

Retrievers of the Past...

By Joule Charney

NFC-NAFC-CFC Major VI

“
Only three other dogs have
earned the dual-National
TITLE IN THE ENSUING
FIFTY-SIX YEARS...
”

A SPECIAL FEATURE of the 2013 National Amateur Retriever Championship, held last month in Mondovi, Wisconsin, was the distribution of a recently acquired film of the very first National Amateur. Made by the National Amateur Retriever Club, the film has been converted to DVD and each handler and other event notables received a copy. Yes, it would have been ‘handier’ had this been the 50th anniversary of the 1957 event. There is, however, some interesting math that can be applied to this situation: 2013 minus 1957 equals 56. Fifty-six is six more than 50; and, it just so happens that the name of the 1957 Winner is Major VI. For readers who are rusty on their Roman Numerals, ‘VI’ is 6.

With his 1957 National Amateur Win, Major VI’s achieved two firsts in retriever field trial history. He won the first National Amateur; and, he became the first NFC-NAFC, having won the 1954 National Open three years prior. Only three other dogs have earned the dual-National title in the ensuing fifty-six years, Super Chief, Wanapum Dart’s Dandy and Candlewood’s Super Tanker, points out field trial author and owner Sue Reynolds.

Major qualified for seven consecutive National Opens, in 1951 through 1957, and was a Finalist in 1951 and 1956, in addition to his 1954 Win. He also was a Canadian Field Champion. When it came to the National Amateur, “his success percentage was excellent,” pointed out retriever historian Richard Halstead. The 1957 National Amateur was the only one for which Major qualified. He was one of the four oldest dogs to compete, each of whom was nine years old.

National Opens began sixteen years prior to National Amateurs, in 1941. Amateur Field Championships for retrievers were not available until the 1950s.

“Major VI qualified had 145.5 and 37.5 Amateur points, for a career total of 183. He averaged 18 Open and 5 Amateur points per year, in 8 years of All-Age field trials,” cites Reynolds. As a sire, he was bred infrequently, producing about ten litters, with only one titled offspring, according to Halstead. Major was admitted to the Retriever Hall of Fame in 1993.

Major is out of FC Shadow’s Ebony Bob x Wardwyn WindBound,



Photograph by Evelyn Shafer

bred by Graydon Topping in 1948. A historically prominent dog one generation further back is Dual CH CFC Little Pierre of Deer Creek, Major’s Dam. There is no apparent significance to the ‘VI’ in Major’s name. There are no Majors I through V in his pedigree. Reynolds points out that ‘Major’ is a common dog name, among all types of AKC breeds. To distinguish one dog from all others with the same name, the practice of the AKC has been to add Roman Numerals. With the present ability to change an established AKC name, Reynolds adds that this practice might not remain as prevalent.

Major was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Fraser M. Horn of New York, with occasional listings of Mrs. Fraser Horn, solely, as owner. Major VI’s professional trainer was Ray Staudinger, one of the most successful pros of the era. The Fraser’s son, John Fraser Horn, who was just out of college, handled during the 1957 National Amateur, which was refeatured in ‘The Tenth Series’ article in the June 2013 Retriever News.

Staudinger handled Major during the 1954 National Open. One of the most memorable aspects of the 1954 National Open, held in Weldon Spring, Missouri, was its weather. Retriever Field Trial News, the official publication of the Wisconsin Amateur Field Trial Club, reported on the event: “The weather was disagreeable throughout, cold, windy and overcast, with rain Thursday afternoon and all day Friday; in fact, one does not recall a single ray of sunshine.”

Thirty-three dogs started the 1954 National, out of thirty-seven who were qualified. By the start of the 8th series, six dogs remained, including the King Buck, who had won in 1952 and 1953, and Massie’s Sassie Boots, who would win in 1956. The 8th Series was one of six

“that leveled the field, and you will note here that four of these were on water. The 9th and 10th were comparatively simple tests, really an anticlimax and it seemed to prove little except that good dogs, on their good days, continue to do good work throughout a trial,” according to News writer.

Major's work throughout the event “far surpassed that of any of his competitors,” the report continued, stating that no one was surprised when Major was announced as the Winner. “This was a popular win. Major VI has been a consistent performer in the past three years and a top winner in Open All-Age stakes.”

The News also pointed out that 1954 was only the second occasion in which an Eastern-owned dog won the National Retriever Championship Stake. The previous year was 1947.

