

## Fritz special as a versatile champ

By Mallory Carra Staff Writer

LaFAYETTE, Ga. — Gambles Odyssey Fritz wasn't a city dog. That was obvious when he pulled up the carpet of his owner's Atlanta condo and dragged it across the room.

Walnut Hill Kennels owner Rick Hopkins gave the pup to his son Tom, who returned it to the kennel where Hopkins bred him in LaFayette.

Now the 6-year-old German shorthaired pointer, called simply Fritz, is the only dog of any breed worldwide to earn master hunter and retrieving dog titles while also becoming a dual champion of field and show.

Fritz added "dual champion" to his long list of titles last month, earning it along with his master hunter title within a year and a half. The coveted title of dual champion is a feat accomplished by only 250 other German shorthairs in the history of the breed.

"This is from years of line breeding the best of the best shorthairs for over 25 years," Hopkins said. "I knew he had a lot of potential. I'd start him in something new every time he accomplished enough in something else, and he would excel with anything we trained him for. He has a lot of natural ability."

Fritz claimed three championships at the National Shoot To Retrieve Trials and was second runner-up out of 196 entries at the National Dog of the Year Trial. He was runner-up among 46 dogs at the Georgia Regional Championship.

In two months, he became an American Kennel Club champion. And after working with ducks only twice, Fritz earned a retrieving dog title offered by the German Shorthair Pointer Club of America, which also awarded him a Versatile Champion Excellent award.

Lara and Jimmy Spears of Sharp Mountain Kennel evaluated and handled Fritz for dog shows, and he became a show champion. Dogs tend to focus on either field or show, and it's unusual for one to have the mental capabilities for both, Walnut Hill Kennels co-owner Brenda Roe said.

"Just the fact that a dual championship is so elite and he finished the field titles so quickly, we thought we'd give it a show since he's a young dog," she said. "What he's done is shift from one to the other, and he does it well. He was geared for field, so he wasn't as obedient and as calm as he should've been, but when he was he'd win."

Fritz has also been well sought as a sire, with his litters yielding competitive dogs. He is friendly and social with his fellow dogs in the kennel, the handlers all say.

Born in North Carolina, Hopkins started breeding and training dogs in Flagstaff, Ariz., after he left U.S. Army in the 1970s. Then, he joined Roe in La Fayette, where they have run the Walnut Hill Kennels for

15 years. They have trained and bred many successful dogs, including Snips Ticked Off, a 10-time National Shoot to Retrieve champion.

Hopkins and Roe train and breed about 24 dogs at the kennel mostly during September through April, because the dogs cannot train in the summer heat. Training is made up of pointing, obedience and retrieving birds that have been shot. The kennel also offers boarding, conditioning and training on the 40-acre property, where Hopkins and Roe also raise pigeons for the dogs' training.

Starting in the fall, Fritz will train for a North American Versatile Hunting Dog title, a highend elite test that includes field, hunting and water work.

“He’s shown so much desire working with ducks, we thought why not?” Hopkins said. “He has all the training in place — he just needs to do some water work. Seeing the way he does everything else, we thought we should do it.”

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## **MEET FRITZ**

Formal name: DC/3X NSTRA Ch Gambles Odyssey Fritz MH, VCX, RD

What that means:

Dual Champion; three time National Shoot To Retrieve champion; Master Hunter; Versatile Champion Excellent; Retrieving Dog Age in human years: 6 Age in dog years (approximate): 40 Home: Walnut Hill Kennels in La Fayette, [www.walnuthillgsp.us](http://www.walnuthillgsp.us)

Owner/breeder: Rick Hopkins

Also handled by: Ray Dohse of Eshod Farm; Lara and Jimmy Spears of Sharp Mountain Kennel.



Contributed Photo

Rick Hopkins and Fritz take a break from hunting during a trip to North Dakota.



Staff Photo by Gillian Bolsover Owner-trainers Brenda Roe, left, and Rick Hopkins pose with Fritz during a training exercise at Walnut Hill Kennels in La Fayette, GA. Fritz is the only dog to win master hunter and retrieving titles and also be a dual field and show champion.