

Cover Story...

Tri-Sett Keerious Kade UD JH

Kade earns UD title
at 10 years of age!



Kade is my third Gordon Setter and second one to earn obedience trial titles. After Hettie (Mary Hill's Vivian Leigh) passed on, I went for a year without a Gordon and it was quite apparent to my wife Harriette that I really missed having one around. Our household always had 2-3 dogs and we were down to one middle-aged English Springer. With Harriette's encouragement, I started thinking about a new Gordon Setter puppy to train for hunting and obedience. I wanted a puppy from a pedigree that contained a mix of hunting, obedience and show titles because I wanted a trainable dog with the classic Gordon Setter appearance. I started going to dog shows and hunting tests again to observe dogs. Unfortunately I wasn't seeing any Gordon Setters in the obedience ring.

So my research began with a review of pedigrees in the *GS Review* and *The Complete Gordon Setter*, plus some Internet searching. I reread some of my gundog and obedience training books, as well as Stanley Coren's "*The Intelligence of Dogs*" to help prepare for puppy selection. I had the greatest pleasure of meeting Don Sunderland, an avid breeder of Gordon Setters since 1950s. He and I, and his friend Bonnie Hayes, had many discussions about dogs, puppies and breeders.

During my puppy search I came across the breeding of two dual champion Gordon Setters: Tri-Sett's DC Zenith Brite Judee JH and DC Beaconfield's Captain Fantastic JH. I was impressed. I remembered seeing some of the Tri-Sett dogs and meeting Ms. Karen Gatchell of Tri-Sett Kennels, when I was active with the Magnolia and Atlanta Gordon Setter clubs in the 1980s. I wanted one of her dogs.

I contacted Karen Gatchell and we exchanged information via email. She provided photos of the sire and dam along with individual puppy photos. There were also the various health certificates and a puppy contract provided. I knew that I wanted a puppy from this litter and sent the reserve deposit to her. When the time came, I packed my Sherpa bag and flew from Seattle to Connecticut to pick out my puppy. Karen and I went down to the

puppy pen and turned them all loose in the yard where I found a pack of 5 rambunctious rascals—not a shy one in the group. Karen had a quail wing on a pole and fresh toys to toss so we put these out to see which puppies responded—all of them did. Kade was the most outgoing one, nearly always in my face but occasionally taking off to explore. When it was time to make a decision, it was a toss-up between Kade and the puppy that would eventually become CH Komicbook Kharacter (Billy).

I spent some extra time with these 2 puppies to compare their behavior. When I tossed a toy for Kade, he'd retrieve the toy for me most of the times. On the other hand, when I tossed the toy for Billy, he would take the toy wherever he wanted, or chew on it. When I teased the puppies with the quail wing on a stick, both puppies took to the hunt, searching for and chasing the wing. Occasionally, either of them would catch the wing before I could pull it away. But there was a difference. If Billy caught the wing he would not let go of it—it was his and he let



me know it was his—whereas Kade was willing to let me take it from him. Karen provided her opinions on the puppies. Kade was not too stubborn, yet not so sensitive that he would shut down in training. He showed some eagerness to please. As I watched Kade chase the toys and continue to search for the quail wing after it had been put away, Karen suggested that perhaps he was a much better prospect for best of attitude, and for me to pursue my goals

I packed up Kade and said goodbye. Poor Kade was unhappy about being separated from home and littermates, howled his little head off for the hour

drive back to the hotel at the Hartford airport. I worried about keeping him quiet for the night so other hotel guests could sleep. Back at the hotel I let him run around the room to burn off energy before putting him in the Sherpa bag for the night. He started crying. So I put the bag on the bed and went to sleep with my hand in the Sherpa bag to keep him calm.

Karen wanted the owners to name the puppies for the AKC registration with the only condition that they have double names starting with the letter K to represent Tri-Sett's KK litters. All of my Gordons have had Scottish names or terms in their registered or call names so I pulled out a Scottish book of names and terms. Keerious (strange/curious) Kade (wetlands)—Keerious Kade. Aahha...This became his name. He was such a curious puppy and, at that time, was just learning how to go outside and you can only imagine the wet spots we occasionally found on the carpet.

