

FIRST SATURDAY IN APRIL

~ By Vince Pino ~



Vince with dogs Badger, Diesel, Boss, Bess, Sally, Gun and son David

On a recent trip to Italy to see their pointer trials, I was scouting around for some new blood for my kennel back home. I couldn't help but wishing I had my own dogs running in these trials. When I arrived back home, the 2006 Victorian quail opening was only a month or so away. Even after having a good Duck Opening I couldn't help but think about the Quail Season.

The opening week arrived and Friday night I didn't sleep a wink, tossing and turning in bed excited about the following morning. Thinking of what it would be like, what the dogs would do and whether we would find birds? I was worse than a kid waiting for Christmas morning. The car was already packed and dog trailer hitched on ready for an early departure.

Having just looked at the clock only minutes earlier suddenly the alarm goes off and I jump out of bed. A quick espresso coffee and into the garage. My sons David and Fabian, my brother Santo with my nephew Christopher were eagerly waiting.

I also invited my cousin Paulie, a keen hunter who doesn't mind walking behind well trained dogs, plus he can help with some handy video work. Anyway Paulie didn't let us down and was on time. The weather forecast was for a nice cool day.

In the car we go and on the road, with butterflies in my stomach, day dreaming what could be lying ahead.

Finally we arrived at the paddock, had a quick chat to our farmer friend and another quick espresso coffee. The dogs were scratching on the trailer doors keen to jump out, knowing where they were. I let them out of the trailer in pairs. My first pair were Bess and Badger, (being two of my four already imported dogs) a quick blast of the whistle to sit and settle them down. The dogs sat with their heads and noses pointing straight up taking in big whiffs of the paddock ahead. I was loaded with the camera and I had David and Fabian with the guns in the first round.

David just had Chemotherapy on Tuesday for Hodgkin's Lymphoma. He was still keen and there was no way he was going to miss the opening. I'm so proud of David after what he has been through he has still managed to come out for his love of hunting and dog work. He has had courses of needles the last ten days straight and bags and bags of Chemo in him and every blood test you can think of. He has even had a painful bone marrow test. He is a strong young man that I'm very proud to say that he's my son.

A quick wave of my hand and the command "off you go" and like two missiles off go Bess and Badger. Almost perfect conditions, a lite breeze in our face and the early morning sun on our backs. The dogs worked to a perfect beat when suddenly Bess spun and locked up on a breath taking point. Badger quickly slammed on the brakes to honour her, with the hairs on my neck standing up.



Badger on classic point.



Bess looking sharp on point.



Badger swinging on point again.

I let Fabian walk in to take the shot. I tell David to keep an eye on Badger to make sure he doesn't run in on the bird and then order Bess to flush. Fabian downs the bird and Bess makes a nice retrieve. I call the dogs together again and send them off. Some nice quartering by both dogs galloping flat out when the front end on Badger comes to an instant stop and the rear end slides out spinning around at almost 180 degrees to a very stylish point. His head and nose up at the sky.

Badger looks spectacular on point so I take a few photos. David comes in to take the shot and I order Badger to flush the birds. Up goes a pair and Dave takes a one bird. A quick retrieve by Badger and a praise to both dogs.

After a few more finds each I swapped them for the next fresh pair of dogs. I normally run each pair between an hour to an hour and a half. Not that the dogs wanted to stop, in fact quite the opposite. I brought six Pointers along with us and I wanted them all to have a good run in the early morning cool breeze as birds can handle differently at different times of the day with winds and temperatures changing.

My imported dog's lines go back to early field trial lines and unless you are prepared to put in some out of season training with some obedience etc... you will have your hands full. Although not stubborn dogs and fairly easy to train they are hard running machines and require good control. They love finding birds.

My next pair of fresh dogs were Diesel and Sally. My other import, Sally, is a very biddable and light to handle bitch. She's very stylish on her birds and this was her first quail season in Australia. This time I was going to shoot with my brother Santo.

