

From a Backpack to a Brittany of His Own, Junior, John Killion Makes the Grade!

by: AKC Executive Field Representative Gary Sadler

A fifth grader at Desales Catholic School in Lockport, NY, 10-year-old John Killion is an excellent student. Along with being on the swim, baseball, football and golf teams, John carries a 98.4 grade point average. In addition, his goal is to become a lawyer.

Quite a lot, you say, for this young man? Hold on, John also enjoys training and showing his Brittany, Annie, in conformation and Hunting Tests.



John, the son of David and Valerie Killion, credits his father, a trainer for over 30 years, with his success.

“I have dogs around me for as long as I can remember. My Dad used to put me in a backpack and run the dogs. I watched in the comfort of the backpack while he did all the walking.

“My Dad shows (conformation) and runs dogs in Hunting Tests. I help him train and am going to start showing as well as run them in Hunting Tests.”

As a matter of fact, John put his first Junior leg on his nine-month-old Brittany, Annie and hopes to finish her title this Fall. In the show ring, John has already put two points on Annie (Killion’s Little Bit a Nitro). In addition, that same weekend, in his first Junior Showmanship competition with Annie, John placed first in his class both days.

Asked about his future goals, John has it in mind to help Annie earn her Master Hunter title and to make her a show champion. He would also like to go to a field trial and see how she does there.

What does he most like about Annie?

“She always makes me happy no matter how bad things seem to be going.

“I really had a great time running my dog in the Hunting Test this Spring and can’t wait until Fall so I can run her again. I also am looking forward to showing her in the summer in conformation events.”

According to David, “Junior Handling has given John confidence and the ability to perform under pressure. He has seen how you can win everything one day and lose the next. He has learned that you can't give up and that you just keep striving to be better the next time out.

“Junior Handling has created a wonderful



bond with Annie by training for Hunting Tests and dog shows. It has also allowed him to meet some wonderful people from other parts of the country that have the same interests as him.

“One weekend, one of the professional handlers at a (conformation) show asked John to come over to her motor home after the show and she worked with him on handling tips in the ring. The next day he went Best of Opposite in the Brittany sweepstakes and put a 4 point major on Annie out of the puppy class. It is really nice to see people so willing to help a kid out.



“Training with John and his puppy has also created a closer bond between John and me as I pass on to him the training tips that I have learned over the years. John has progressed so much this year that I think it is time for me to step aside and let him finish Annie in the show ring (she only needs a 3 pt major to finish) and to let him finish putting the Hunting Test titles on her. Junior Showmanship in both the field and conformation has just been a wonderful experience for John and me.

And lest you think David is premature in that “step aside” remark he has further explanation:

“We took turns showing Annie a few weekends ago (in conformation). I didn't even get looked at when I showed Annie. John showed two times and took a Reserve Winners Bitch at one show and a 4 point major

the next time he showed. I can see the writing on the wall....time for the old guy to be replaced!!!! I am looking forward to being able to sit back, relax, and critique the performance both in the ring and in the field!!!”

