

# SOVEREIGN BRITTANYS' DUAL CHAMPION DOGS

Keeping up with a high-energy Brittany named “Hobey” hunting quail in the gun dog horseback stake at the 2020 Iowa Brittany Shooting Dog Championship is intense. His forward-running race, skirting the edge of the prairie where coveys roost in tangles of bluestem and goldenrod, is explosive and stylish.

The 10-year-old male, a Dual Champion — No. 678 in the Brittany record book — is stamped with Field Champion and Show Champion titles and is a mere 2 points from becoming an Amateur Field Champion. Handled in the one-hour stake by breeder-owner Dawn Droel of Sovereign Brittanys in Marine on St. Croix, Minnesota, Hobey is scouted by bird dog trainer Bob Burchett of Conway, Missouri. Partnering with Dawn as a breeder

of Brittanys under the Sovereign prefix is her husband, Joe Droel.

A late bloomer who did not train for field trials until age 3, Hobey caught on quickly to the game of finding birds and holding steady to wing and shot. Field trials were an alternative to hunting tests where he ran so big he'd be found hunting a mile away. “He has tremendous drive to find birds,” Dawn says. “You ride up, and there he is beautiful on point. His whole body quivers, yet his tail is straight up steady as a rock.”



Above: Dawn Droel and “Hobey” high-five after he wins Best in Show in 2013. Below: A Dual Champion fueled by *Purina Pro Plan SPORT Performance 30/20 Formula*, Hobey did not start training for field trials until age 3.



Started by Ed Tillson and Jessica Carlson at their 2013 summer camp in Montana, HobeY honed his fieldwork with Burchett. "HobeY's tenaciousness to find birds is seen when he digs into the cover," says Burchett, who has put Field Champion titles on some 40 dogs that became Dual Champions. "His feats have never been accomplished."

A Brittany history maker, HobeY is the only Dual Champion to have won an all-breed Best in Show, which he did in 2013 at the Coulee Kennel Club show in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and to have won Best of Breed at the American Brittany Club (ABC) National Specialty, which he did in 2015 from the field trial dog class. With Dawn as his handler, HobeY also won the ABC Top 20 Invitational in 2016 and was a Top 10 Brittany in 2013, 2015 and 2016, despite limited showing due to field trialing.

"HobeY is our dream come true," Dawn says. "He is the epitome of the total package that we love and try to produce in our breeding program. He is fun to show and a pleasure to hunt behind, but mostly he is a joy to have as a companion to our family."

A third-generation Dual Champion and fifth-generation Field Champion, HobeY, formally known as BIS/BISS DC GCHS Sovereign's Chasing Legends, was the keeper male from a frozen semen litter. HobeY was sired by BISS AM/CAN CH Alar's The Rocketeer AM/CAN CD SH out of DC Sovereign Copley Kiss My Chips, No. 515 in the Brittany Dual Champion record book. The Droels, who bred the dam, "Zelda," leased her from owner Robin Tomasi of Copley Brittanys for the breeding. Zelda had first earned her show champion title, becoming a Top 10 bitch campaigned by pro Amy Booth, and in 10 months on the field circuit with pro trainer Scott Johnson became a Field Champion.

Joe and Dawn Droel have had Brittanys since 1993, though their beginning in dogs was as junior handlers. Joe followed his pro handler parents, Darrel and Romelle Droel, to shows, helping condition, train and show dogs, particularly the Weimaraners they bred. Dawn helped show and put obedience titles on her parents' Australian Shepherds. Her mother, Lynn Westman, took her to shows, and her veterinarian father, Dr. Charles Westman, an equestrian who had qualified for Olympic hunt jumping, gave her a love of horses.

Joe and Dawn worked 12 years handling dogs professionally, giving it up in 2000 to start a construction business that would allow them to stay home and raise their sons. Their beginning in Brittanys came four years into the marriage, when a retired 8-year-old show champion named "Cody," officially known as Multi-BIS/BISS CH Cheabrits Code of the West CD, once the No. 1 Brittany in the country, came to live with them. Campaigned by Shirley and Roy Murray of Texas, Cody won nine Bests in Show, outdoing a 30-year record.

"Cody was our first Britt, and we got him from Joe's parents after he retired to live with them," Dawn says "We got him in shape and entered him in a couple of specialties, which he won

from the Veterans class. We entered him in the 1993 ABC National Specialty, and he won Best of Breed from the Veterans class."

Before their hiatus in showing dogs, Joe and Dawn finished a male Brittany called "JR," who then went out with trainer Jim John, and later Ed Tillson, to earn his Field Champion title and become Dual Champion No. 506 in the Brittany record book. DC AFC Sovereign's Who's Ya Daddy JH taught them about the versatility of the highly biddable breed.

Since those early years, their Sovereign Brittany breeding program has produced more than 50 show champions. Dawn and Joe look for pups with the independence and conformation



PHOTO: ADAM FREEMAN

Joe and Dawn Droel, pictured with HobeY, fell in love with the dual-purpose versatility of Brittanys. American Brittany Club officers, Dawn is third vice president and show chair of the 2019 and 2020 National Specialties, and Joe is a member of the board of directors.

needed for dog shows and fieldwork. "The most important thing we breed for is dogs that will be perfect family companions," says Dawn, noting they are on their second- and third-generation puppy buyers.

"HobeY has contributed so much to our breeding program," she says. "He has sired over 30 show champions, multiple hunt-test titled dogs and field trial winners, and agility- and obedience-titled dogs."

This brings us to their latest Dual Champion, "Jackson," owned by Dr. Barbara and Wayne Pepin of Cross Creek Brittanys and co-owned by the Droels. Not yet officially entered in the Brittany record book, Jackson will be Dual Champion No. 683. DC Cross Creek Sovereign Pop-A-Top, a 3-year-old male, was sired by DC Hope's Tap-A-Keg out of CH Sovereign's Legendary Chocolate JH, a HobeY daughter.

"Cody and HobeY are once-in-a-lifetime dogs," Joe says. "They are related, too. Cody is HobeY's great-great-grand sire. Our goal is to produce another record-setting Brittany."

In the meantime, more fun days afield await HobeY and Sovereign Brittanys. ■