass, bumps, gullies--the list could go on forever. Push your dog, find out where the problems are, and then use basic straight-line techniques to overcome the problem. Your dog should track footprint to footprint, no matter what the obstacle in



Continuing across the road up and over.

front is. To achieve maximum points, the dog must go through the barrier, not around it. Tip-toeing around obstacles is avoidance, and there is no excuse. Precision knows only correct and incorrect. There are no mysteries, only fundamentals. Use your articles to get your dog to the barrier, and one in close proximity on the other side of the barrier to create the drive in the dog to push straight through to the other side.



**Zorro and Floyd crossing the mud road in Bangor, Maine
FH Championship - Judge Al Kerr.**

Road Crossing

Crossing roads, even at the very best, is hard. The dog generally has a mental block when approaching roads. (For most of it's life we have been yelling at the dog to get off of the road. Now we want the dog to cross the road. There's a classic conflict.)



**SV Judge Walter Hoffman,
tracklayer Tim Cruser and
Alphie with Floyd demonstrating
footprint to footprint deep nose
tracking on the FH.**

Roads you will encounter in the tracking test may consist of many different types of surface, from dirt and gravel to asphalt and concrete. Some roads may actually have traffic crossing; some roads may be

abandoned. Train for all types. Use your fundamentals to help the dog through this barrier. The most advanced crossing, an actual road that is in use, is our target. When your dog can cross a road that carries occasional traffic, you're ready for any road crossing you'll meet on the circuit.

If you're feeling insecure about beginning road crossing, find a place with a few sidewalks, like a park. Lay a few short, straight tracks that cross the sidewalk with articles on either side. Once you're confident, expand the amount of pavement the dog must cross. Put an article out in the road a little to get the dog to take to the pavement. Put one near the other side to get him driving across.

Keep your road-crossing training separate from your overall track training. Do not put any road crossing in your track until your fundamentals are sound in the road crossing exercises. Keep your journal carefully. Analyze your failures and your successes.

Cross Tracks

With your scent discrimination fundamentals soundly in place you should not have any problem with cross tracks. Here are three ways to proof your cross tracks:

1. If everybody lays his or her tracks in a North-South direction, lay your track East-West. Cross back and forth over their tracks.
2. Drive a car or bike over the track at specified locations.
3. Take a bitch in heat and walk her over your track in specific locations.

If the bitch urinates near the track, know where that is. You may want to mark that spot and be ready. Incidentally, females will be distracted by the scent of another female in heat as well as males. This is an extreme distraction and should not be given until the dog is sound on the problems set forth in 1 and 2.

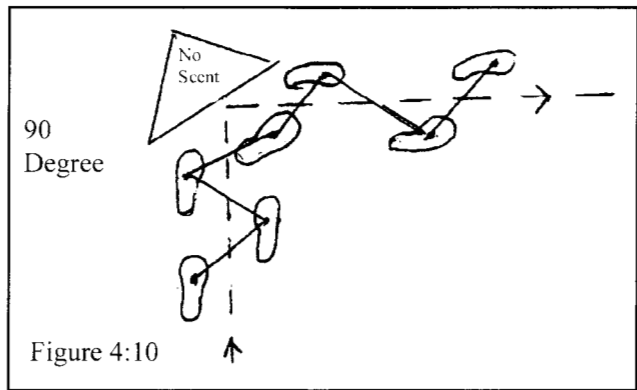


Figure 4:10

You should be specific in where you put these challenges so you will be ready to help your dog get through the problems.

*Repeat after me,
"There are no mysteries,
only fundamentals."*

Visual Distractions

Game, animal movement, and people are the most often encountered distractions in competition.

Leashing out animals, or crating animals near your track will solve this problem. You can also put big sticks attached to a long line in the weeds near the tracks. Have a club member snatch the stick hard though the weeds as the dog goes by to emulate a deer or other large game escaping.

