

# FC Ruby Rubster Warrener

---

Ruby, a littermate to Rocky and Freckles, had a false start. Her initial owners had buyers' remorse and returned her. The second time around she hit the jackpot; a delightful couple from Middleburg Virginia, Jack and Daphne Cheatham had shown an interest in the bitch. We met at Prospect Hall Shooting Club where I showed them Ruby. Jack asked a straight forward question, "Do you think she can become a field champion?" I looked down at her for a moment then redirected my gaze to Jack. "Yes, I think she can."

She lacked her littermate's confidence, but was as honest as the day's long. Initially, she proved tricky to work around other dogs. Even the slightest indication that I disproved of another dog's behavior, she would tuck tail and bolt back to the kennel or truck, whichever was closest. This was a habit that was tricky to break. I could see it coming on, if she felt uneasy, she would look me in the eye, then focus on either the truck or kennel. No amount of cajoling would change her opinion of the situation and off she would go. Training her initially was tantamount to walking on eggshells! The slightest miscue on my part, she would give me the most disapproving stare, calling a halt to our work for the day.

Ruby had a reaction to chukars that I've seen a few times since. If the bird was moving, she would produce it with style. If it was seated, she would invariably lock eyes with the bird and proceed to circle it. It was almost like she had drifted into a trance and was rather disconcerting.

I started working her only on wing clipped chukars. Her mouth was always impeccable. After a chukar has been caught two or three times, they tend to run. Unlike pheasants, they will usually stop after a hundred yards or so. This provides a confidence building tracking and retrieving exercise. Ruby thrived on this training. I really learned a lot from working dear old Ruby. Today, if I am planning to enter a chukar trial, I will work all my dogs the above way. I don't shoot any chukar what so ever. Too many flighted chukars can compromise a dog's flush.

Ruby worked into an extremely consistent field trial contender. I have had dogs win more, but very few who were as consistent finishers.

I well recall running her in a trial under the late, very well respected springer man, Barney Ziegler. Ruby took a running pheasant off to our left. She took it at speed. We were moving at quite a pace to keep up with her in fairly heavy cover. Then something happened that was a first for me in a trial and has not repeated itself since. Ruby checked herself and waited for us to catch up, without any verbal or whistle commands. When she saw we had closed some ground, she cast herself back on the track. She did this three times before flushing the bird for a shot and retrieve.

I don't stop dogs on moving birds in trials unless absolutely necessary. Some handlers use it as a showboating tool turning a thirty yard track into a three hundred yard marathon. This doesn't sit well if I am judging.

Ruby is the only dog that I have handled to date that voluntarily stopped on hot scent to wait for me to catch up. This was a perfect indicator of her kind nature.

Jack had previously kept Chesapeake Bay Retrievers for retrieving the geese that he hunted around the



northern Virginian waterways. Ruby proved a competent substitute; she was a powerfully built bitch, put together like her sire, Bran. She retrieved many a Canada goose for Jack on winter mornings.

She will go down as one of my favorites, not least because of her unwavering honesty that perhaps gave her a slight air of vulnerability. The other reason is she brought Vicky and me together with her wonderful owners Jack and Daphne. One couldn't wish to have better friends.