

WHAT IS BEHIND A WORLD CHAMPION?

By Don Nicely



When Mike Miller was getting his pup ready for the Super Stakes the thought that this pup was going to become the youngest World Champion ever didn't cross his mind. You could say Mike has been hunting all his life. Starting at about 6 or 7 years old he would hit the woods with his father. Like a lot of us who got our start following behind our dad, he was lucky in that his father always tried to have a coon dog around to hunt. His father also handled some of the famous hounds of the day including the Redbone Famous Amos.

Mike was lucky like a few of us who had a father that not only coon hunted but also had a coon dog in their pen. He grew up not being a stranger to what it took for a dog to be what I like to call a real coon dog. He always liked the Walker hounds and has tried to always keep a good one around.

When Mike Miller went hunting with a puppy named (Gainesville Creek) Tank he saw something he liked out of that puppy. He had the chance to buy him after hunting with him and bought the pup that would soon make history. Tank did things quick and young and right. He was entered in some PKC events at an age most people would just be thinking about starting their pup. The pup, Tank, started bringing the money home. He made a PKC Champion at a very young age.

Before the ACHA World Championship Mike's focus was getting Tank ready for the Super Stakes. Little did he realize when he decided to enter him in the ACHA World Hunt that things were going to change quickly. Kind of like Tank's rise in the Coon Hound world of competition hunting.

The ACHA World Championship has a history that no other registry can lay claim too. The competition hunts started with the American Coon Hunters Association (ACHA). If you study the history a little the impact the ACHA World Championship

had on the coon hound was unmatched in its day. ACHA was the first World Championship and for the longest time the only World Championship.

Even today when there are numerous World Titles by different kennel clubs, ACHA stands out. ACHA could be called the true World Championship. How can you truly have a World Champion when some dogs aren't allowed to enter? With the ACHA World Hunt any hound can enter. They don't have to be registered with the ACHA offices. It is a true world championship open to all coon hounds to enter and compete in.

Many say that the ACHA World Hunt is one of the hardest to win. You can't reenter. You have to tree a coon to be able to advance and you have to recast some nights. It takes its toll on hound and handler. Gainesville Creek Tank didn't make a minus point until the last cast of the finals. In the 5 previous casts he didn't receive a minus point. Here is 20 month old hound hunting in 5 casts some of them two casts in a night, treeing coon and making very few mistakes. Doing this at an age a lot of people would still call them a pup.

The emotions that were running through Mike Miller had to be many at the time because more things were happening then just the hunt. How does it feel to own a world champion and to sell a world champion at the same time? I can only imagine the feelings that would be going through someone. Before the hunt was over Mike Miller had agreed to sale Tank to Albert Clay.

Everyone that competes much has had the thought of wanting to own a world champion or win a world hunt. Here was the case of a person going to achieve that dream that so many of us have and at the same time stick to your word and sell that dog to another man.

As Mike now knows when anyone wins a world championship they will start getting phone calls from people they have never heard of. People calling to congratulate you or to ask questions about your World Champion.

People want to know what the dog is out of etc. When you ask about the breeding of Gainesville Creek Tank a whole article could be written on his breeding and bloodlines. Tank is a very well bred hound but let me fast forward to the part the ACHA World Championship had on the bloodlines of Gainesville Creek Tank.

I believe the ACHA World Championship may have had more of an impact on the Treeing Walker Breed then any of the other 5 breeds. The ACHA World Hunt was the Only World Championship for a long time. When a dog won the World Hunt

interest was created in that dog. Through the early years when most of the registered dogs were single registered hounds a lot of crosses were made because of the ACHA World Hunt.

Let me deal with one thread that goes back to Tank numerous times. At least 15 times (but I haven't carried his pedigree out all the way yet). The first World Champion Treeing Walker was White River Boone who won it in 1949. He had a big impact on the breed and considering his early accidental death it could have been even greater.

The second Treeing Walker World Champion was The Incredible Rock who won the world title two years in a row, 1951 and 1952. A daughter of White River Boone, Nance's Jane, was bred to The Incredible Rock to produce Bunker Hill Queen. Queen produced some very nice hounds in her day. She was bred to Shetler's Sonny Boy to produce Carolina Kate.

The first world champion of a world champion was Merchant's Fanny who won the ACHA World Hunt in 1959. She was out of The Incredible Rock. Today it is hard maybe impossible (unless the dog is single registered) to find a World Champion that doesn't go back to past ACHA World Champions.

