

Taka-Tapiolan Flatcoats

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I made a trip by boat to Helsinki in the beginning of the nineteen eighties to judge at the Finnish Flatcoat Championship. It was a mixed show and working event and to me it was no doubt that the beautiful little dog Taka-Tapiolan Roi was the definite winner in each sphere. If I remember it correctly his litter sister T. Pikifer, handled by her breeder/owner Tapio Takala, was no 2 at least when it comes to the cold game stake. I've learnt since then that this kennel has played a key role on the working Flatcoat scene in our great neighbour country over close to five decades.



Taka-Tapiolan Roi with his owner

It's no doubt that there is a strong working Flatcoat culture in Finland with numerous talented breeders needing more attention at another occasion. But few breeders could expose such a long line of successful dogs and such an impact on other breeder's stock than this kennel. Of the 43 Flatcoats having gained a "Jakt Champion" title in Finland over the years, eight are branded with the Taka-Tapiolan prefix and 18 others could expose a Taka-Tapiolan dog more or less close behind in their pedigrees. As far as I've understood some of the last winners are cobred with other successful breeders, but that doesn't diminish the fact that there is a strong Taka-Tapiolan line behind. It seems obvious to me that Tapio has been a frontrunner and role model for numerous other talented Finnish breeders successfully using his lines.

Looking at the Finnish working lines it's obvious that the fundament of the breed is very much the same as in Sweden. In the early years Finnish breeders picked dogs from some of the best litters in Sweden and used well merited workers from the Swedish scene. But over the years first class workers have been imported from Denmark, Norway and United Kingdom. Today the best Finnish working Flatcoats could match the very best in any country.

There is no explicit Taka-Tapiolan strain in a sense where strong capabilities from previous generations have been stabilised via line breeding to his own line of dogs. But obviously, Tapio Takala has an eye for a good worker and in each generation outcrosses have been successfully made with well merited dogs. To me it's very similar to the breeding policy that has been successfully used by Tom and Annika Rölander, Hinnareds, for many years the leading Swedish Flatcoat breeder, primarily using highly merited outcrosses in each generation.

The three first Taka-Tapiolan dogs, in the list of "Jakt Champions", got their merits during the nineteen eighties and the last five, from three different litters, during the years 2007 - 2009. But between these years there have been numerous other ones keeping the Taka-Tapiolan flag high. Looking at the Finnish team in the Nordic Flatcoat Championship it has been dominated by Taka-Tapiolan dogs. Tapio had his first Flatcoat in 1975 and I hope he will continue to breed first class working Flatcoats many years from now on although there is no Flatcoat in the kennel for the time being.

I asked Mr Takala to tell a little about his "dog life journey" and he sent these lines exposing a Finnish man devoted to the development of a first class working Flatcoat.

"I was looking for a Labrador puppy at the time but there was a three-month waiting list for them. I saw an advert about Flat Coated Retrievers in a Helsinki Newspaper and got the last puppy in the litter. I did not see any other puppies to compare with, because Mollyfer was the last one kept in the kennel and I did not know anything about her parents. The dam of the litter was jumping against me and at that moment I decided that my dogs would never be allowed to do that.

To begin with Mollyfer was meant for shooting but I bought my first shot gun at a later occasion. I went to obedience training which was meant for utility dogs like German Shepherds. I listened to the instructions and trained her mainly for obedience. In those days methods were quite tough, and dogs were forced to obey. Today some of these methods seem weird. At home I was very strict with her and later with my other dogs. I believe that strictness is the basic thing that has led me to success. You can't really be floppy with them as determination is the key word to success. I have always known where my training is heading to and at home I have been single-minded with them. Dogs need to know their own place and they cannot do what they want. Consistency in everyday life is the key.

The first year is mainly used for testing the pup and to encourage the inherited skills. At about one year of age I start to train obedience and to challenge them a bit. A bit later, when they are having their health checked to evaluate if they're physically fit for breeding, I make the decision to keep them and start training for Cold game tests and Working tests.



Taka-Tapiolan Pikifer



Tapio Takala with his bitch Taka-Tapiolan Manta (Photo: Markku Kastepohja)



Taka-Tapiolan Manta in action (Photo: Markku Kastepohja)

I quit tests when we have shown what we can, I really don't have any competitive instincts. My latest bitch, Taka-Tapiolan Manta, quit the working scene at the age of three when she had shown what she can: a 1:st at an Elite Class Cold Game Test, 2 x 1 at Elite Class Working Tests (one with a certificate) and a 1:st price at an unofficial A-test (Field Trial).

FI CH, FI & SE JCH Taka-Tapiolan Pikifer was my best bitch for shooting purposes and her mother Mollyfer was the best possible bitch as the foundation bitch for my working gundog kennel. For seven consecutive generations I have kept the same bitch line and each generation have been successful. I have absolutely had more luck than skills. In 1995 I got my first German Short-Haired Pointer and decided to quit the working Flatcoat scene. Taka-Tapiolan Merisilja was returned back to me and I continued breeding. At the moment I don't have any Flatcoats at home but just three German Short-Haired Pointers and a working Labrador on trial, but I've had no luck with them.

I've bred several Flatcoats for others being very successful at tests and for shooting purposes during these 40 years, I couldn't put any of these before the others. But anyhow, I want to mention the highly merited FI V-84 FI UCH FI JCH Taka-Tapiolan Roi. There have been several dogs with the Taka-Tapiolan prefix over the years which have been excellent shooting dogs but lacking results from tests.

I am pleased to say I'm a lucky breeder. As an example, the four best ones at the Finnish Flatcoated Retriever Championship in 2016 carried the Taka-Tapiolan prefix, out of three different litters.