Early training for competitive obedience is important. Some trainers believe a puppy should be a puppy for a year before the serious training starts while others have the opinion that training should start very young. Based on my experience, I've found that waiting a year to start obedience training doesn't work well for a Gordon. I feel it is better to start training early. For starters a young puppy is small, easier to handle and also very dependent on the trainer, similar to any animal parent and its cub. I gave my new puppy a few weeks to bond, earn my trust and adjust to a new home. Then the training began. Much of his early training began prior to 4 months and was restricted to my house and yard until he developed immunity to dog diseases. Puppies gradually learn that human words mean something. Very soon, words like

“cookie,” “bird,” and “walk” came to evoke raucous bouts of exuberance. We started with basic commands like stand/whoa and sit. Heeling and down commands would come later. The early training was all positive reinforcement, with a few treats. As I trained, I was heavy on praise and attention with minimal food rewards. Mostly you would have thought he won Best in Show if he performed an exercise without help. I was so proud of him, and let him know. I also introduced hand signals as Kade began to understand the verbal commands. Negative reinforcement was only implemented after he reached about 6 months and only on refusal to perform a learned command. It was always followed with positive reinforcement when the exercise was performed correctly to keep his confidence up. Training is a delicate balance and you really must learn to “read” your dog to know when they are confused or it’s time to end a training session. Dogs pick up on human body language quickly and even small movements that may be unconscious to us can be confusing for the dog.

To introduce Kade to the distractions of other dogs, I entered him in obedience training classes at Manning Dog Training in Yakima, WA when he was 6 months old. By the time he was entered in these obedience classes Kade was already proficient with basic verbal commands and hand signals. But, throw in all the distraction of all the other puppies, dogs, toys and food. It was just too much. Oh how he wanted to play and steal things—forget all the commands. This other stuff was just too good. It took months of patience and training. The little rascal finally overcame these distractions as classes progressed from novice to open obedience exercises.

My one-on-one training sessions with Kade became a form of “attention,” and Kade was thrilled when it was time to go practice—tail wagging and head up. While he trained he developed a fondness for new exercises as he became confident with them. On the flip side, although he was quick to learn new exercises, he was easily bored with them after much repetition. Keeping the exercises interesting or moving through them quickly seemed the key to success. Kade’s memory is sharp—he remembered most exercises even when we went months without training.

In January 2001 Kade was entered in his first AKC obedience trials—4 back to back shows. We earned qualifying scores in the mid to high 190s at all four shows. That year Kade was the second highest scoring Gordon Setter in the country for novice obedience dog. Now it was time to move on to open classes in obedience trials.

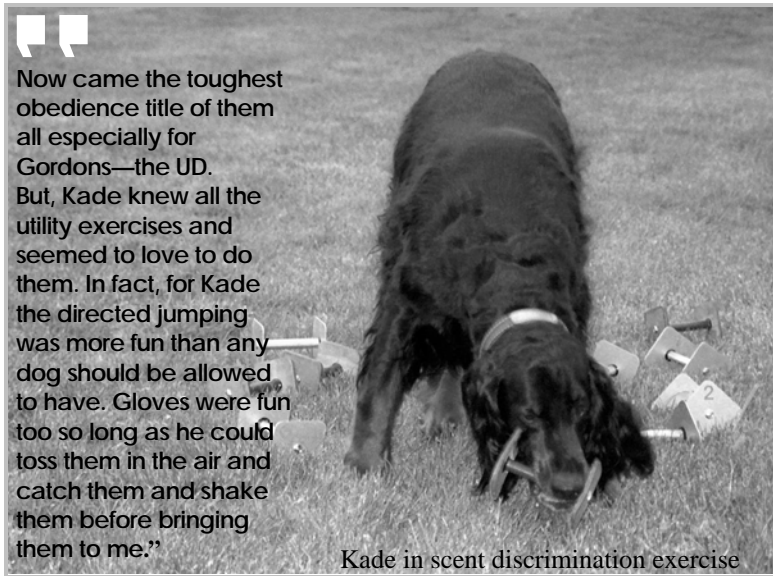
Upon completion of the CD, Kade was about 90% ready for open exercises. He had all the hand signals and drop on recall down pat. The broad jump and dumbbell retrieves needed polishing up before going into the ring. Kade loved jumping so that was the easy part but shortcuts to the finish were a problem. The retrieve was another matter. The first few dumbbell tosses he

would fetch and after that he ignored the dumbbell so we needed to force break the retrieve/fetch command. This was the toughest part of all the CDX training for both of us. Kade eventually developed confidence to the point that he would fetch dumbbells, shoes, and other objects as directed. The fetch command came quite handy while reorganizing some closets in our home. We put Kade to work fetching shoes—about 15 pairs in all. He demanded payment about every fifth shoe with a run to the cookie jar in the kitchen.