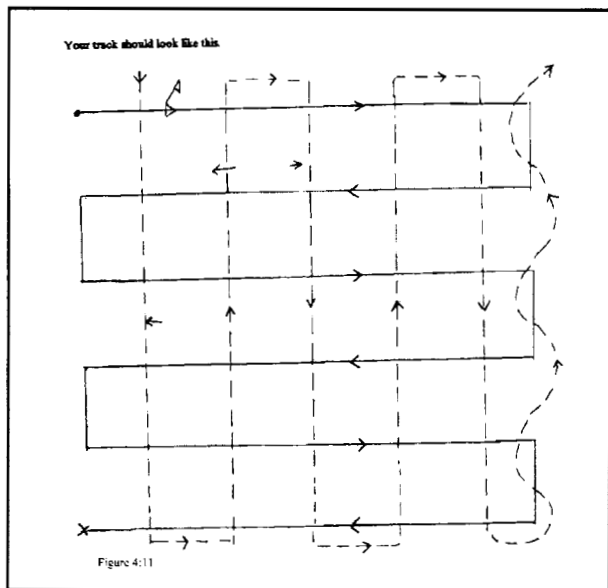


Figure 4:11

People standing in the wrong place can be a problem at trials as well. Some bystanders just don't know where to be. It's not their fault they're in the wrong place. It's not their fault if they ruin your score either. It's your fault. Be ready. Track through groups, through people's legs, etc. Just always be sure to have an article near your distraction point so you have some relief for the dog if it does get distracted.

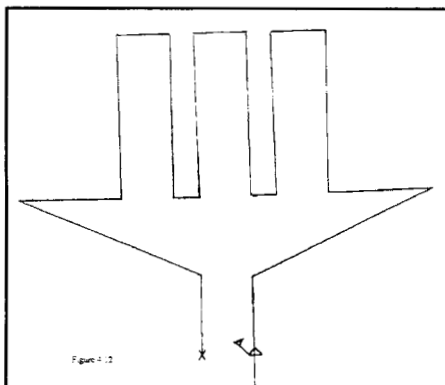


Figure 4:12

Laying Tracks

When you consider the level at which we are laying these tracks, it forces one to reconsider the track laying process.

When laying your track, just walk normally, don't dig in every step, or stomp some scent pad in the ground that looks like a roto-tiller demonstration. Just walk normal.

Turns: When approaching your turn point, lengthen your stride four or five paces before beginning the turn. This will create pre-turn intensity in your dog and result in better focus at the turn.

Figure 4:10 demonstrates what I believe to be the proper footwork in laying a turn. The inside foot should always be pointed toward the turn. When trained correctly from footprint to footprint, dogs will take turns like this without ever losing stride.

Aging and Over-washing

As you work on aging, you can once again use your fundamental straight tracks to push the limits. Lengthen your track age incrementally until you hit the wall. Watch your journal. Know where your dog's limit is and extend it through fundamental short tracks. Work to the point where you can lay a track at dusk and run it in the morning.

Rain can be a pretty scary thing to any contestant. The tracks are in, and the rain starts--hard. This is easy to overcome. Watch the weather. When it looks like it's going to rain, go out, lay a quick track, and wait for the rain. When the rain quits, run your track. Note the results in your journal.

FH2

If you have trained your fundamentals, the FH2 is really not that big a deal. Let's break down the rules and relate them to fundamentals:

- ▶ The search area is nothing more than the "find it" command within a 20-meter square.
- ▶ The angle turns are taken care of with the saw-tooth.
- ▶ The semi-circle is nothing more than the serpentine.

The biggest thing that hinders FH2 training is space. You need a bunch of space. Find the space, and lay the track as outlined in **Figure 4:11**. Use only one article here. We are building sustained concentration, drive, and intensity on this

track. The legs of the track are 300 paces, the connecting legs, 25 paces.

Your track should look like **Figure 4:11**. As you can see the track is loaded with problems to work out including cross tracks.

Designing the Ultimate Challenge

How good is that dog? With practice of fundamentals, good work ethics, and organized training, you will bring your dog to amazing levels of tracking ability.

I would like to share this information with you. Prior to the collapse of the Berlin Wall some information was coming to this country via East Germany. The track

By now, your
articles have become
the signposts,
the goals, the rewards,
the everything
for your dog.

shown in **Figure 4:12**--one that I always proof my dogs on--is the past FH Championship track from East Germany. I am sure that you will not only find the track interesting but hard as well. You can apply all of the techniques already discussed, straight lines, step offs, saw-tooth, etc. You can arrange your articles anywhere you like.

