

Woman's Touch at Field Trial

Spaniel Enthusiasts Hold an Informal Meet Upstate

By WALTER R. FLETCHER

Spaniel field trials for years had been a masculine pursuit. Six years ago, however, a dozen women, led by Mrs. Ruth Greening of Mahwah, N. J., decided it was time for the distaff side to get into the sport. So the Ladies Amateur Spaniel Handlers Association, more



Melanie Garvan, 9, handles her pup, Dungarvan Cup Cake

familiarly known as Lasha, was organized. Although Lasha never has held a regular championship trial

or even a sanctioned event, each year it sponsors a "fun" water trial. Last Saturday the event, an informal affair, was held at La Grangeville, N. Y.

There was no admission. Field trial enthusiasts were urged to come, pack a picnic lunch, bring the family and enjoy the sport. Nearly 100 accepted the invitation.

They saw F. T. Ch. Berol Lodge Gay Lady, owned and handled by Mrs. Henry Berol, a Lasha member, win the cocker open and Johnny Ringo, owned and handled by Julius Farkas, win the springer open.

Younger Dogs Outclassed

Gay Lady, 10 years old, had been in retirement for more than a year and now is strictly a house pet. However, the little black-and-white cocker hadn't forgotten her training, retrieving brilliantly to show a half-dozen younger dogs the way a champion performed.

To encourage future Lashas, a junior handling stake was held. Noel Garvan, 6, handled two cocker puppies; her sister, Melanie, 9, worked a 5-month-old cocker; Alexa Mangine, 12, had Meg, the winner of the puppy cocker stake, and Joan Gahegan, 8, sent a springer puppy through his paces.

With an entry of sixty dogs, this was the largest water trial held this season in the East and a record for Lasha.

Spaniel trials are a real test for the handler. The dog must be steady to shot, able to mark his own game and to retrieve on both land and water. Unlike

the pointing breeds, the spaniel does not point his game but flushes it. When he does, he sits and waits for the command to retrieve. The dog must learn obedience to the whistle and to take directional signals when needed.

In 1956, when Lasha was formed, the men didn't take the organization seriously. But the following year the women showed they were very much in the field-trial picture when four members proceeded to gain honors previously won by the masters of the household.

Mrs. Peter D. Garvan of Roslyn, L. I., was named the best amateur handler at the cocker national championship. Mrs. S. L. Hutcheson of Greenwich, Conn., was the best amateur handler at the springer open at the Connecticut Springer Field Trial Association and took first in the gunner-handler stake at the Eastern springer event.

Surgeon Wins Trophy

Mrs. Greening was the best amateur handler at the Cocker Spaniel Field Trial Club of America. Dr. Marlowe Dittebrandt, a surgeon in Portland, Ore., took the gunner-handler stake to win the Robert Bishop Amateur Challenge Trophy at the Northwest English Springer Spaniel Club trials on the Coast.

Mrs. Philip D. Armour Jr. of Chicago, another Lasha, became the first woman to go through the national springer championship when she handled

her Jordieland Micky to a third place in 1958. The national is a grueling competition. It lasts for three days. A dog must compete in seven series—five on land, two in the water.

Only two women ever had their dogs complete the seven events. The other, also a Lasha, is Mrs. Evelyn Monte. She accomplished the feat in 1959 with her Earlsmoor Country Girl. Mrs. Monte not only handles but is an all-round judge, regularly working at trials for pointing breeds as well as spaniels.

Last year, Mrs. Armour was able to whistle "Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better" to the men handlers when she guided F. T. Ch. Carswell Contessa to the national springer championship. She was the first of her sex to do so.

Other Lashas who have been faring well are Mrs. Albert F. Winslow of Goshen, N. Y.; Thelma Addison of Great Neck, L. I., a painter of abstracts; Mrs. Roy D. Chapin of Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich., and Betsy and Forsyth Watson of New York.

Lasha by no means includes all the women handling spaniels. However, it has done much to get women interested in the sport.

"We organized to promote the use of the spaniel for hunting and specifically to encourage women to handle their dogs and to compete in the field," said Mrs. Hutcheson, Lasha's president.