



I Count All the Charms About Linda

BREED TYPE OR VERSATILITY?



BY RICHARD REYNOLDS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Reynolds has been chasing after dogs for more than 63 years. That pursuit has taken him around the world and into some of the most unbelievable situations imaginable. It always has been, and still is, a learning process and he is grateful to SHOWSIGHT for granting him the latitude to share these pearls of wisdom with its readership. You're not going to find any deep canine theory here, just discoveries and bits of information you may find useful. From time to time in these adventures, you come across a truly outstanding dog. The current article about "Linda," the hog baying Dachshund, describes one of those. As always, I appreciate your indulgence and your support.

To be honest, I had started writing an article about using various breeds in multiple disciplines, not all of which are appropriate to the breed's original purpose and breed type. Almost every breed of dog can be trained to succeed in many sports. For their part, many parent clubs encourage "versatility" with specific awards for success in a wide variety of pursuits, not all of which are suited to the breed's desired purpose or basic construction. For its part, the American Kennel Club has limited participation in some dog sports to those breeds historically requiring those skills, while some others are open to all. Lure Coursing, Hunt Tests, Earthdog, and Field Trials are examples of those limited by breed, while Agility and Fast CAT are open to most all comers. My article was going to be titled, "Versatility, Bane or Boon?" and it would point out the problems inherent for breeders when dogs are bred specifically to compete in a given sport that does not directly relate to the breed's primary job function. It would have been a great article, and I was looking forward to the spirited debate that it would no doubt raise.

About halfway through, I had to journey to Texas for the annual hog bay, sponsored by the American Hunting Terrier Association—the Jagdterrier Breed Club. For those of you who missed my article last year on these pages, a hog bay is an organized test of a dog's skill in "baying" a feral wild boar in a structured environment for two minutes. No harm is intended for boar or dog and the event itself is not unlike a Herding Test or Trial on steroids. The purpose of a "bay dog" is to locate and hold the boar in position, barking loudly thus summoning the hunter. The dog does not grab or hold the boar and, in fact, any contact with the boar that exceeds five seconds results in disqualification. Still, it's not a sport suitable for many breeds although there are no restrictions by breed on entries.

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top: Cody Furrh has cross trained "Linda" to be a versatile hunting dog and a valuable partner in several types of hunting, all of them in keeping with the original (and current) purpose of the Dachshund. She provides ground support for Furrh's Harris Hawk, named "Queso." (Cody Furrh photo)

bottom: Everything is big in Texas and a tracking collar is a necessity even for the little guys. Dachshunds can be hard to find when they are working. (Cody Furrh photo)

Imagine my surprise to see this highly out of place little hound enter the bay pen as a contestant in the single dog bay. Like her Jagdterrier counterparts, she was screaming and ready to take on the rather large and aggressive boar that trotted in from the opposite side of the bay pen. I was not alone in my skepticism that this smallest of the hounds would rise to the challenge of subduing a feral beast of about 450 pounds, which had bested bigger dogs earlier in the competition. Evidently, the boar was equally skeptical of this short-legged interloper for it began running circles around the bay pen with Linda in hot pursuit. Often, a boar will face off with its challenger, but I believe this old feller thought he could outrun the little squirt. That proved to be a mistake, for Linda kept pace (within five feet of the pig as required by the rules) and round and round they went. Ultimately, Linda stopped the hog for a few seconds but couldn't hold it and the chase began again.

In hog bays, dogs are not scored on the ultimate success or failure of their efforts, but rather on their efforts and technique as well. They are allowed to nip at the hog only if it is in motion and may never lose eye contact with the quarry. Linda ran a path that enabled her to get a nip or two in (any lengthy contact disqualifies) and eventually brought the hog to bay. She handily won the class designated for SOBs, "Some Other Breeds."