Now, I have shared much information with you and if followed should make you and your dog a great tracking team. But, before you pat yourself on the back for doing a great training job, I would like to share this anecdote with you recently sent to me by my good friend, Will Adams.

We used to track on a big hill over looking our training field. All the handlers would dutifully lay their tracks, some short tracks with lots of bait, others, long, with little or no bait. On this hill lived a Chow dog. He would watch us lay tracks every

Saturday and Sunday. If he wandered too close we would run him off.

After tracking, we would go on down to the training field, drink coffee, munch doughnuts, and talk about everybody's tracks. We started to notice the Chow emerge from the brush up on the hill and cast all over the tracking area. We would laugh and the critiques would start to roll. "I'd like to see the dog have a deeper nose." "I'd like to see the dog more

consistent in his speed and intensity."

Confident in our training and commitment, we would turn to our work. The Chow would continue to cast. It went like this all through the fall, into winter, and into spring. After a while, we took it for granted that the Chow would come on the field after we left and run all over the place, picking up missed food.

I'm not sure exactly when it happened, but it was spring. I do remember that. Gerald Tryner was gazing up the hill after tracking one day and said, "Hey, look at that damn Chow dog." The Chow was tracking up a leg, nice

and steady; he'd eat a piece of bait, re-establish his scent and move on. We all got a big laugh out of the Chow that day. Soon the Chow show became a regular feature after tracking. The Chow was getting better.

Soon, he figured out there was more food around the flags than anywhere else. He began to give the track markers a very thorough inspection before moving deeper into the tracks. The critiques began to fly once more: "The dog takes a good deep nose at the scent pad;" "The dog's intensity

is excellent on his approach to the track. His pace is good."

Near summer, the Chow was really hitting his stride. His nose was deep and his intensity was good. His turns were excellent. He even did step-offs, and acute turns with ease. Club members would sit in wonder while the tracklayers called out the play by play, "Here comes a step off. Damn! Did you see that?"

We all agreed he was one of the best tracking dogs we'd ever trained.

We train at a new place now, and the Chow's tracking field has been taken over by trailers. But all who saw that dog teach himself to track will never forget. He tracked out of instinct. He tracked out of habit. He gave his own corrections. His tracking was as pure as it was accurate. He learned to pace himself. When he covered one track, he moved on to the next. He stayed in drive until every last bit of bait was ingested.

I always said, "If I can catch that sucker, I'm gonna put a long line on him and go win the FH Championship." I never did catch him. I tried. But I did learn a thing or two from that old Chow. I don't know whatever happened to that dog, but I'll bet somebody lost their picnic lunch after a long walk in the field somewhere near his place. I'll bet they did.

See, I told you that if you follow the KISS principle, are patient, and maintain the proper work ethic, you too will be great.

In my last article concluding this series on tracking I would like to dwell on the handler, judge, and rules. Talk to you later.

• USA

Floyd Wilson is a USA Judge, Regional Director of the Southeast Region, four-time member of the SchH3 Club, and a Master Gold Medal holder as well as a participant and judge at the National level. His dog Zorro was 2nd in the nation to complete the FH2 with 99 points, which is one of the highest FH2 scores in the world.



Zorro and Floyd completing the second FH2 in USA with 99 points - USA Judge Mike Hamilton. This score is still high on the international level. "We did it together,

'Schutzhund Is a Natural Continuation of What I've Been Doing All My Life'

Profile of USA Judge Floyd Wilson

Floyd Wilson's involvement in dog sports was a natural result of his career in athletics and education. He was a boxer and wrestler and played football through college (Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina). "You reach a point in time when you can no longer block and tackle," he says. "To me, Schutzhund is action and contact." A career in education allowed Wilson to continue to be involved in athletics as a coach and teacher of the 11th and 12th grades. His advancement to school principal took him too far from the "action and contact," besides taking valuable time away from his dog training. So he left his post as principal and joined the USA Apprentice Judge Program.

