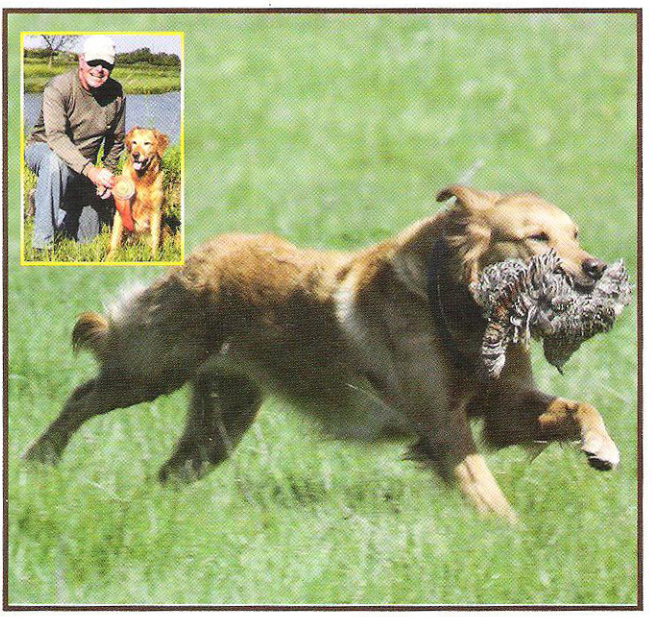
WILDFIRE RUNNIN' RUBY 09 MH
"Ruby"
Owner: Paul W. Deck, Jr.

It was a little over five years ago that I turned the family vehicle up Roz Wilson's lane. She owns and operates Wildfire Kennels in Montgomery, MN. The family, including my wife, three of the seven kids, and grandpa and grandma, was there to inquire about a "field bred" Golden. At first, I asked Roz if she'd be interested in breeding to my male, but her response was an emphatic "absolutely not!" Okay … then Plan B was to get a pup from her next litter. From that came Ruby, a very talented, female Golden Retriever.



"Ruby"

Like the two Goldens already in the house, I was obsessed with training her myself. Other than force fetch, I taught her obedience, marking, and delivery to hand. It was that first winter, though, that I realized that she would benefit from professional training. That is when I became acquainted with Brian Hartfield, Webshire Kennels, Larson, WI. He put Ruby on his truck for a winter trip down south. Much of Ruby's talent has been developed and refined by Brian and his wife, Lisa.

My goal was to participate in NAHRA and AKC hunting tests. My vanity was that only the dog needed the training, not me. That worked through the early stages, but handling mistakes caused Ruby to fail when she should have succeeded. It was then that Brian explained that the dog and her handler are a team. He strongly suggested that I spend time with him improving my handling skills. That was a "eureka" moment for me. To read Ruby's tendencies, her strengths, her weaknesses; to understand the marks, the order of retrieves; and to challenge the blinds were all skills that the handler must learn.

Although I was not particularly precocious, I was dogged (pun intended). In 2014, Ruby and I earned an AKC Master title, and she went on to qualify for the Master National. In October, she participated in the 2014 Master National Hunting Test. Under the skillful handling of Brian Hartfield, she passed and earned a Master National title. That is pretty rarified air.

One thing I learned on this journey is that Goldens who can do the work at that level are not as common as Labs. "Field bred" Goldens are coming back, but if you have a good one, breed the dog through a reputable breeder. As for Ruby, she is currently my little blond, hunting companion. We should all have a dog like her!