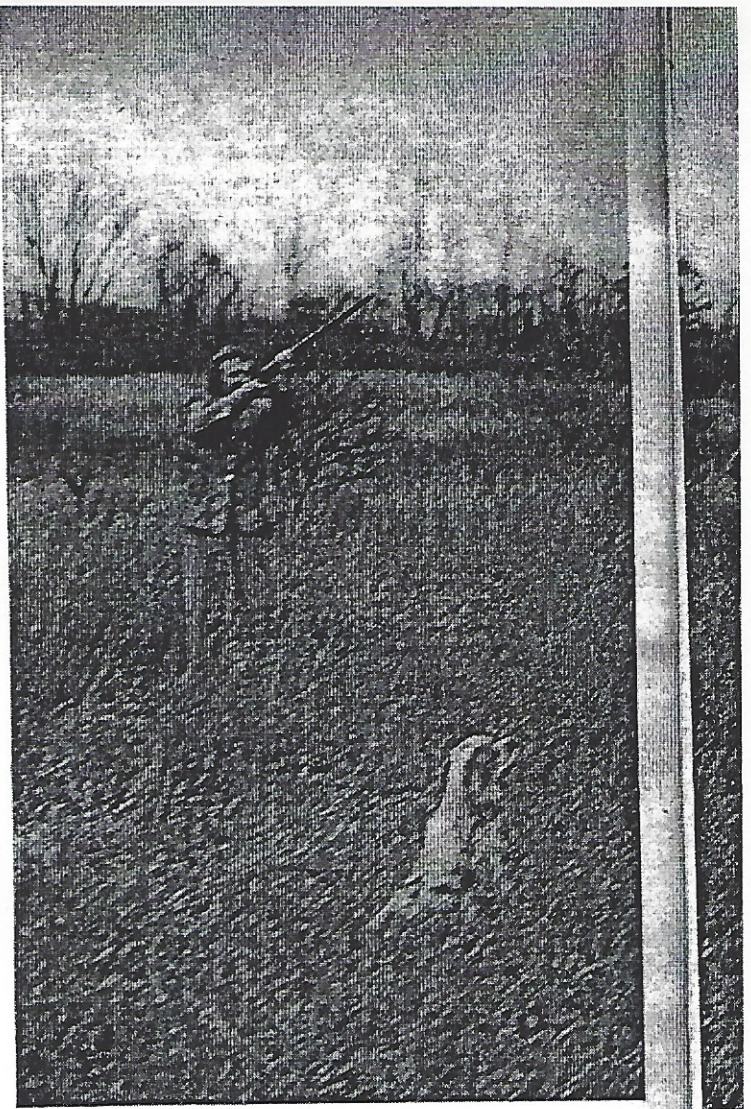


Leave It To The Ladies

Now the Lashas, members of the Ladies' Amateur Spaniel Handlers' Association, are training, running and shooting over their dogs with such success in open competition as to put their lesser halves to utter shame



The ladies gun for one another while working Gallerette steady while Jean Hutcheson and



Julie Armour reaches for a delivery by her springer, Field Trial Champion Carlo of Chrishall

THE sun was slanting from a cloudless blue sky. A mountain ridge across the valley displayed a magnificent tapestry of autumn color. On our side of the valley, swinging in and out over the weeds and bracken, a little black-and-white springer bitch beat a perfect pattern, bending happily to the soft trills of her handler's whistle. Suddenly she swung, charged into a thicket and pushed a cock bird cackling into the air.

The handler steadied the dog, rode the bird out with confident deliberation and folded it neatly. The little bitch unwound her springs on command and brought the bird promptly to hand. Mrs. Jean Hutcheson had won another gunner-handler stake—and chalked up another accomplishment for the Lashas, the Ladies' Amateur Spaniel Handlers' Association.

Organized in June 1956, the association represents a concerted effort to keep alive an amateur interest in spaniel field trials and to encourage, by their example, amateur competition by both sexes. The ladies appreciate, too, that personal participation in active competition will stimulate their interest in proper training and handling methods and help them to evaluate dogs in their own breeding programs. They have hurled a challenge into an arena in which professional dominance is most apparent—there are only open stakes in today's major springer and cocker trials. When you further consider the long hours of training and grooming of their charges for competition, the extent of the chore these gals have attempted is literally staggering.



their dogs. Here Ruth Greening holds Ruchar's Katey Winslow drop a pheasant for the retrieve

A few years ago on Long Island some of the "not so weak as they'd like to have you believe" sex decided to get together to learn how retrievers should be trained and handled. They engaged Dave Elliot to teach them the fundamentals and coach them in trial management. They learned not only how to work a dog but the organization and ethics of trial management. They formed the Ladies' Retriever Club, engaged in competition, played an important part in breeding programs and presently run one of the nation's top trials—prodigious enterprise.

In the spaniel fancy there have over the years been occasional individual distaff accomplishments. Rux Chapin qualified a dog for the Springer National in 1954 and ran it through all series. When the cocker field-trial advocates organized and set up qualifying requirements for their first National in 1953, Ruth Greening qualified a dog of her own breeding and ran it in the National. She has qualified a dog for each subsequent National Cocker Championship and has run one in all but 1956, when her lady candidate came in season.