North Carolina is great dog country, and for years Wilson trained and competed in the AKC ring. Eventually he found that his dogs had more potential than the forty-foot-square AKC ring allows. Tony Perrone, USA and SV judge, was transferred into the area ten years ago and stimulated the formation of USA training groups. Inspired by Perrone, Wilson was one of the founding members of the Raleigh Schutzhund Club. Most of the members of the club have an AKC background, and Wilson still maintains membership in the Greater Raleigh Obedience Club (AKC). "Our AKC friends say we train our dogs to stop in midair," Wilson notes. He likes that perception.

Making Dogs from Puppies

Wilson has raised all of his dogs from puppyhood. That in itself takes a great deal of patience, effort, and dedication. The result, Wilson reminds us, is far more rewarding and gives the trainer a greater depth of understanding. Wilson's first dog in Schutzhund was Nando v. Kathton, which he got from Perrone at eight weeks old. By two and one half years of age, Nando had his SchH III and FH. Wilson never failed to pass a trial with Nando, and Nando now serves on the K-9 unit of the Asheville, N.C., sheriff's department.

Wilson got his second dog, Alp v. BlitzStrale, a bitch, at eight weeks old from Johnny Westmoreland. Alp and Wilson won two Regional Championships and qualified for two National Championships. Now at six years old, Alp is running for the 1989 Nationals in Bowling Green, Ky. Floyd and his wife, Bobbie, Wilson, breed under the USA registered kennel name Vom Haus Lido Kassel.

The dog Floyd and Bobbie bred Alp to was Cord v. Haus Bock, nicknamed "Lido II" for his father, the two-time winner of the Deutscher Meisterschaft. Floyd got Lido II at eight weeks old and earned his SchH I last December. Floyd is working Lido II behind Alp and has already selected his next puppy, Ico v. Sudliche. Young Ico is six months old at this time. Floyd got Ico from Stewart Harvard at the Bi City Schutzhund Club in Alabama. Floyd's Ico is the son of Gary Hanrahan's national champion Ico v. Ardhaus.

Judging and Apprenticeship

Floyd Wilson planned out his competitive line-up, but he never really planned to become a judge until USA judge Mike West suggested it to him. Two SV judges whom Wilson respected, George Muller L(76) and Hans-Gunter Voss L(69), encouraged him to apprentice for USA judge. In 1986, Wilson joined USA's Apprentice Judge Program. He served his apprenticeship under USA director of judges George Shumaker, USA judges Willi Ortner and Mike West, and SV judges Hans-Gunter Voss, George Muller, Hans Schmidt, and Volker Diesem.



USA Judge Floyd Wilson.

Wilson's strongest influences were George Muller and Hans-Gunter Voss with whom he maintains close contact and enjoys a personal friendship. Wilson is a member of Hans-Gunter Voss's club in Germany, O.G. Volmarstein. He trains frequently with the club and enjoys the helper work and fellowship.

Pet Peeves and Judge Pleasers

"I hate to see beginners who have not taken the time to read the rule book — especially beginners with SchH III dogs," he says. The greatest reward a judge gets is seeing a dog and handler team do the best job they can do and still smile, regardless of the score. "Handlers should be honest with themselves," he notes. "Their dogs only do what they were trained to do."

Floyd Wilson was approved as a USA judge at the 1988 Nationals in Ohio. In 1989, his first year of judging, Wilson judged fifteen trials, traveling 30,000 air miles and 4,000 ground miles to judge trials. "I enjoy working with the people in USA, and I can't think of any one thing bad to say about one of them," he says. Still, apprenticing takes a lot of time and expense. "You feel like a stepchild at a family reunion," he notes. "The only reason anyone would go through it is because he loves the sport." The USA Apprentice Judge Program deserves a great deal of support. For Wilson, being a USA judge is a "continuation of what I've always been doing."

One Year Later

by USA Judge Floyd Wilson

USA judges go through an endless and costly apprenticeship, a personal scrutiny and subjective evaluation by the Judges Committee, the General Board and the membership at large before being awarded a USA judges license. In 1989, Floyd Wilson was awarded his license. After his first year of judging, he reflects.