Sally locks on point and Diesel backs from a mile away. With my heart beating 100kph I walk up to Sally and order her to flush. Up rise the birds and "BANG BANG", I miss. Sally just stood there wagging her tail.

I get the dogs together and send them both out again. They're ever so hungry for finds and they gallop flat out. Now Diesel does a hand brake and spins onto point. I steady Sally not to steal and Santo goes in to take the shot. Down goes the bird and I sit Sally and make Diesel perform a seek dead (that is to point the dead bird). A fine job he does!

I went back on camera and my nephew Christopher and Paulie were next to shoot over the dogs. Christopher being guided by the watchful eye of his father Santo. Sally in her first quail season after being imported was on fire. She was being very competitive and hungry to out find its brace mates.

With an instant stop she skids and locks up on point again. Paulie comes in to take the shot, normally a very good clay target shooter that shoots "A" Grade. He walks in behind Sally as I order her to flush up the birds. Up come a pair of birds but unfortunately after firing both barrels, one at each bird, Paulie misses both. He claims he was under too much pressure by all of us watching him.

Knowing there's a bird under the dogs nose just adds to the nerves and pressure anyway. Luckily for Paulie the dogs were producing some more birds and he downed a bird with his next shot.



Bess on point with Sally backing.

I wanted to keep Sally running, being her first quail season so I paired her with Bess. Both these dogs are ever so competitive and don't want to be headed by the other dog. They were running shoulder to shoulder trying to out race each other when all of a sudden they both slammed on point as if they had ran into glue. Both spinning on point. This looked great! I got in front of them and took some photos. It looked like a side by side double barrel shotgun pointing at the birds. Only if looks could kill. The intensity on the dogs faces and hunger in their eyes! I asked the boys not to shoot as I walked up to the dogs and commanded Bess to flush and sat Sally. Control training!

By now Santo wanted to head back to the car to get the barbecue going. He enjoys being head chef when ever we go away. Knowing it was going to be a late lunch we got the two young dogs out for their first season at just 12 months old. Boss, my dog and Gun, my son David's dog. Both pups were finding and holding birds extremely well, as if they had been doing it for years. I don't shoot over Boss yet and I was working him on a check-cord but David couldn't help himself. After Gun having some excellent finds David had to drop a few over him. He wanted to see what the dog was capable of doing. Gun did not disappoint.

Back at the car for a nice BBQ lunch, a cool drink and freshen up. After lunch we were back in the field and swapped the pair of dogs around. I really enjoy hunting over the Pointers. They are exciting, quick and hard running dogs that really give their all. In a day's hunt almost every find is an instant full slam, hair raising, stylish on point and these days I'd rather shoot my Cannon (camera) than my Beretta shotgun. The Beretta still gets a fair workout though.

Although it was a cooler start to the season than most other years some of the paddocks were still dry and bare. If it wasn't for the way that the Pointers carved up the paddocks we would have been lucky to have flushed up a bird. All in all, a good day was had by all.

There's nothing better than hunting over a well trained gun dog except, two or more well trained gun dogs. Ones that will work for



Side x Side double barrelled action - Bess & Sally

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*Bess, Badger,
Diesel,
Sally, Boss
and Gun.*

you and not themselves. I think that all dogs in the field should have some level of training to allow you to have a more enjoyable day in the field. With some top quality imports in recent years by myself and others and a blend of what we have already inherited I think the Pointer will continue to rule the paddocks and retain its title as the bird dog specialist. It is a very impressive breed to see when on full point.

To see some well trained dogs working at their best and for trial dates and information, photos etc. see our web site www.pointerclubinternational.com or contact your breed club they can also help.

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By the end of the day we all had a good shoot with a good bag of birds to take home for our friends and family to enjoy.

By the end of the day, Paulie, a GSP man, was so impressed with the pointers he was trying to work out how he could fit one into his kennel at home.

We are so lucky to have this great sport to go out and enjoy. For those that don't do it, give it a try, you don't know what your missing.



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