

## Judge's Report for Belgische Club Voor St. Hubertushonden Spring Trials 2012

Conditions: Saturday was dead flat calm with a high altitude mist which the sun tried to burn through from time to time, making it quite pleasant without being too warm. Sunday was very similar but with a very slight breeze which made it feel a degree or two cooler. Overall the conditions were ideal for hunting.

### Novice Stake

First off was **Clearwater Emerald Sanft** handled by Mr Nick Sutcliffe. The hound made a nice start in a small field which had green shoots just coming through the cultivated surface. The line ran down the edge of the field beside the road until it reached the field boundary. At this point the road made a sharp turn to the left, and the runner had come out of the field and continued down the verge of the road. However the hound went up to the fence between this first field and a second one, and then cast a short way up and down it. After a few minutes the handler first lengthened the cast and then pushed the hound through to try on the other side. Although the handler was trying to encourage the hound, there was some obvious frustration in his vice and this seemed to unsettle the hound somewhat. They drifted along this second field, still parallel with the road, for some distance before coming out onto the road close to a junction. At the junction, there was a track which went off to the right and the line went down it. The hound and handler initially went past the turn, but after a short time turned, cast back, and went down the track. The hound then started hunting much more positively. Initially I thought that it may have changed onto the scent of a man walking a Golden Retriever who had gone down the track shortly before we arrived at it, but after a while the hound hunted past them without hesitating. Shortly after this though we came to a junction with another track where the line turned sharp right, almost doubling back on itself, and at this junction the hound went to the left. I gave the hound and handler some distance to realise their mistake, but as they were still going I eventually decided to call them back. Once back at the junction the pair set off down the track in the opposite direction, which ran through a wood. Although they were now running along the line, the hound didn't show any real signs of picking it up again. At the finish the runner was hiding behind a tree at the side of the track, and at first the hound went past them, but then checked, turned and came back to make an identification. Time 30 minutes.

Second to go was **Ike of Roberts' Choice** handled by Mr. Robert De Messemaker. This hound set off at a steady pace along a path which ran alongside the edge of the wood. After about 1/3 of a mile we came to a junction with a second path which ran at right angles to the first. Here the line turned to the right and the hound followed round without hesitation. We then came to a track where the line turned left, went along the track for a very short distance, and then turned off to the right again. Here the hound made the first turn to the left without error, but missed the turn to the right. Hound and handler then went up the track for some distance before stopping. After a few moments, and in the way in which some very good hounds seem to have an extra sense of where to search for the scent when they have lost it, the hound turned right handed casting itself through the wood and round in a loop until it met the line again. Here it picked it up immediately and set off again, following it along the end of a field,

then turning to the right down a path and into the finish where it identified the runner. Time 15 minutes.

### Junior Stake

First to go was **Gaia De La Voix Royal** handled by Mr. Alain Dubois. The first part of this line was a very narrow U shape running down one side of a couple of fishing lakes and then turning round and coming back up the other side of them. The hound made a very slow and hesitant start, with the handler showing considerable patience. Eventually, at the end of the first lake, there was a path through between the lakes and the hound cut through, missing out the part of the line which went round the second lake. The hound picked up the return leg of the U and continued to make very slow progress back up towards the track where we had started. At the track she correctly followed round to the left and went along it for a short distance. At this point several different paths and tracks met. The handler tried casting the hound down each one in turn in order to try and find the line. Unfortunately one of the tracks led to the finish of the line which was quite close, so when they tried this one I had to call them back after only a very short distance, but they then continued trying the other options until the correct one was picked. Progress continued to be very slow, as we followed the line round to the left until we met another fishing lake. Here the line turned sharp right along the side of the lake. Initially the hound missed the turn, but after only a short distance turned and came back. Just as they started down the side of the lake I had to leave to go to the start of the next line, but my assistant informed me that at the end of the lake, where the line turned onto much fresher ground in the wood, the hound picked up pace and hunted much more strongly, following the line correctly outwards in another U shaped loop and back in to the runner. Time 55 minutes.

Second to run in Junior was **Ch. Cammonstone Jubilant Sanft** handled by Mr. Nick Sutcliffe. This hound set off quite positively through the woods, but after about 1/3 mile turned sharp right off the line, cutting through the wood to the next track which ran parallel to the one we had started on. The line had come back up this second track, so at the point the hound was on the line again having missed out a loop. We then followed on along the line, but after going over a bridge the line turned left and the hound went straight on. Hound and handler must have crossed over the line again at one point but by now had switched onto something else and followed on at a good pace looping round to the right and down to a track. I followed the course of the line which was shown on the map and found the runner in the correct place before turning back to go and pick up the hound and handler.

Third to run in Junior was **Harvey Truffe Medievale** handled by Ms. Chantal Van Raemdonck. The hound made a steady start along a track, but after about 1/3 of a mile missed a turn to the left and went straight on, continuing along the track. After a short distance they turned and came back and picked up the turn. They then followed round a small loop, but at the point where the line came back to the track and crossed straight over it, they turned left and went along the track again. This time they went quite a distance before turning and coming back, but then picked up the line again and headed off into the woods. They then followed the line for some distance before missing a turn to the left. However, again

they turned round after a short distance and then picked up the line again, and followed it for another 2 or 3 hundred yards before meeting another track where the line turned left. Here the hound went to the right and set off in the wrong direction. After a while, as there was no sign of them turning back, I called to them to return. Once back to where they had turned off the line, rather than picking it up and going off to the left, the hound went straight on. After 2 or 3 hundred yards the hound must have been following along the line again as it came back in from our left, but at the point where the line turned to the left once more, the hound again went straight on until it came to a T junction with another track. This time the hound turned to the left and then, on reaching the track which the line ran along, correctly turned to the right and followed the line round into the finish and made a good ID. Time 28 minutes.

