

# Handling a Retriever: Part III

## More Handling Tips

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We like to train the beginning dog to handle from a distance in the yard on the modified "T" pattern. The modified "T" has three parallel back lines and two over lines. (See Retriever Journal articles "Handling Patterns for the Retriever", Dec/Jan 1996/1997 and "Obstacle Training on the Modified Double 'T' Drill", June/July 1997) On the modified "T" we teach the dog to carry lines through obstacles and past diversions while running to the known bumper piles. When you stop the beginning dog because he has veered from the original line, you can handle him successfully by "blocking" or by moving up.

### **The Blocking Technique**

Use the blocking technique when the dog leaves the line he was sent on to go toward something he sees as more attractive. Stop him with a whistle "sit" as he leaves the line he is running. Walk out and stand between him and the attraction he has veered toward. Then use the appropriate cast that will send him onto the original line he was running.

Your body blocks the dog from going to the wrong pile so he will take your cast. After a few sessions working on the modified "T" pattern, you shouldn't have to use the blocking technique.

### **Moving Up**

One way to regain control when handling a dog is to move up. Stop him with a "sit" whistle and move up close to the dog then give your cast. The next time you stop him, don't move up quite as close.

If he doesn't take your cast correctly stop him again and move up closer. You may be asking too much, too soon. Be patient, eventually you won't have to move up at all and he will take your casts from a distance of 100 yards on the modified "T".

### **Removing the Option to Quit on Water Blinds**

A beginning dog will want to quit when faced with what he perceives as a "big swim". This drill will remove his option to quit when asked to run a water blind.

Along the far shore of a small pond place bumpers about every 20 feet. Place them so that the dog cannot see them until he gets out of the water. You want the bumpers placed so that there is a bumper that is easy for him to find no matter where he lands.

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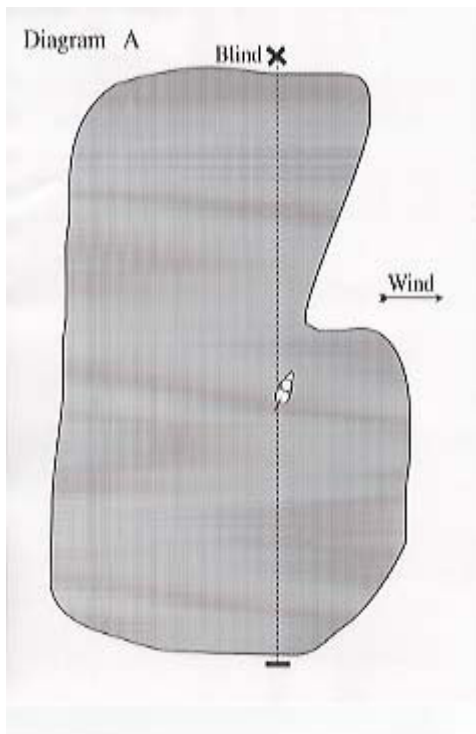
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You will send him from one shore to the far shore where the bumpers are hidden.

Send the dog across the pond on a blind retrieve. Most likely he will swim part way then quit. Give a whistle sit and cast him "back". If he won't take the cast, let him quit and come back to you. When he touches the shore give him an e-collar correction. Then throw a mark out into the pond along the same line as the blind and send him to retrieve.

Now send the dog on a blind retrieve again. Repeat the procedure until the dog will take a back cast when handled instead of trying to quit and come in to you when he loses confidence.

### Parallel Shore Blinds



Another drill that will help the dog learn to handle in water is running him on blinds where the line runs parallel to the shore. When the dog leaves the line and heads toward the tempting shore let him go until he is about three feet from the bank. Diagram A. Then stop him with a whistle "sit" and handle him "Over" away from the shore. If he doesn't take the cast, give an e-collar correction *when he touches the shore*. Stop him with a "sit" whistle, and give him a cast "over" into the water.

If he doesn't take the cast, stop him again and move up close to him to regain control. Give him an "Over" cast into the water.

At this stage of training it is better to correct at the place he was attracted to (land), than it is to correct in the water where he gave you the cast refusal. The beginning dog views the land as the easier more pleasant route. You want to make the land less attractive so that swimming becomes the more pleasant route. Also, if you correct the beginning dog in the water too much he will perceive it as a barrier

having "hot spots" and will not want to go into the water at all.

The correction we use is a nick that is meaningful but not too upsetting to the dog. You do not want to make him fearful of the land you just want him to stop viewing it as the most attractive place to be.

However, with an experienced dog instead of the beginner we would handle quickly to keep him on line. We would also give corrections out in the water if he refused a cast instead of waiting until he touched the land. We treat the advanced dog differently because he understands the "parallel to shore" concept. Also, he has had much more experience handling in water and should take your direction better.

## **Handler Tips**

1. After a sit whistle, let the dog settle and make sure he is looking at you before giving a cast. Handling too quickly after the whistle will cause the dog to not concentrate on your cast and he may go in the wrong direction.
2. Do not stop the beginning dog too frequently when trying to keep him on a straight line. When beginning "cold blinds" allow the dog to take the cast some distance before stopping him even if he is going off the line from the blind. If the dog is stopped too frequently it is likely that he will start stopping on his own ("popping"). This happens because he will chain the following sequence together: whistle sit, cast, move a few feet, another whistle sit.

## **"Over" to the Ribbon, "Back" to the Truck**

With both the beginning and the advanced dog the best cast to give is usually directly away from the hazard. In the diagram the dog has started to swim toward the hazard, a point of land. An inexperienced handler will often make the mistake of giving the literal cast, a left hand "back".

Odds are that most dogs given a "back" cast in this situation will turn as if to go back but continue veering toward the hazard. "Over" in this situation is the cast that will most likely progress the dog toward the blind. Thus the truism, "'Over' to the Ribbon, 'Back' to the truck."