Kade's first two qualifying scores for the CDX came quickly in 2001. The final qualifying score took awhile. During open exercises the retrieve over the high jump became Kade’s favorite and the drop on recall his least favorite. Several times in the show ring Kade decided a jump would make a nice substitute for the drop on recall. Spectators at the obedience trials thought it quite cute but the judges didn’t think it cute enough to qualify

him. One day it all came together and we got that final qualifying score for the CDX in 2003. Yea! Kade was the third ranking Gordon Setter in open obedience that year.

Now came the toughest obedience title of them all especially for Gordons—the UD (Utility Dog). We Gordon Setter owners usually give up at this point. But, Kade knew all the utility exercises and seemed to love to do them. In fact, for Kade the directed jumping was more fun than any dog should be allowed to have. Gloves were fun too so long as he could toss them in the air and catch them and shake them before bringing them to me.



shake them before bringing them to me. We got the first qualifying score for utility quickly. But then, everything changed.

It was show...after show...after show of nonqualifiers. The effort seemed futile. In practice things were perfect—we’d go through entire routines without mistakes. We practiced in parks and with trainers. Kade would perform perfectly. But, at the shows we’d go through the obedience trial almost flawlessly and then he’d make a disqualifying mistake. I remember one particular time during the go-outs—he was so brilliantly focused but then spied a beautiful Irish Setter in the other ring and couldn’t take his eyes off of her. The crowd roared with laughter. He was in love, but instantly disqualified. Over the continuing next few years, we continued going to utility shows. But with all this time, I found that Kade had learned the utility routine so well that he acted on the judges’ commands rather than mine. It was very frustrating. As a consequence, I decided to take a break for awhile from entering Kade in Utility.

A few years quickly passed, before I reconsidered getting Kade finished. I got into an advanced training class with Kade at Paws Abilities in Seattle. The training was different—we set him up to fail individual exercises then corrected the failures. We never went through the entire utility routine in practice anymore.

My wife and I traveled from Seattle to visit with relatives in North Carolina for a few weeks in October 2009 and we took Kade on this trip. I decided to enter him in shows at Knoxville,

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TN and Asheville, NC. In Knoxville, he disqualified when I had to give him a double command at one show, and at the second show chose the wrong article in scent discrimination.

The next weekend at the Obedience Club of Asheville, it all came together. No one at the Asheville show had ever seen a Gordon in obedience and I knew we had a challenge. It felt like every pair of eyes in the room was on us.

Kade earned a qualifying score that put him second place for the Utility class on Saturday. The next day, we were flying back to Seattle. I almost cancelled going to the show on Sunday, in order to spend more time at home visiting with my 87 year old mother. But, as fate would have it, I decided at the last moment to go to the show before heading to the airport. That Sunday, in Asheville, Kade's qualifying score took first place and the long quest for the UD title ended. After six years since winning his CDX, Kade had finally done it! He had his Utility Title.

This past summer I entered Kade in some hunting tests where he finished his JH title. Kade was trained for hunting upland game birds. He was about 9 weeks old when I got him. Between 10 and 12 weeks we played with the quail or pheasant wing on a string. The quail wing on a string quickly graduated to a quail or pheasant wing hidden around the yard but out of his reach and sight so he was forced to rely on his nose. I'd hide the wing then

let Kade sniff my hand as I said "find a bird." After a few days the command "find a bird" was enough to send him on a frantic search around the yard and house for the wing. Once he caught on to the hide-and-seek game it was kept to a minimum until Kade could be introduced to live birds. As soon as his vaccines became effective and his risk of getting Parvo or Corona viruses were low, I introduced Kade to real birds in the field. While Kade was a puppy and young dog, I was fortunate enough to live adjacent to the Wenas Wildlife Range in Central Washington where he had the opportunity to find pheasant, grouse, chukar and quail. We have spent several hunting seasons on the wildlife ranges and the public hunting areas on the Yakama Reservation where Kade has fun "finding his bird." At 11 years old he's still going strong and we plan to spend some weekends this fall hunting game birds on the wildlife ranges and national forests in central Washington. A bird retrieved to hand with an obedience front and finish—a nice ending to a day in the field.

I want to thank Karen Gatchell of Tri-Sett Kennels for all of her support, and guidance on the Gordon Setter breed. Kade has turned out to be a wonderful dog and our loving four legged furry son. ■

—Bill Greene, Seattle, WA

Bill and Harriette are members of the Pacific Northwest Gordon Setter fanciers, an active group that relishes the breed and supports community activities.