1954 was the third time the National Open was held at the August A. Busch Memorial Wildlife Area. Prior to the event, there was concern about the suitability of the area, due to a three-year drought. Fortunately, although the water levels were low in all the lakes, they were adequate.

Of the ten series, the types of setups were evenly divided between land and water: three consisting of marks only, one mark/blind combination and one long blind.

Perhaps difficult to imagine now-a-days, 1954 was only the second year during which “the highly desirable innovation of using a test dog at the start of each series was continued,” the News noted. “Hence, each series had been proved in the presence of a gallery before a single contestant was actually tried on it.” Apparently, another novelty was an early version of holding blinds. “The movable 4 x 3 foot canvas screen was also used again. This gives the handlers an opportunity to be readily available and near the line, but prevents competing dogs, that have not yet worked, from watching either previous falls or the planting of blinds.” ■

Tenacular Dogs – Joule Charney

Joule resides in Paradise, California. Joule has been a contributing writer for Retriever News for five years. The *Retrievers of the Past...* feature series is published four times a year: May, July, September and October. Visit Joule Charney online at www.tenacular.com.

AMENDMENT - June 2013

1977 NFC-AFC EUROCLYDON

Rocky's progeny includes:

1981 NFC-AFC Orion's Sky and
1985 NFC-AFC Dynamite Duke,
both out of a 1977 litter. The sire was
1981 NAFC Dude's Double Or Nothin'.

MAJOR VI

1954 National Champion
1957 Na'l. Amateur Champion
4/20/48 — 5/20/59

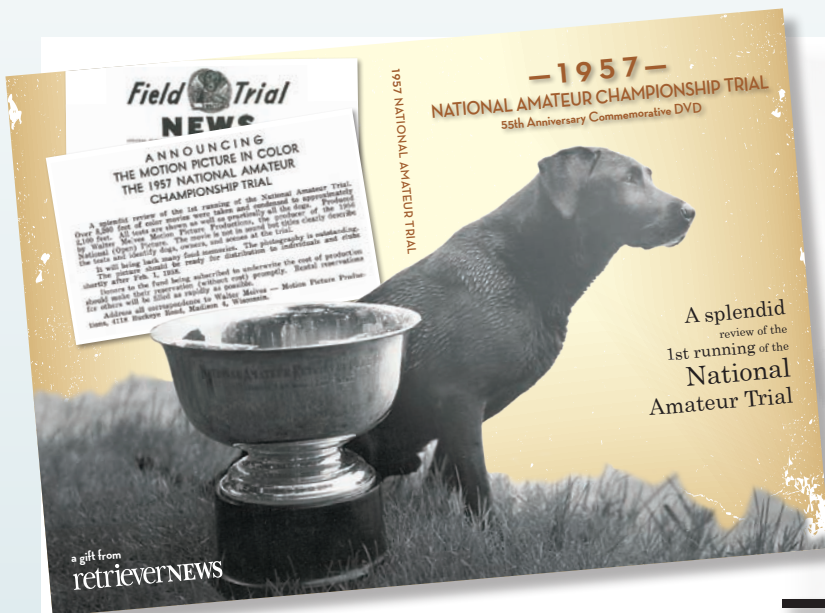
One of the truly great Retrievers of all time died May 20th. If ever there is established a “Retriever Hall of Fame” certainly the son of Shadow's Ebony Bob ex Wardwyn Windbound justly deserves membership.

Major was retired from competition in 1958 after compiling a most impressive record. Up to the present time he is the only Retriever ever to own the dual title of National and National Amateur Champion. His record shows an amazing total of 145½ championship points in Open competition, plus 36½ points earned in Amateur Stakes.

He won the 1954 National under the handling of Ray Staudinger. In his victory at the 1957 National Amateur he was handled by John Fraser Horn, son of his owner.

As a youngster, Major might have been termed a “problem child”. His terrific desire and drive often ran him into trouble but he was always a joy to watch. As he matured and steadied down, he definitely was the dog to beat in any Trial.

Mrs. Fraser M. (Betty) Horn can always look back with pride knowing she owned Major VI. It is wonderful to own a great one but no matter how old they are, it saddens one to see them go. We will always remember Major — you could not forget him once you saw him perform.



Order your copy of this DVD
from Retriever News
today **\$15.00**

— 1957 —

NATIONAL AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP TRIAL
55th Anniversary Commemorative DVD



retrieverNEWS | **EntryExpress**

TheRetrieverNews.com ■ EntryExpress.net ■ 262-278-4201 ■ info@theretrievernews.com