The first and only hound to win three ACHA World Champion titles was Merchant's Bawlie in 1955, 1956, and 1958. Merchant's Bawlie was bred to Merchant's Fanny a world champion out of a world champion to produce Bawlie's Rock.

Bawlie's Rock was bred to Carolina Kate to produce Tut's Tillie. Tillie was bred to 1963 ACHA World Champion House's Bawlie to produce Wright's Sue. Sue is considered to be the fountainhead of the Yadkin River strain of Treeing Walkers. Sue also had an important part in a dog called House's Lipper. Back in his day there was a lot of excitement and buzz about House's Lipper, not so much because of the winning he was doing (he was doing a lot) but because of the pups he was producing.

Wright's Sue was bred to 1964 ACHA World Champion Stan's Sailor Jr. who was out of 1961 ACHA World Champion Stan's Sailor Boy. This cross produced 3 hounds that had a great impact on the treeing walker breed. Shive's Goldhill Lou, Wright's Pistol Pete and Brack's Blaze.

When Blaze was bred to a Finley River Chief female that cross produced Yadkin River Tom who produced Kyles Rozell who produced Yadkin River Jeff when she was bred to Wright's Pistol Pete.

Shive's Goldhill Lou produced House's Queen Lou the mother of House's Lipper. If

you will take the threads I just mentioned you will find what an impact they had on the walker breed. The fact is this wouldn't have gotten where it did if not for the ACHA World Championship. There is no doubt some of these crosses were made at the time because a dog had won the ACHA World Championship.

Tank's mother is Nite Champion Cypress Lake Stylish Maggie.



Owned by Flynn Welch and Wayne Albury, Maggie is still being hunted doing what she loves, treeing coon. Flynn owned her mother Grand Nite Champion Cypress Lake Stylish Bitty along with Joe Patterson. They bred Bitty to Grand Nite Champion Lipper's Stylish Cade to get Maggie. Flynn says that Maggie shines in the winter time when the leaves are off the tree. She is very accurate when she trees. Most of the time if she passes by a tree that another dog is treed on it will be slick. She also has a big male dog mouth and all of her pups have over powering mouths. Flynn and Wayne are proud of the type of pups that Maggie throws. As Mr. Welch said: "You can bet one thing for sure, Maggie will do her part."

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Tank's father is Grand Nite Champion Coma's Stylish Pride.



Pride is owned by Justin Bowden and Branden Dement. Actually when Pride was bred to Maggie to produce Tank Flynn Welch owned him.

Pride just turned 10 years of age but is still in good shape and still treeing a lot of coon. Justin says Tank is a good hunter but hunts with you and doesn't leave you and the country. Once he trees there is no leaving the tree. He has a big bawl mouth on track and bawls and chops on tree, mostly chop. Justin and Branden are very proud of the pups Pride is producing and are planning on studing him out and collecting him also.

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Albert Clay like many of us started following these hounds behind his daddy. Albert was 5 years old when he started going hunting with his father. From that start he has been hunting all of his life. Mr. Clay has always tried to have a good coon hound at his place and most of the time has had one.

Being a fan of the Finley River hounds, Albert liked the type of hound that most of us that has been in the sport for a while would call a *real* coon hound. He has hunted with a lot of the name dogs of the past and still today hunts a dog that can compete. Just last year he placed two hounds in the Top Twenty of the World Hunt.

He had been hearing about a young dog from a number of people. This dog was young but would tree coon, was accurate and had so many of the things we look for in a young hound. During the World Hunt negotiations began on the purchase of Gainesville Creek Tank.

On the final night of the World Championship Albert Clay did something most of us wouldn't have had the guts to do. Two hours before the final cast Albert closed the deal on Tank by giving a World Championship price for a hound that wasn't a World Champion yet. True he had a 1 in 3 chance of winning it, but there was still that last cast that had to be hunted.

Albert showed his faith in what he had been told about the young hound called Tank and in his handler Mike Miller. He paid the price one would expect to have to pay for a World Champion.

Albert's plans for 2010 ACHA WORLD CHAMPION GAINSVILLE CREEK TANK

are first and foremost he wants to hunt and enjoy his World Champion. Albert doesn't want to breed a lot of females to Tank because of his young age, but he would like to breed a few of the better females. He believes Tank will do his part in producing good hounds so he wants to get a few on the ground out of good females.

Albert plans on hunting Tank in some of the larger hunts and may even get Mike Miller to handle Tank in some of those hunts. He hasn't ruled out the possibility of trying to win another World Title. After all as I write this Tank hasn't even turned two years old yet.

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