### Intermediate Stake

The only runner in the Intermediate stake was **Cupidon Du Noble Limier** handled by Ms. Chantal Van Raemdonck. The hound set off at a good pace through the woods, and followed the line perfectly as it turned to the left just inside the end of the wood and then veered right out in to the field. We then followed along the field until we got to the end. Here the hound initially checked and cast back and forth, but then picked up the line again and set off once more, again at a good pace. The line went along a track and then turned right, going down the edge of another patch of woodland and then following it round to the left. Once round the opposite side of the wood the hound initially missed another sharp left turn and kept heading straight onwards, out into the field. Here the handler wanted to keep going across the field, but the hound convinced her to turn back and picked up the line again, following it down into the bottom end of what was a very wet field. Down at the bottom the hound had difficulty in finding the way out again, but the handler cast out into the field and the hound then picked up the line once more as it came up the hill to make a left turn round the end of another patch of woodland. The hound found the turn round the wood a little bit difficult, but after casting round set off again positively, crossing a grass field and turning right. By this time we were  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way round the line, and the hound had followed most of it inch perfect. Unfortunately there was some doubt about exactly where the line went at this point, but as the hound had been hunting so well I decided to trust it. For some reason though it made an additional loop round to the left and went up to some farm buildings before turning back and coming down to a small patch of woodland. Here the line went to the right of the wood, but hound and handler went left. I thought that they may turn right at the other end of the wood, but they initially went straight on and down a track to the road. Here though they turned back and on reaching the wood cast along the bottom of it, picking up the line when they reached the other side, and then hunting into the finish where the hound identified the runner. Time 1 hour 10 minutes.

### Senior Stake

Due to a late cancelation, **Cupidon Du Noble Limier** handled by Ms. Chantal Van Raemdonck was also the only runner in Senior. The line started on a footpath which ran down the side of a wood, and the hound set off at a steady pace, following the line correctly as it turned first to the right, then to the left,

and out onto a track where it turned right. The line only went along this track a short distance before turning right again down a different track which ran parallel to the route we had taken from the start, however the hound missed this turn and carried on for 100 – 150 yards or so, at which point I decided to call them back as only a little further on up this track they would have been on the line again, but going in the heel direction. They then set off down the correct track, but progress was slower than it had been previously. At the end of this track we came to a junction where several tracks met, and here the hound had difficulty in finding the way. Quite some time was spent casting up and down and trying each track before the correct one was taken. A short distance down this track the hound suddenly “came alive” as it picked up the line again, and we followed it along the track and then correctly made a sharp turn to the left. The line only went a short distance in this direction before making another sharp left turn. The hound overshot this turn and went through a wood and out onto a track before turning round and coming back, this time successfully picking up the line again and setting off in the correct direction once more. The next mile was covered at what (for me anyway!) was more or less jogging speed all the way as we swung right handed past a pond, out onto the track where it turned left, and then making a sharp right turn down the side of a wood. There was a short pause where the line turned sharp left and the hound initially overshot the turn before coming back to pick up the scent, but we then headed off again until we reached a track where the line turned sharp right. The Hound made the turn, but then found it much more difficult to follow the line along this track which was a popular walking route. After nearly half a mile the hound went off the track to the left and cast round in a small field before returning to the track and carrying on another 100 yards or so to a junction with another track. Here the line turned full left, almost going back on itself (about a 315 degree turn). I thought that hound and handler were going to come unstuck at this point as they tried the tracks, and the surrounding fields, for quite some time before eventually picking up the line again and heading off in the right direction. After some distance the handler, who had become a little uncertain that the hound was correct, brought the hound back along the track for a couple of hundred yards, but the hound then turned round once more and retraced the route it had taken down the track and onto the road at the end. Here the handler wanted to try onwards and to the right, but the hound knew that the line went to the left and won the argument! They then followed the line correctly along the road, round to the right and into the finish where the runner was identified. Time 1 hour 35 mins.

### The awards

It is always a little bit difficult judging a stake where there is a small number of entries, but since I had the rare privilege of judging all 4 stakes this gave a reasonable overview of what the overall scenting conditions were like and I therefore felt confident in awarding the following:

First in Novice to **Ike of Roberts' Choice**. I hope that Robert is able to bring this hound to the UK to compete as I believe it showed signs of having really first rate capabilities.

First in Junior to **Gaia De La Voix Royal**. Gaia found the first, probably heavily foiled, part of her line difficult going, but once onto cleaner ground really picked up the pace and hunted well.

First in both Intermediate and Senior to **Cupidon Du Noble Limier**. I really enjoyed following this hound in both stakes. A good steady worker, easy to read, and a hound which signaled such pleasure and enthusiasm when finding the line again after it had been lost.

No other prizes were awarded.

A big thankyou to the Belgische Club Voor St. Hubertushonden for asking me to judge at these trials, thanks to my assistant judge, Ms. Catherine Tilleuil, to the landowners, the line walkers, and to Krist'I Bal for organising the whole thing. Purely by chance this happened to be the weekend of my birthday – and it was an excellent present!

Chris Daniel