Well, here the writer is, a year later, looking back and asking the question of himself, what happened? Overall, the writer has judged sixteen trials, flown over 30,000 miles, ground traveled over 4,000 miles, judged over 150 handler-dog teams, seen old friends and hopefully made many new friends. Spent many hours in airports, labored over cancelled flights, fog, ice, snow, lost baggage, and many other thrilling experiences. The writer shall never forget the weather conditions in North Texas, Tennessee, Ohio and Pennsylvania. The writers' judging career started off in a snowstorm, early 1989 and definitely ended in a snowstorm the very last of 1989.

The writer was able to observe a cross-section of training techniques throughout USA. Overall, the techniques were varied. However, in the end regardless of training techniques utilized, scores reflected the relationship between the team of handler and dog everytime. The Royal Air Force has an axiom which states that "Every handler deserves the dog he has trained" and the writer concurs in almost every instance.

Humor along the way, oh yes, plenty. For example in the middle of a critique in Central Texas: there is a scream and a woman approaches with a bull snake over her head and informs the judge that his present is a snake skin belt; the F.H. track layer, after laying the track informed the writer he could not place the article as directed. When asked why, the tracklayer replied "A big snake was laying there." To which, the writer replied "The dog will find the article and understand exactly why you had to place the article further up." Now that's dedication and that is exactly what the writer found to be true throughout the USA, hard working dedicated people interested in promoting the dog sport called Schutzhund. Another instance was when the top dog in USA zeroed in on the writer while judging the "Courage Test" later, a voice, out of the stands, asked "Do you want us to run you through a car wash"? At that precise moment a lot of laughter broke the tension. On another occasion upon hearing his score a voice out of the stands again said the "handler was dazzled and blindfolded with dental floss." We do have comics in our sport.

Outstanding is the way the writer would describe his youngest handler dog

team, only eight years old, little Nicole and her buddy Jenny qualified for the "B" title. Over Christmas the writer received a Christmas card from little Nicole who informed him that in March, 1990, she is going for her "WH" or Schutzhund I title. In the writer's opinion, USA will grow stronger as these little ones grow up. We should all strive to promote youth activities in USA.

If the writer could present a trophy for sportsmanship it would go to the editor of *Schutzhund USA*. One of the greatest displays of sportsmanship was exhibited by this handler at a trial. We should all strive for improved sportsmanship.

Overall weather conditions in USA go from one extreme to the other. Howling winds, snow, ice, sleet, tons of rain, unreal and unbelievable conditions. Consider yourself fortunate if you have ideal weather. The writer would urge all handlers to train in all conditions especially under a canopy of screaming jets only a few hundred feet over your head.

Overall tracking scores appear to go up almost with each trial. This means training and techniques have improved tremendously.

In obedience, what seemed to be missing in many of the teams, the writer judged, was lack of a happy relationship with each other. The writer would urge all handlers to concentrate on a happy relationship, speed, correct quick sits and group work.

As training techniques evolved, one could notice that protection had more or less stabilized. One likes to observe a dog with good nerves, sound temperment, controlled and willing to defend their master at all times. Overall the writer supports the helper training program throughout USA. In order to move forward we must have a strong, correct program.

Finally, in order to check the writers performance charts, notes and other useful information was recorded. When clubs utilized video, the writer requested a copy in order to self evaluate. Most clubs were very cooperative. The results of this self evaluation is as follows.

In conclusion, the statistics illustrate that in the "A" phase the scores were more or less evenly spaced and most handlers gave a "Very Good" perform-



USA Judge Floyd Wilson

ance. On the other hand the "B" phase illustrates that a great deal of improvement should be made and in the "C" phase the majority of teams turned in solid "Good" performances. Overall scores indicate that the majority of teams the writer had the pleasure and privilege to judge turned in a credible "Good" performances. Come to think of it most of the teams the writer judged were owners who had raised their puppies to compete and were incredibly "Good" people.

Finally, the writer would like to express gratitude to USA for granting the privilege to judge, the membership, and 150 plus handlers and dog teams who allowed the writer to judge their performance, the many USA and SV Judges who gave so much of their time. To Gary, Gene, George, Hans for their encouragement and finally to Bobbie for granting space and time to make this dream a reality. You have made this writer's life a happier one.