

## **Announcing the 2023 American Brittany Club National Grand Amateur Walking Gun Dog Championship Judges**



John Hott

I am pleased to have the opportunity to judge this prestigious Championship. I started with bird dogs in 1964 when Mr. Herb Holmes of Gunsmoke Kennels gave me a puppy out of his Champion Smokepole. At 14 years of age I was hooked on hunting and soon got the field trial bug. Mr. Holmes became a mentor to me and with his guidance, I learned how to train and how to evaluate a dog. Over the years I worked with many of the old time pointer folks and made lasting friendships. I have been honored to meet and train dogs with many Field Trial Hall of Famers over the years and feel that this has shaped me into not only a better person, but a good judge of dogs.

I retired as the Site Superintendent of the Kickapoo State Park complex in Illinois, which includes the Middle Fork Wildlife Area, one of Illinois' major field trial areas. I worked for the state for 35 years and have had the opportunity to meet and ride with field trailers from every breed. I have judged the National Open Prairie Chicken Shooting Dog Championship, Red Setter National Championship, Brittany Pheasant Championship, Irish Setter National Championship, Weimaraner National Championship, German Wirehair Pointer National Championship, Brittany Quail Championship, the Vizsla National Championship and the Gordon Setter National Championship along with many classics, several futurities, and many weekend field trials. I train and campaign pointers on the shooting dog circuit and look forward to many more years of traveling and competing. Thank you for inviting me to judge this great championship.



Al Van Wieren

My wife Sharon and I have had Brittanys for about 50 years. It started with my desire to have a hunting dog and Sharon wanting a house pet for company while I was on business trips. We soon got involved with the LaSalle Brittany Club and later with the Hoosier Brittany Club which lead to our competing in both field trials and shows. We have competed with numerous dogs of our own, as well as helping some of our friends with dogs primarily from our breeding. We have campaigned both all age and gun dogs and continue to focus on excellence in hunting dogs. The best known of our dogs was of course Hall of Fame DC Royal Brit Starbuck of Auten. While in recent years we have competed on a more limited basis, we continue to train, hunt and compete with our dogs when we can.

I have been judging trials for well over 40 years and have judged numerous regional trials as well as national and championships events. I look forward to judging the National Amateur Walking Gun Dog Championship and hope every competitor puts on the performance of a lifetime.

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Andrew Campbell

Thank you for the opportunity to return to judge the American Brittany Club's National Walking Gun Dog Championship in Ionia, MI. Since I judged this event back in 2021, I was also fortunate to be invited back to judge your horseback National Gun Dog Championship in Booneville, AR in 2022. It is a profound honor and a pleasure to be invited back to judge another of your national championships.

Since that previous time, I turned professional after 15yrs of training and running dogs in hunt tests and field trials as an amateur. Happily, it has not diminished my love for hard-running, well-polished dogs! And has given me a reason (as opposed to an excuse) to take dogs to south Georgia for the winter.

I know I mentioned this three years ago but I still regard one of my greatest privileges to have been to judge the late Robin Gates run Shadow Oak Bo at the 2013 Black Belt Open All-Age (a National championship qualifying trial) in south Georgia: he took first with a pointer called Big Sky Pete, and also second with Bo. It is no surprise that since I wrote this both Robin and Bo have been rightfully inducted into the Hall of Fame at the Bird Dog Museum in Grand Junction, TN. Robin's incredible skill was his ability to handle his dogs even at great speed and range; his genius was understanding that a field trial is about painting a picture for the two judges not terribly far behind him and then applying that tremendous skill to truly showcase a dog within the frame of that picture.

I am grateful for the opportunity to watch your dogs once more.



Sam Thompson

I found the Brittany world in 1987 when we welcomed home our first pup, Captain. Friend Gary already had a couple of Brits and introduced me to our local Greater Milwaukee Brittany Club. I ran Captain in the Open Puppy that fall and came home with a blue ribbon. It's the only ribbon that pup ever earned, but I learned a lot from my mentors, and the rest as they say is history. We sold our sailboat and the house on the lake, in exchange for a wee bit of acreage where we could keep a few horses and too many dogs.

I started judging in 1990. My daughters, Kim & Carly have both been involved since they were kids, and still are. Both have their own horses and are field trial judges in their own right.

While I have not always had the time or means to widely campaign my dogs, we have won or placed in several Futurities; and have put field championships on 6 dogs, 3 of them out of my breeding.

Of note, was FC AFC Sam Hill's Flyway Jack. When I retired him at 10 ½ (with a 4 point win), he had accumulated 112 AKC points! Jack also offered Carly the opportunity to win a 5-pt major Amateur Gun Dog stake, at Ionia when she was just twenty. At the time, I was judging the All Age Stake on another course. Another memorable day was the Derby Invitational at Ionia in 2017. I placed first, and my daughter Kim took third, with dogs from a litter I had bred, owning both the sire and dam.

While my hunting career has taken back a seat to trialing as time has progressed, our love of competition, dogs and horses has continued to enrich our lives.

I have judged hundreds of trials, including Futurities and Championships, competed in the Gun Dog Nationals at Ionia through the late 90's. When the Futurity was split into Gun Dog and All Age, the first year it was held, I judged the Central Gun Dog Futurity. I am looking forward to watching some great dogs compete.