Linda's owners, trainers, and handlers are Cody and Caroline Furrh of Denison, Texas, near the Oklahoma border. Both of them are licensed falconers and they acquired Linda specifically to use under their Harris Hawk. Because they hunt rabbit, squirrel, and the occasional odd rodent, Cody and Caroline consider themselves "Dirt Hawkers" and rely on the teamwork of dog and bird for a successful hunt. An earlier try with a Miniature Dachshund proved that variety a little slow for their particular wide open country and they elected to move up to a proven line of Standard Wire-haired Dachshunds.



Most folks who run hog bays have more than one breed that they use for hunting, and those breeds are largely dependent on the type of hunting they do. "Dirt Hawkers," licensed falconers who use their birds to capture ground-based quarry, often use Dachshunds to work with the birds to flush or bolt quarry to be later dispatched by the bird. This being the case, it was no surprise to see a Dachshund in the company of Caroline and Cody Ira Furrh, licensed falconers from Denison, Texas. They had brought their Standard Wirehaired Dachshund to try her skills at blood trailing, go-to-ground, and retrieving, which were part of the event. It never occurred to me that this short-legged hound, bred primarily for hole work on badger, might be entered in the bay competition.

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All Dachshunds have a secret superpower that allow them to go airborne when the situation demands it. Linda overtook and brought to bay this feral boar many times her size.



"Hold up there, big guy!!!" Linda works extra hard to get her message across. The "D" in indomitable may stand for Dachshund.

Linda was whelped on April 20, 2022 and was bred by Dennis Loudermilk from an imported German bitch and an imported Hungarian dog. All are registered with the American Kennel Club. Linda is more properly known as **Field Champion Listen Louder Linda vom Hawk's Nest**. Her conformation might appear a bit odd to those of us used to American Dachshunds, but the longer legs and considerable tuck-up are not uncommon in a working Teckel in fit condition as found in Europe. Having proven herself in AKC Field Trials and early hunting experience, Linda has successfully hunted rabbit, raccoon, squirrel, and rats. Her day job is evicting raccoons from private homes and buildings where they are pests. On a last-minute whim, they entered her in the single dog hog bay.

While I was a bit surprised to see a Teckel at a boar bay, the breed has been used in hunting boar in Europe since time immemorial. We value them as "hole dogs" because their charge and parry style of hunting keeps them safer than the "in your face" methodology used by most terriers. In fact, it is this style that makes the breed very useful indeed for boar baying. They are brave enough to take on the task without hesitation, but sensible enough to know they are up against an opponent with a vast advantage and sensible enough to get the job done while (for the most part) staying out of harm's way. This is exactly what boar baying is all about.



Brought to bay! With the boar's forward motion stopped, Linda remains within five feet while barking loudly (and incessantly) to summon the "hunter."

In her book, *The International Working Teckel*, Julia Szeremeta describes hunting boar with teams of Teckel in a driven hunt and the advantage of their size in being able to penetrate dense underbrush and thickets to bolt or bring the boar to bay. Clearly, while a Dachshund used on boar in Texas is a novelty, it's old news in Europe and the rest of the world where they have been dedicated to that purpose for centuries.

Soooo, what started out as an article about breed versatility has become a piece directed toward purposeful breeding of those characteristics employed in the day-to-day applications of the breed. The hog bay in Texas requires the same conformation, temperament, and skill set as hunting in the forests of Europe and Scandinavia. Hunting hogs with Dachshunds is not "versatility." It is a tried-and-true purpose of the breed, just as retrieving is ingrained in the Poodle or hunting birds is hard-wired into a setter. But what's an article from me without a significant dose of grandfatherly advice. Versatility for its own sake may not be a good thing. It's good to reward activities (and titles) that stem directly from the breed's purpose, but breeding dogs specifically to compete in non-related pursuits can, and eventually will, have a negative effect on breed type.

So, for now, having witnessed an absolutely miraculous display of her prowess, I'll watch the video over and over and, as Frank Sinatra crooned so many years ago, "I'll Count All the Charms About Linda." ■