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Best Advice You Will Ever Get?

A short story on the subject of training principals.

"That *&%\$&*# SOB is just trying to screw me, he KNOWS better than that!"

Do you hear yourself, a training buddy, or worse yet your "pro" when you read that?

Let me take some of your time and tell you a true story about **THE** single most important thing Rex Carr ever said to me in the 20 years I've known him. More than anything else it helped me become a better trainer.

It was many years ago, in summer near the time of the Am National and Rex was starting pre-national training here in Oakdale, before moving off to the trial.

In those days he always had 16 or more dogs qualified and he had a big group of "big-shots" everyday for training.

He asked if I would come shoot, so that he could keep things rolling better. I was working as a "pro," training hunting dogs and a couple Derby dogs for the public, but most of these people were "my heroes,"..... So, of course, I agreed.

I shot a lot of flyers the next couple days and never got a minute to work my own dogs but, I was learning a lot watching so, who cares?

Then on the third day, at lunch break, Rex noticed me and said, "Run Samson on that blind we've been doing."

My 18 month old on a pre-national water blind? In front of all these heroes?

ummm One DID what Rex said, and I was no exception.

I got my dog, put Rex's collar on him, and tried this very difficult, very contrary blind while Rex and his clients sat about 25 yards from me and busily chatted and ate, totally ignoring me.

Samson skipped whistles. Samson refused casts into the water. Samson climbed back out after I finally got him in. Samson first went "out to sea" then "up on dirt." Samson went everywhere except where I wanted.

Frustrated, embarrassed,, and unable to "correct" Sammy myself since Rex had the transmitter, I mumbled "You \$*&@ SOB"

I had thought that Rex was totally unaware of me, but he got up and headed towards me with a terrible air about him. I genuinely thought he might hit me, he seemed so angry. He came at me pointing and rammed his index finger hard into my chest, " I don't ever want to hear you swear at a dog again! When you swear at a dog, you are only swearing at yourself. The ONLY thing you have to be mad about is that you have not trained your dog well enough to do this test!"

All that at full volume, in front of people like Judy and Delma and other heroes. I felt 1/2 inch high, I wanted to cry, I wanted to hit that mean old man, I wanted to dig a hole and hide. But, instead, I went into the field and shot flyers and thought and thought damn hard, and it became obvious that Rex was right.

It became obvious that when we blame our dogs we are advertising our own incompetence, whether we use swear words or not. I vowed that from that moment forward, I would take full responsibility for my dogs, if they failed it was because I had failed. It made me a much, much, much better trainer. And I vowed to share this story, now and then, so maybe others could benefit from some thinking too.

If your buddy, or worse yet your "pro" is consistently blaming the dog, finding excuses, and encouraging you to feel the same way, that person is holding you back, making it impossible for you to reach your highest achievement in dog training. Understand that saying "He's a hardheaded \$@#\$ and won't do what I want" is exactly the same as saying "I am not skilled enough to train this dog to a reliable level" but, it sneakily shifts apparent blame off the trainer. Such people show you a way to fail "with excuses" not the way to success. I advise you to keep better company, for your own good.

The next time someone says "he Knows better than that" try to hear Rex's deep voice saying, as I heard it many times, " he doesn't know better well enough, does he?"