

## Consistent Shadow lights up the Miterdale kennel

Contributed by John Walsh  
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A reward for consistency is the unanimous verdict on the 2020 senior championship win of Miterdale Shadow. The puppy champion in 2017 with 39 wins; third in the senior title race the following year and runner-up in 2019 the building bricks were in place. Shadow's potential this year was built on solid foundations. His delighted owner Sophie Steele, 20, has been around hounds for as long as she can remember attending her first trail as a babe in arms.

Indeed she is the third generation – and the one that's made the Miterdale line tick - following mum and dad Anthony and Steph Steele, and grandparents Mary and John Jenkinson into the sport. But there's no doubt that Shadow (or Buster around the kennel) is the one that has changed the fortunes of the Miterdale brand.

A great battle for the 2017 puppy crown saw him finish four clear of Huntsman's Major from the outstanding Patterdale kennel of Denise Bland and daughter Jenny.

It would not be lost on the Bland's either that their good bitch Jenny's Rascal was the mother of the champion.

The same two kennels were involved in the battle for this year's senior crown after Shadow had opened-up a good lead early in the shortened season.

But it was almost a heartbreak end for Sophie and co when Shadow was injured on September 26 with over a month of the season to run.

"It looked like a muscle injury which was treated and when he ran again after a week he came back lame.

"He went to the vets and he had broken a bone in his wrist which meant he had two screws inserted. We go back on November 26 to have them taken out and hopefully it will have healed," says Sophie.

So the injured Shadow finished his campaign early on 13 wins and it was a question of whether the Bland's Huntsman's Nimrod could reel him in.

On October 18 the Patterdale bitch scored her 12th win with seven trails left to contest but three of those were cancelled due to bad weather.

Nimrod, herself, went missing from a trail at Millstone Moor as the season was reaching a climax but was found the next morning.

So it was back to Millstone Moor for the final day and the senior trail where Nimrod needed a win to share the title with Shadow.

But in a dramatic finish to the trail Cracking Last One managed to survive a collision with a sheep to hold off Nimrod by a head and seal the title for Miterdale Shadow.

His 13 victories were accumulated in four of the six HTA areas - at Helton, Dearham, Bridekirk, Tallentire Hill, Redmain, Low Place and Lowick.

Biggest win of those was in the August Premier Trails at Tallentire Hill where he had to dig deep to beat the 2019 puppy champion Acorn.

"That was one of the highlights of the season because it was a hot day and Buster really had to work to hold-off Acorn.

"I have to say it's a dream to win the old dog championship. When it started late in July I just wanted to enjoy myself at the trails, run the hounds and try my best.

"What it shows is that age doesn't matter and it should give hope to anyone new or young who is coming into the sport.

"Obviously Shadow is very, very special and I hope he's able to run again next season but if there is the slightest doubt about it he will be retired," she says.

Sophie has the assistance of two brothers and a sister, as well as her parents in looking after a full kennel of 14 hounds - seven of whom ran this year while the other half are retired. Young Millie Mawson has also become a keen supporter and helper of the enthusiastic Miterdale team.

Three more – as yet un-named Miterdales - will be running next season and Sophie is looking forward to seeing how they shape as pups.

Two of them are home bred out of Miterdale Prim by Miterdale One, and the other is out of Silver Dusk by the 2018 puppy champion Endure – and thereby hangs a tale.

They are owned by the Keith Lynch/Darren McMaster partnership – and Darren happens to be Sophie's boyfriend.

When these two get together we might be witnessing the start of a new hound trailing dynasty. Watch this space.

At the top Sophie is pictured with her champion at Lowick after a good win; Miterdale Shadow is seen flying a fence at Seaton during the 2019 season while the bottom picture shows Sophie, Miterdale Shadow and new helper Millie Mawson.