



FTCH Almanza Poetry In Motion

— of dreamers who never give up...

TEXT SVEN BOSSHARD, SWITZERLAND

PHOTOS "FIELD TRIAL TRAINING IN MASSERANO/
ITALY" BY ANNA POZZI (WWW.ZOOPHOTOS.IT)

When I started to work with my Flatcoated retriever five years ago, I was quite innocent but interested and fascinated to practice a dog in something he was bred for originally. After being on our first shooting day in the UK, we were caught by the passion. My Flatcoated bitch Julia was absolutely captivated, when she marked her first bird falling down from the sky and worked very enthusiastically on live game. I loved to see her work in her element from the very first moment. So the adventure has started...

We travelled around a lot in the last years, mainly to the UK, France and Italy to go on picking-up, training days and then we started to compete on field trials.

I remember many situations, when I arrived with my Flatcoat the first time. The people's reaction is something quite funny — you can read in their eyes: "Oh no, a Flatcoat!" Or they just ask: "Why a Flatcoat?" But we did our basic work well; so no jumping in or any other stupid things happened and after we had our first retrieve, many of them changed their opinion. So I also encountered some nice reactions, like Jamie Bettinson's (a professional gundog trainer and judge from Wales/UK), when he told me that Julia is one of the best Flatcoats he has ever seen. I always enjoyed these situations, took the challenge and memorized the positive and motivating things. Even if I am not sure about Jamie's words, there are a lot of unknown Flatcoats out there with great working abilities. Unfortunately we will never take notice of them, because they are not trained and used for work, which is a big pity in my opinion.

CHALLENGING

Of course it was not always an easy way. We did a lot of training and I think I often arrived at a point, where someone else would have given up. I also heard people saying, that it does not make sense to trial such a dog. However I ignored these words or took it as a motivation, to prove them the contrary. I wanted to find out, how far we could go.

I have spent a lot of time in Italy where I met very nice people and some of them became good friends. One of them is Chiara Berzacola. Some years ago, she also had a Flatcoat, a really talented one and she made him up to an Italian Field Trial Champion. She helped me to get into the field trial scene and supported me, whenever I needed some help or advice. She became an inspiring person to me. In Italy, there are very nice trials; they often do it in the same way as in the UK. They have some nice walk-up trials with

Spaniels — I adore them. Also in Italy the open class is dominated by working Labradors and it is hard to keep up with a Flatcoat. But I realized that on walk-up there are often only a few birds shot, where you mostly can send your dog directly on it. And marking is a strength of the Flatcoat, as is well-known. Trials have a lot to do with luck or as Norman Onens (a professional gundog trainer and gamekeeper in the UK) told me once: "It's not the best dog who wins a trial, but the team with the best luck on that day." Sometimes luck is with you and then you have to take the chance and use your strengths. And then sometimes... the Flatcoat can be better than all the others.

ITALIAN OPEN TRIAL

It was 05:00 in the morning on a Sunday in September, when we got up to drive to Masserano located in the Italian province Biella. We knew the challenging ground from some train-

ing days before and I was looking forward to a nice walk-up trial. We caught number 14 at the drawing. So we were in the second trial and in the line right from the beginning. Our judge was Sergio Franchi from Italy.

"Leads off please" and the Spaniels started to cover the ground in some light woodland, where the guns had spread. We walked more than one and a half hour, before we got our first retrieve, because the first birds had been shot at the other trial on the right hand. Julia was excited, but I did my best to make her walking heel nice and steady.

Our first two retrieves were not very difficult and we did well. Then we walked behind the line and waited for what the others would do. Meanwhile it was noon and the sun was shining hot from the azure blue sky. The line had moved to a more open ground but still with high and challenging cover. Some of the dogs were lost in the difficult ground and were eye-wiped by others

or by the judge. I did not see every retrieve, but an Italian friend came and told to me, that it could be my chance today, because many dogs were already out. Then we were called to our 3rd retrieve, a very long mark in high cover. Julia marked it perfectly and retrieved the bird quickly. Shortly after, we were called to the final round. All Labradors were out, only one Golden was left... and the Flatcoat. We both were equal on the 4th retrieve but on the 5th the Golden did not mark well. Then the last bird was shot and... the Golden ran in! Julia retrieved her bird quickly and the trial was over. I could not believe, we had won! I was very happy and many of the people with us.

ONE OF FOUR

By winning this open trial we received our second CAC (Certificat d'aptitude au Championnat), which made Julia an **Italian Field Trial Champion**. Not only a little personal dream





dedicated just for you. It does not matter, because you will never forget them.

I think Flatcoats are a fantastic breed. You can learn and grow so much with them, much more, than you probably can do with an easy trainable working Labrador. It is nice to win a competition, but for me it is more remarkable making something positive out of a defeat and to face the challenge. With these efforts successes do not become more, but more valuable. For me, there is no reason to ask: "Why a Flatcoat?" For me it is evident: There is nothing more beautiful than a nice working Flatcoat.

It was on a sunny training day on a nice Mediterranean wavy ground in Tuscany, when I sent Julia for a retrieve, someone said to me: "She looks like she would float over the field and never touch ground."

— my fabulous Poetry In Motion!

Thanks to all our supporters and of course Ragnhild Ulin and Sussie Karlström for having bred Julia at their kennel Almanza.

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came true but we also wrote history, because only four Flatcoats ever have achieved this title in Italy: Olivia Erfurth with **Elfi de la Ruaz**, Chiara Berzacola with **Royalsilk Gamblerman**, Patrizia Errera with **Oly Black of Fundy Bay's Najad...** and now me with **Almanza Poetry In Motion**.

"A winner is a dreamer who never gives up."
— *Nelson Mandela*

COMMON PATH

Julia is running very well and it is a pleasure to work with her — and of course we will keep going on. However, it is not all about success; it is about walking a common path and growing together. The most important thing is to enjoy our time together, not only in competition but in training or just daily life. Particularly in training you can experience great moments. Recently Julia eye-wiped two other dogs

when she went far enough into the woods and retrieved the bird the others did not find — it was a runner! Sometimes you can show retrievers like this in competition, but sometimes they are

