

Junior Paves His Way in Hunting Tests by Executive Field Rep Gary Sadler

Twelve-year-old Nick Helleis' life has been peopled with dogs. His first recollection of dogs is of Sadie and Ellie (Dobermans) when he was just two. Besides his current German Shorthaired Pointers, Sammy and Nelli, and the aforementioned Sadie and Ellie, Nick has had the pleasure of knowing a yellow Lab and an English Setter. It was with the English Setter, Waldo, that Nick experienced his first time in the field with a pointing dog.



Nick, an honor roll 6th grader at Lower Pottsgrove Middle School in Pottstown, PA, enjoys playing lacrosse, baseball, violin and riding motocross. Nick has a future as a doctor in sight; but it's the dogs and Hunting Tests which occupy most of his time.

"My stepdad, Ken Treese, and I train our dogs Sammy and Nelli every day and run them in Hunting Tests."

Remembers Nick: "My first small game hunting trip was with my stepdad when I was eight. We went to the Blue Marsh. My first time in the field with a pointing dog was with Waldo (the Setter) to find pheasants."

Besides Ken, Nick says he has been helped the most by Lisa Price who "has taught me how to train and handle Sammy and plant birds." In addition, Lisa has let Nick handle her Master Hunter, Josey Wales, in Junior tests for the experience.

But he owes much of his thanks to his Mom, Andrea, for allowing all the time for training, testing and hunting and for allowing him to slack off on his house chores...as

long as Nick maintains his honor roll status.

Currently Nick is running Sammy in Junior Hunter and has achieved two legs toward that title. His goal is to train and run Sammy to his Master Hunter title. Sammy, Nick says, "has a great nose and is my best friend. I would like to see more kids my age at the Hunting Tests."



To make friends with and to tell everyone how much fun it is...riding ATVs, putting out birds, all the different dogs, blank guns. Hunting with the dogs is fun because you don't have to be still or quiet and it's exciting when they go on point."

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Ken also has his take on Hunting Tests and kids. And he has a few people to thank for helping him and Nick and for keeping Nick's interest from waning.

"I would like to specifically thank Lisa Price, Florence Duggan, Lynn Fair and all the rest of the Hunting Test judges who have helped and encouraged Nick along the way. As well as Jerry Krepak, Rich and Kathy Tofono who have helped make the experience upbeat and fun in the times that progress has been slow. And, again, Lisa Price for being inventive in overcoming stumbling blocks and with coming up with simple but very effective training drills Nick and I could do together with our dogs.

I would also like to thank the AKC's field representative for showing such an interest in Nick. It has helped keep him focused through the summer knowing someone at the AKC is interested in his accomplishments."

Ken suggests that if parents are going to get their children involved in dogs and Hunting Tests they should get them involved in all aspects of it. "Hunting Test titles are important and a goal for which kids strive; but for various reasons the training is just as important."

Ken believes Nick's inclusion in an informal group which gets together on

weekends to train has contributed the most to Nick coming along as fast and as far as he has with Sammy in Hunting Tests. During these sessions Nick has seen and been involved with the eight to 10 dogs being trained for all levels of testing; he's seen those dogs go from first exposure to gunshots to birds and check cords and seen the many Master Hunters and how they are handled and trained. According to Ken, this has moved Nick light years faster than he could have as with Ken trying to teach him on his own.

"And it still amazes me to see how these adults welcome and open up to an inexperienced kid. That the same adults who would never let another adult handle their dogs don't even hesitate to let a new kid handle them is pretty cool."

Ken further emphasizes: "Honestly, our most memorable moments have been during the mundane training when it clicks with the dog or we, as trainers, have that magic moment and we understand what the dog is thinking."

Training their Shorthairs and running in Hunting Tests have been a boon. According to Ken, "Nick and I have really bonded and it has helped him mature a lot and learn commitment and responsibility and waiting for the gratification of working to accomplish something."



Top photo: Nick and Josey Wales; Middle: Nick and Nelli with Nick's first pheasant; Bottom: Nick and Sammy show of Hunting Test ribbons earned.