

Well, that's the Game Season over and I was delighted with Tara's performance considering I had only started gundog training at the beginning of 2009. She certainly took to it, but that really shouldn't be too much of a surprise since Vizslas are bred for gun work and Tara had come from a bitch



who was a working gundog. Doing a different type of training from my normal agility had certainly rekindled my interest, so much to learn and take in. It's "food for the brain" "is how Tom puts it," stops you becoming stale".

During the year I had a weekends training session with Steve and Coshy Kimberley in their charming old farmhouse near Exeter. The house had a thatched roof and not a single straight wall, very old and full of atmosphere, really lovely. It was a good weekend, especially since Coshy is a 'cordon bleu' cook. The training was fantastic and it certainly helped at a later date when Tom and I booked a 'shoot-over' day with Steve. It involved six dogs and four guns and was a 'live' training day on an estate near Southampton. We hunted through open woodland with scrubby undergrowth the four guns line abreast about 50 yds apart with two dogs working (one to each pair of guns). Although I enjoyed the days on Tom's shoot this was pure HPR work with my dog hunting in front of me. To walk through the woods and watch her scenting left and right was exhilarating. Halfway through the wood Tara suddenly went onto a 'soft' point, indicating that she had picked a scent up somewhere nearby. She then moved forward and went onto a 'solid' point, all feet on the ground, body held low and head and tail extended, it's just something special when you see your dog do that, gives you goosebumps. Steve shouted across to me "send her in to flush" (he was walking behind us handlers giving instructions and encouragement) and I shouted "Tara, in and flush" and she did it! Brilliant! Out came a pheasant which the gun on my left shot, and I sent Tara off on the retrieve. A magic moment! It really whetted my appetite for HPR style shooting, it was just so much enjoyment. Unfortunately as it so often happens, no birds went Tom's way that day, but he couldn't have cared less. He'd enjoyed a day out in the countryside with his gun, and he'd seen his dog (and wife) working including a successful 'point'.



Last Sunday it was back to training with the GSP club at Lightwater. Tara did a couple of good retrieves on the dummies and then John our trainer put one into the woods and Tara went off on a 'hunt' quartering the undergrowth. John said it was my fault because instead of using 'fetch' I'd given her 'find' and as far as Tara was concerned she had to go and find something. John said she knew where the

dummy was and if I'd said 'fetch' she'd have gone for it. Handlers fault!! He also reckoned that she was becoming bored which apparently is natural after a dog has had a season on Game and then goes back to canvas objects. Tom says that when he was in the Army all helicopter pilots had a pad strapped to their knee to write notes on, and that I should have something similar on my arm with the correct commands listed!!!

Today I took the dogs on their usual walk along the river bank and Tara suddenly went down the bank next to a rugby field fence and went on point. I called her away but she wouldn't budge, she was rooted. I wished I'd had my camera to photograph it! Since she insisted on holding the point I slid down the bank into the bushes to tell her in no uncertain terms that the object she was indicating was in fact a rugby ball that had been lost in the undergrowth, but on closer examination it proved to be a dead duck! It was lying on it's back and the white underside had looked like a rugby ball (to me, but not to Tara), the duck probably had hit the high mesh fencing that stops the balls going into the river and broken it's neck. Tara had either spotted it or scented it and produced a beautiful point. I did apologise for doubting her and gave her a 'reward'.