

Teaching a Dog to Mark – Part IV

Double Marks On Land

By Jim and Phyllis Dobbs

In previous articles, we covered the elements of training the dog to mark singles accurately. Now it is time to develop your dog's ability to retrieve double marks.

When you set up your doubles, keep in mind these four points for marking the young dog:

- ◆ Make sure the memory mark is visible against the background by using either three-inch black and white "contrast bumpers" or large birds.
- ◆ Throw marks at a right angle. Right angle marks are more visible than marks thrown at other angles. Straight-back or straight-in throws are very difficult for the beginning dog to mark well.
- ◆ Make the mark easy to see when the dog gets into the area of the fall. If the fall is going to be in cover, toss wet birds around where the mark is going to fall. This increases scent and will help him put on a tight hunt.
- ◆ Set up the majority of your *memory* marks with a tail wind. Side wind marks will cause the dog to fade to the down wind side and he will learn to depend on his nose to find his marks instead of his eyes and memory.

Beginning Doubles

In doubles, the "memory bird" is the first bird thrown and should be short and easy for the dog to remember. The "go bird" is the last bird thrown and the first one the dog is sent to retrieve.

Start easy; begin with wide spread double marks. Gradually increase the distance to the memory bird as the dog's skills improve. Next lengthen the distance to the go bird in order to increase the time it takes before the dog is sent for the memory bird.

Lining

Lining is a very important element of multiple marking. Before narrowing the angle between marks, teach the dog to go as sent and hold a line. We teach the following drills to improve the dog's lining ability before giving him "tight marks".

1. Push/Pull Drill- (RJ-April/May 97)- trains the dog to move his head left or right.
2. Three in a Row Drill- (RJ-Feb./March 98)- teaches the dog to hold a line when the angle between the bumper piles becomes narrow

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3. Obstacle Drill- (RJ-June/July 98)- teaches the dog to go through rather than around four typical types of obstacles: clumps of cover, the corner of a pond, a mound of dirt and the end of a log.
4. "W" Drill- (RJ-June/July 98)- teaches the dog to go as sent
5. Chair Drill- (RJ-Feb./March 98)- conditions the dog to run past gunning stations without flaring away from them.

Division Marks

A good way to get the dog prepared for running doubles is to run a single mark and then send him to a permanent or marked blind. We like to introduce this concept on the modified "T" drill (RJ-Dec./Jan. 96-97). The four patterns are shown in diagrams 1-4.

DIAGRAM 1 –
Diversion Mark
Away From The Line

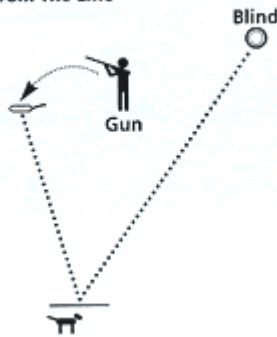


DIAGRAM 3 –
Diversion Mark
Across The Line



DIAGRAM 2 –
Diversion Mark Towards The Line

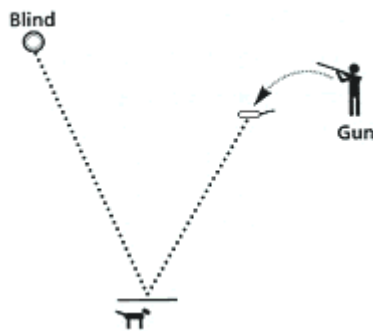
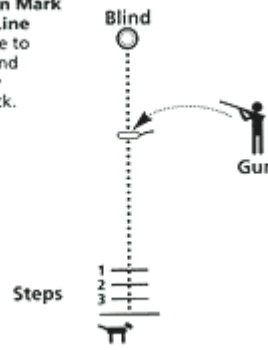


DIAGRAM 4 –
Diversion Mark
On The Line
Start close to
the fall and
gradually
move back.



The dog will get used to retrieving a mark and then a blind. Now, when running a double, he will have the confidence to go on the memory bird even if he is not too sure of the fall.

It will help make this stage of training easier if the dog has been well schooled on the push-pull drill and will let you help him focus on the correct line.

Diagram 5 shows another type of diversion, a crosswind mark that is past the memory bird. The dog must learn to hold the line and not veer off to the closer mark.

Configurations To Practice

1. Into the wind memory bird throw (Diagram 6). Gauge the distance of the memory bird to the dog's ability to hold a line in a crosswind.
2. "Hip Pocket" double (Diagram 7)- gradually narrows the angle to the marks.
3. "Over and under" (Diagram 8)-marks begin with the second fall 10 yards away. Gradually increase the distance to the short mark. If the dog starts to hunt in the area of the short mark when sent for the long mark, shorten the distance in the next set up.

DIAGRAM 5 –
Crosswind Mark

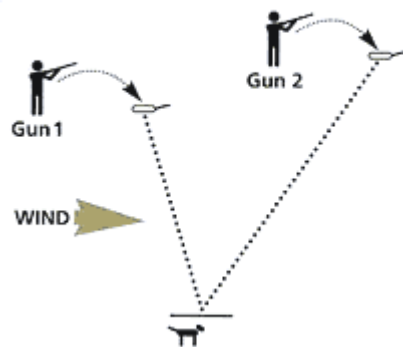


DIAGRAM 7 –
"Hip Pocket Double"

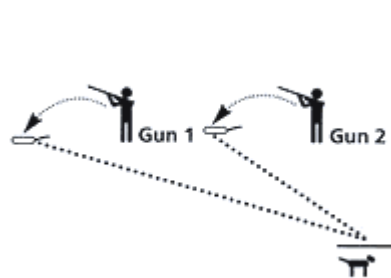


DIAGRAM 6 –
"Into The Wind"

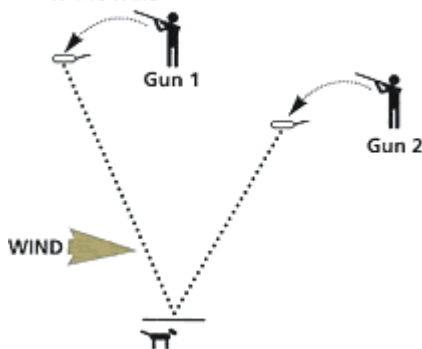
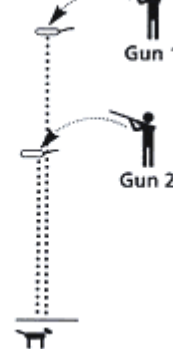


DIAGRAM 8 –
"Over & Under"



In our next article on marking we will address some common problems, "over running", "switching" and "head swinging."