



Team GB – 20th Anniversary Vizsla European Field Trial Championship (Europa Cup); Hungary

26 hours of driving (6 people & 4 dogs in a transit van) saw us finally arrive at our hotel just over the border in Hungary. Admittedly we did stop off for a few hours for some last-minute polishing and a bite to eat at one of our very hospitable opponents in Austria. All booked in and some real food, the team and dogs rested. The following day was spent acclimatising the dogs. On the Thursday, late afternoon we headed to the Championship Headquarters where we met up with the rest of Team GB. All the wonderful equipment supplied by our sponsors was presented to each handler by the Team Captain and the booking in of Team GB began.

Team Captains, some with translators headed off to the Team Captains meeting whilst the rest of the 12 countries mingled at the bar reigniting old friendships and forging new ones. After the Captains meeting the draw was made and all competitors were put into their Batteries (Groups), of which there were four.

Early Friday morning all teams gathered at a remote grid reference for the Opening Ceremony Team GB really did look the part in their uniform and our thanks must go to Skinners for our shirts, ShooterKing for our trousers, jacket and gilets and not forgetting ACME for our personalised silver whistles. Whilst the other nations also looked resplendent in their uniforms, Team GB were the envy of their eyes. The Opening Ceremony involved numerous speeches and traditional horn blowing but also included one of our dogs deciding an early introduction to the judges was required by making a mad dash to say hello..... Once the formalities were over we headed off following support vehicles who allegedly knew where they were going. On arrival at the vast trialling ground, all were keen to inspect and pass judgement on the ground and things settled down. Viewing proved difficult at times as after the third dog had run, competitors were transported to their start point by 4x4. Borrowed binoculars being passed round had proved invaluable.

It soon became apparent that European trialling was a very social event and all teams stayed together with Team GB being the hot spot for liquid refreshments whilst other countries supplied their local delicacies of breads, homemade salamis and black pudding variants. This theme continued throughout the whole competition which was really nice and different to what we are used to back home. After a long day with a lot of dogs not finding any game the Judges of many different nationalities returned and gave their verdict of what they saw throughout the day.

Saturday was split into numerous themes. The first part of the day was dedicated to Derby Dogs (young dogs under 20 months). Again this proved difficult for some due to either bare ground or the temptation of the dreaded hare getting up. After this, all dogs had to complete a simple seen with shot water retrieve. 5 ducks were shared between the 78 competing dogs which, having been in the mouth of other dogs, proved difficult for some. The latter part of the day was dedicated to a local Hunting parade and Conformation Test. The Europeans believe that whilst Hunting ability is paramount, it is important that the breed to the breed standard. Team GB, whilst many of the dogs were graded 'Excellent' there was one stand out and therefore we came away with Best HWV male this Test which involved some very elegant 'walking' from one of our male handlers who had never done anything of the sort previously. Saturday Night saw the Gala dinner. A fine 4 course meal with

a local wine tasting session and copious amounts of beer saw great conversation between all the nations which went into the early hours of the next day.

Sunday was the last day of the Championships with all competitors remaining in the same Battery but reversing the running order and changing to a different ground and different Judges. Conditions were much the same as Saturday with dogs being expected to run for up to 25 minutes on what appeared to be fairly barren ground. This was overcome by the organisers providing extra birds to be released out in the field during short breaks. Most dogs still handled this situation well however within all nations, some were let down by handler error.

After critiques had been given by the judges all competitors headed back to Headquarters to await the results. After ogling at the vast array of wonderful trophies, individual awards were presented along with the top 3 teams. Hungary came away with the crowning of a new European Field Trial Champion and also top team in the overall competition. The Team GB Captain also presented gifts from the Hungarian Vizsla Society, Hungarian Vizsla Club and the Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla Association to the President of the hosts, Magyar Vizsla Klub Egyesület congratulating them on the 20th Anniversary – they were well received. It would take nearly a week for all the official results to be published showing Team GB coming 7th and 8th out of 16 teams from 12 countries. A respectable result from the conditions encountered and heads should be held high.

Team GB felt it was an absolute pleasure and a privilege to be at the 20th Anniversary of the competition, not least the fact that it was in the homeland of our breeds. Our thanks must go to our generous sponsors, without whom Team GB would look very much the poor relations and to them we are very grateful. Skinners, our Official Dog Food Sponsors, ShooterKing our Official Uniform Sponsors, ACME Whistles our Official Whistle Supplier, Kronch for dog supplements and Southfield Vets for a canine first aid kit, which thankfully was not needed. Spencer Signs also made the Team a fantastic banner which highlighted all our sponsors. Team GB would like to dedicate the success that they had to Spencer Digby, owner of Spencer Signs who sadly passed suddenly the week after our return.

Kev Rule
(Overbore Gundogs)