Dr. Marlow Dittebrandt of Oregon recently retired the Robert Bishop challenge trophy by winning the Amateur Handlers' Stake of the Northwest Springer Spaniel Field Trial Club for the third time. Billie Garvan handled her Gummer's Delight through all series of the Open Stake at Millbrook, New York, and won a certificate of merit, as did Ruth Greening at Albany with her home-bred pup, Ruchar's Citation. (Continued on page 95)



Ruth Greening with three American cockers, Katey Winslow with an English cocker and Jean Hutcheson with three springers. Five of the seven in their string are field champions



Rux Chapin with her springer on line at a water test in the 1953 National Springer Championship, awaiting the judges' command to send him. They finished all seven series



Gem Berol and Berol Lodge Gay Lady present a pretty picture against the snow at the 1955 Cocker National at Amwell, New Jersey. They were in contention to the "best end"

Ruth Greening was the first woman to make a field-trial champion when she finished Ruchar's Bess Again at Millbrook in 1952. In 1955 she won best amateur-handled cocker in the National with Ruchar's Busy Bee. Pressing closely was Gem Berol with Berol Lodge Gay Lady.

The gals have really been showing their heels to the men in the amateur stakes. At the Albany Spaniel Club annual trial, for example, the Brownie of Berol trophy for the best amateur handler to place in open competition has been won only twice—both times by Ruth Greening, and she missed returning it this year by only one place, winning best amateur handler but finishing just out of the money with a certificate of merit. Last year Ruth retired the Latch Up George amateur-handler trophy presented by the well-known spaniel enthusiast, Monte Lewis, by winning three of the five legs on it. She then presented the Ruchar Trophy and proceeded to take the first leg on it this year.

These persevering females work their dogs with considerable regularity. When they need assistance or an opportunity to work their dogs on pheasant, they find the professional trainers enthusiastically cooperative. Katie Winslow works with Jasper Briggs or Luke Medlin; Jean Hutcheson finds Luke's preserve most convenient to her Connecticut home. Ruth Greening works with Luke or Larry MacQueen, Billie Garvan with Sterling Yoder, Gem Berol with Blair Crowell, Julie Annom with Steve Studnicki.

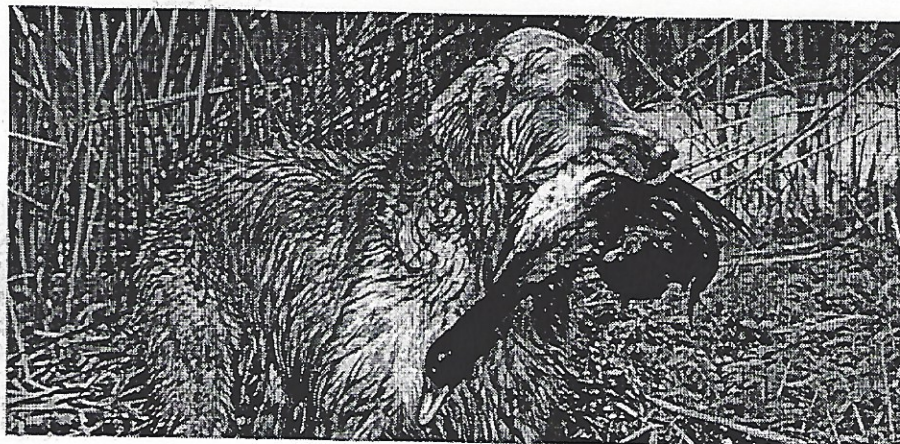
The pros are enthusiastic about this amateur participation. They have long since learned that such participation is the heart of any competition. They know that their own abilities and accomplishments are most appreciated by those who have experienced similar obstacles, successes, disappointments.

Patience and understanding, as well as willingness to evaluate a dog's good and poor qualities, are best expressed by owners when they have firsthand knowledge of the trials and tribulations of training and, what is also of great importance, a realization of the significance of breaks and good and bad days in competition. Once an amateur has had a few ups and downs, he is less likely to feel that the handler has let a dog down because the dog, having won, does not consistently bring home top honors.

Whenever the members can arrange to work on the same grounds together they do so, as four gents would schedule a foursome of golf. They plant or fly birds, gun for one another and generally criticize or try to work out problems.

Ruth Greening has more wins to her credit than any other Lasha. She is quick to admit that competition in cockers is not as tough as in springers, but the question that comes immediately to my mind is, Where are the male amateurs in cockerdom, since she must be top amateur to gain the honors she has?

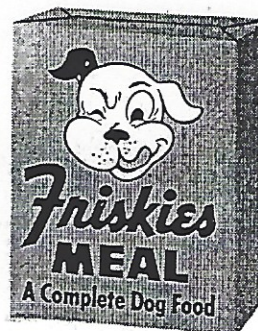
The Lashas have a trophy at which they all aim their guns. The Lasha trophy, a beautiful sterling-silver pitcher, is held annually by the Lady Amateur spaniel handler who wins the highest number of points each year in open competition.



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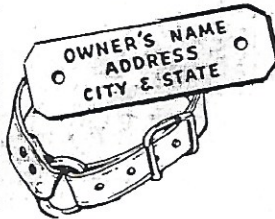
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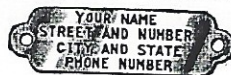


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