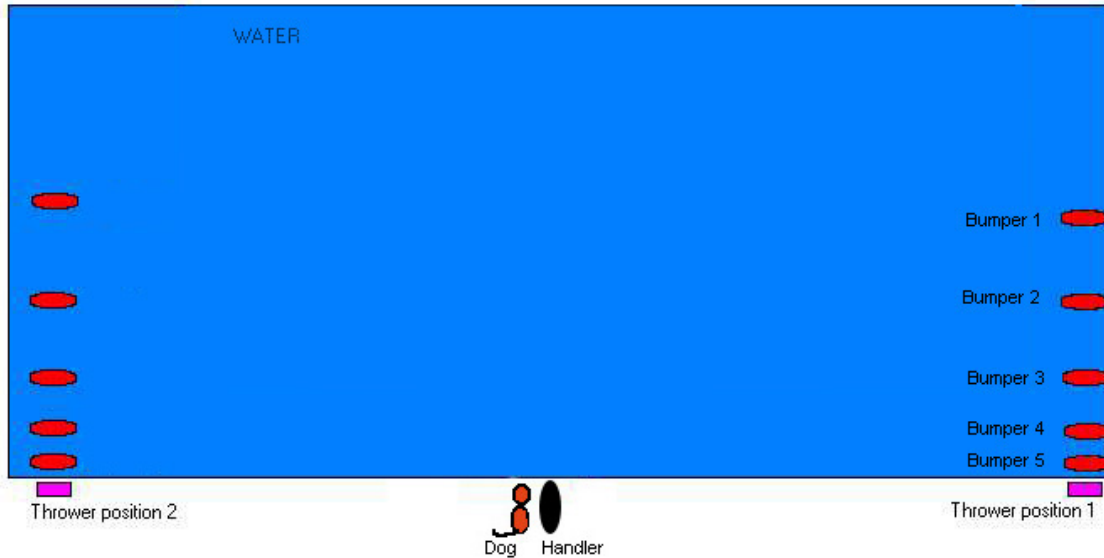


Initial Shore Breaking Drill



The shoreline should be straight with no cover (only short grass) and a steep drop-off into preferably swimming water is necessary. The “dam” of a pond or an irrigation channel works well. The water should not have anything in it. The idea is to make this as cut and dry as possible. This is a Drill, NOT a mark. You are trying to teach your retriever something specific. The retriever should have some kind of trained retrieve, and deliver to hand, but need not know how to handle (blinds). They need not be totally steady, but they should sit with the handler needing only a light hold on the collar. I normally teach this prior to running a dog in JH.

Depending on the retriever, I will run this drill for two days straight, then give it a day’s break and run successful land marks or non cheaty water marks. Something that the retriever will do well and easily. If they like flyers, give them one. Then I will return and run the drill again for a day or two. I want to get on with it, but I don’t want the retriever getting too worried or stressed. I would not advise doing it in successive days until completed, especially a minority breed. Break it up a little bit. Just NO water marks that are cheaty.

Referring to the diagram, start with thrower in Position 1, on the right hand side of the handler and retriever. The thrower is about 20 yards or less from the handler. Use WHITE bumpers. The diagram is in red for illustrative purposes ONLY. The diagram shows all the bumpers position relative to the thrower, retriever/handler and shoreline, again for illustrative purposes. There is only ONE bumper in the water at a time. The handler is as close to the shoreline as possible. The thrower has a whip stick (or something similar) to threaten your retriever. The handler uses their legs to “body block” the shore so the retriever has to enter the water right away. The thrower can just yell, “Hay, Hay” to get the retrievers attention, duck calls and guns are not necessary. The first throw should be one that the handler feels the retriever will go right into the water and come back without trying to shore early. As the retriever returns with the bumper, the thrower will walk down the shoreline and threaten the retriever with the whip as needed. Most “minority” breeds see the person with a whip stick saying mean things to them and think to themselves “Water is the place to be, I don’t want a piece of that”. However, I have had field trial bred Labs literally run over the thrower. Hitting the water or ground is many times effective. The thrower can say harshly to

the retriever “get out of here”. If the retriever persists in coming ashore, the thrower will have to hit the retriever with the whip to keep them in the water. Do only enough threatening as necessary to keep the retriever in the water all the way back to the handler. You are not trying to terrorize your retriever. It is very important that after this drill that the thrower pet and praise the retriever and even throw a few “happy” bumpers. Since we just did this whole water drill, I make sure if I throw a “happy” bumper, I throw it on land. As the thrower is threatening, the handler encourages the retriever to stay off shore by signaling with the left arm and verbal “over” toward the open water, and if the retriever is online, “Good Dog”. The handler can also give a “come in whistle”, but in this teaching phase, I normally am verbal with “Good Dog!”. It helps if the retriever has had some handling training, but it is certainly not necessary. The handler watches the retriever’s eye focus and head position. When the dog is looking at the handler, most likely they are coming in at the correct angle. When the retriever looks toward the shore, they are not. When the retriever glances toward shore, use a word like “No” or “Ahh” and then repeat the signal and command to “over”. Allow the retriever to correctly exit the water, by the thrower backing off and allowing the retriever to shore. Then the thrower will return to where they started. When the handler and retriever are ready, the thrower will again get the retrievers attention and throw another bumper, this time the distance will be perhaps half of the starting distance. As the retriever returns the thrower again will walk down the shoreline and keep the retriever off the bank. Then try position number 3. This process is repeated for position number 4 and 5. At position 5, the thrower is tossing the bumper right next to the bank in the water. The retriever should enter the water, and swim the distance to the bumper (or run in the water), and return in the water along the shoreline. While it is ok for the retriever to shore before getting to the handler, I prefer the retriever swim all but the last few yards. This last bumper the thrower might have to take a step or two away from the shoreline to make the throw right at the waters edge. Normally when the retriever is “getting” the concept, it will actually swim further into the water then would be in a straight line. This as if to say, “See, I don’t want to get even near the shore”. If you have to really threaten the retriever at a given position, repeat for success. Don’t be afraid of repeating. That is why the marks are short. The retriever is not apt to tire. You will not normally get to position the first time you do this drill. End with success, even if you have to go back a step. Don’t forget to praise your retriever in-between throws. You will need to do this drill with the thrower on the right hand side several times, i.e. several different days, until the retriever is proficient and the thrower does not have to walk along the shoreline. The handler should be able to sense if the retriever requires the thrower to walk the shoreline or if signaling and saying “over” is enough to keep the retriever on line and in the water. The handler will need to instruct the thrower when they are required to walk the shoreline, stay where they are, threaten, ect. Once you can complete position 5 with the thrower staying in the throwing position, you are ready to do the drill with the thrower on the left hand side. Now the retriever could actually run the bank to “square” the water to the bumper. Because you have conditioned your retriever to get in the water in the first part of the drill, this should not be a problem if you start far out in the water on the first throw or two. If the retriever starts to run the bank at any point to the bumper, say “NO!” and call them back to you. Insist that they go into the water from your side. I have even had to give a retriever a slight jerk to stop them from running down the shore. On the return, the handler will use their right hand to signal the retriever over. The left hand side will take several sessions (different days) to get a retriever that will not need the thrower walking the shore to insure they will not run the bank.

Now they are ready for the “Cheating Singles Drill”, the second drill in teaching a retriever not to cheat and take correct angles into/out of the water.

This drill also has an added effect of teaching in and out angles into/out of the water.

Good Retrieving

Laura