



In Bounds: Dog Days

By JOHN "JACK" MACKENZIE, CGCS
North Oaks Golf Club

A refreshing and cool north breeze made me grateful for the long pants I had on even though it was mid-June. The first hot and humid week of the season had broken over night with the accompaniment of loud thunder and splendidly bright lightning. With a sliver of pink orange sunrise I drove to work contemplating the full day my staff and I had ahead of us. Indeed, today was to be an active early summer Monday, the last with no outside groups, full of projects great and small.

Smiling, I took in the early hour; the stars fading slowly, dark to my right and a rosy glow of an anticipated sunny display to my left. Wonderfully too cool for downed windows (a temperature only appreciated by out-of-doors workers who tire of long periods of heat and humidity), and Nora Jones soft in the background, my drive to work was the start of a superb day. Until that is, my nasal passages were assaulted by an odor of magnificent proportions which had suddenly and unexpectedly violated my private dream world.

Someone had farted. Musky yet spicy, viscious though light, the pungent aroma almost brought tears to my eyes. With lightning speed my fingers raced to the buttons that soon would bring relief to my olfactory system. Looking to my right I spied the culprit, Tyson my four year old Sheltie/American Eskimo mix, cute with button nose and perked ears, sitting perched upon the fold down armrest of the pickup truck.

"Thank you very little, my furry friend." I said, knowing the deady fluff was nothing personal. However, not to be surprised a second time I pushed him to the back seat along side his partner in dog crimes, Nugget, my five year old Golden Retriever, who was snoozing, oblivious to the nasal bombardment.

Dogs have been synonymous with my employment at North Oaks Golf Club for the last 23 years. Three goldens and one mixed breed have chased every kind of creature upon the course and graced my cart seat during down time. Silently they have listened to me as I preached about club politics, disease pressure and personnel management. With tilted heads and curious expressions they almost seem to ponder my very words to gather meaning. Each has had a different personality, yet every one has shared my love for the golf course.

My dogs have been very appreciated by the membership as well. Besides looking great as cart ornaments, all of the hounds have been proficient in chasing geese. To their credit

we have not had a "flying rat" problem since 1987. Darting, barking and swimming they have each made it a point to prevent any goose intrusion upon the golf course. They also have had their own idiosyncrasies and lapses in behavior.

Jessie, my first love, was a dark red/brown lady who waited at the front door for me every morning to chauffeur her to the club. The brightest retriever I have



Tyson MacKenzie

ever owned, she was a very well disciplined bitch. In the off-season Jessie accompanied me duck and grouse hunting, hobbies that were at one time very important in my life. Bred twice for added income (yeh right!!!), she produced my second golden, Bailey, and also picked up a rather embarrassing habit.

You see, the breeding process changed my good girl Jessie from a fine and proper lady to a horny dog. Even after surgical legation she still had a yearning for large male dogs. Once while changing cups on the practice green she caught me by surprise doing the nasty upon the first tee with Toro, the large Collie owned by Dr. Jameson who lived next to the clubhouse grounds. Of course, once the process began interruption was almost impossible. Good thing it was early in the morning and only a few members were out. Her daughter Bailey wasn't always a good girl either.

A blonde, Bailey was just a few marbles short in the intelligence department. She did however have a tremendous nose and provided me with a long, lasting memory of my final great hunting experience. Joining her mother, we were upon a logging trail in northern Minnesota sleuthing for the elusive grouse. The smell of cedar

pervaded the air and helped console us as we walked mile after mile looking with little luck for the often flighty bird. Suddenly a pair flushed from the clover to our right. Lifting my Browning 20-gauge semi-automatic, I shattered the silence with two shots.

Off into the forest the dogs went in search of our game and soon after both came back, one bird in each of their mouths. A double, double on a beautiful fall day with two great companions.

Bailey the wonder dog, so called because she would sometimes look into space as if pondering the revolutions of our planet. I did always love her though, except for the time she accompanied me onto the seventeenth green to chat with a foursome of state amateur players. While I visited about green speed she proceeded to pinch a loaf not 20 feet from the cup. Boy, was I embarrassed!

Nugget, my third and probably last Golden due to my new fondness for little dogs, is anything but calm. Spastic, paroxysmal, energetic, raging, lively and sometimes annoying, this fine creature continues to amaze me. Yes, she is a master of goose getting, but gosh I get tired of her anxiety to work the course. Nugget just wants to go and go and go.

One day two summers ago we drove by Mr. Johnson's house on the ninth hole. As usual Nugget was running along the out-of-bounds darting after rabbits, squirrels and an occasional dragon fly. Without warning she disappeared and shortly thereafter I heard a shout of surprise. Making a quick u turn I bee lined to the Johnson's house to investigate.

Much to my surprise I found Mr. Johnson, donut in one hand and coffee in the other and luggage at his feet, staring at Nugget who had inconveniently placed herself in the driver seat of his brand new special edition Lexus. Apparently she didn't want to be left behind when Mr. Johnson took off for New York.

Thankfully her paws were somewhat clean and my neighbor was in good spirits. With a frenzied shake of reluctance the brown beauty soon jumped from his car to my cart and off we went on our rounds.

And last but not least, my favorite dog, Tyson. A little dog, something I never would have purchased for I like big dogs, he arrived with a cat and my step-daughter three-and-a-half years ago. She moved out several weeks later without her dog and cat, go figure! Untrained and not housebroken Tyson and I spent several weeks deciding who was boss. Once the early hurdles were cleared we bonded. His intelligence amazes me, a once true blue golden guy. I honestly love him more than any pet I have owned and his manners are impeccable.

Except sometimes he has gas!