

THE PASTRONE WORKING STANDARD BREAKING DOWN THE DETAILS

By Ericka Dennis

With Editorial Comments by Flavio Fusetti

When Dick, Jacki and I were in Italy, one of the most significant things we learned was how important the Working Standard is to the Italians and the Bracco Italiano Breed in Italy. We were constantly reminded of it as each dog was tested. The Pastrone Working Standard is just as important, if not MORE important, to the evaluation of the Bracco Italiano Breed as the conformation standard. In fact, the Bracco Italiano cannot earn a Certificate of Beauty (Conformation Title) unless the dog receives a hunting certificate first.

I would like to begin to explain the standard to everyone in hopes of constructing a test where the club can evaluate their Braccos with qualified judges in real hunting situations. Since a lot of us are focused on hunting with our dogs, and the club is promoting the hunting instinct of the Bracco, the Pastrone Standard should be familiar to each of us as we choose breeding stock for future generations.

The Ente Nazionale della Cinofilia Italiana or ENCI asked Mr. Giovanni Pastrone, a lover/owner/breeder and very important person to the Bracco Italiano in the 1930s, to write the working standard. Pastrone began with older articles written by several prominent gentleman of the time like Delor, Solaro, Bosisio and others. He also took into account discussions held at several meetings of the Italian Kennel Club (the precursor to the ENCI), and opinions of breeders and owners of the Bracco Italiano. The standard was approved during the International Cinologic Congress held in Paris in 1937. Although the wording has changed very little in the last 70 years, the refinement of the breed has. The overall deportment of the Bracco has gone from a dual type build to a sleek and slender unified body type.

The following is a breakdown of the standard beginning in Italian and then the translation into English with a commentary following.

THE PASTRONE STANDARD

L'andatura è di trotto lungo e serrato, tollerato qualche breve tempo di galoppo nei ritorni, sul terreno già ispezionato, od all'inizio del turno ed in caso di estranee eccitazioni.

The gait is a trot, long and brisk. Brief periods of galloping are admitted when re-crossing previously covered ground, at the beginning of the hunt or in cases where the dog encounters a new situation. Above all, the rule when working scent is the trot. This is a lively movement that covers the ground well.

At the moment we think that the gallop is not “tolerated” but “admitted”. Take also into account that it is not important how much time the dog trots, but HOW it trots. It must be long and brisk.

Ma l'andatura di rigore, quando affronta il quesito olfattivo, è di trotto. È un'andatura vivace e redditizia che si svolge in diagonali quasi sempre rettilinee di un centinaio di metri di lunghezza ed anche più, ben spaziate ed in relazione all'olfatto eccellente di cui da prova questo gran fermatore sempre quando non ecceda in andature contrarie alla sua natura.

During the hunt, the dog should quarter at distances of about 100 meters (330 ft) or more from the handler, well spaced and in relation to his excellent smell, which always confirms this great pointer when he doesn't move contrary to his nature.

This is in an ideal situation, with a flat field etc.... In general the dog must cover all the terrain where we hunt because if it covers all the terrain the probability to discover game is higher. Keep in mind the shape of the field, the wind and the scenting conditions.



È evidente che in lui (come in tutti gli altri trottoni) la preoccupazione del compito olfattivo è in primissimo piano, e la soluzione dei vari quesiti che nei grandi galoppatori è data quasi d'istinto, fulmineamente, richiede in lui un processo mentale complesso che è facilmente leggibile nella sua bella maschera di «pensatore».

It is evident that in the Bracco Italiano (as with the other trotters) the preoccupation with the scent is of prime importance. Unlike the fast and immediate reaction of the great gallopers, the Italian Bracchi treat the hunt as a complex mental process that is easily read in his expression, which is one of thought.

This is a “poetic” part of the standard that means that the dog is not like the English pointer, the bracco must be “soft”. Just an example: if you do something without thinking at this you are fast and, maybe, “hard”, more than if you do the same thing after thinking about it.

La cerca è diligentissima ed allietata da un moto trasversale quasi continuo del mozzicone di coda; ed il portamento è ben eretto, con il collo poco proteso, per avere ben alta la testa con la canna nasale fortemente inclinata sull'orizzonte (verso terra).

The search is extremely diligent and enlivened by the rhythmically, almost continuous, side to side motion of the stub of the tail. The posture is erect, with the neck slightly extended in order to hold the head high with the nose angled acutely from the horizontal (towards the ground).

This is an important part of the standard. The head is carried high, and the nose is also. The direction of the head is angled acutely (look at the picture n.9 on the home page of the new SABI' site www.ilbraccoitaliano.org. This dog is Omar). Take also into account that, to improve the speed the dog must carry the neck in the horizontal way (as English pointer/setter) but in this case the nose “points” to the terrain (see the picture n.17 on the SABI site - remember the up lines of the head, divergent. Vice versa the pointers are convergent and the setter have parallel so they can have the neck horizontal without problem). On the opposite side, the dog can carry the neck perpendicular to the terrain, and in this case the nose is in a very high situation but the dog goes slow. So we have to balance between these two situations. Finally note that the poise of the head of a dog depends on a few factors. One is relevant to the environment: wind, temperature, dry/wet habitat, type and shape of the land, cultures in place. The second is relevant to the game hunted, in term of its behavior (pheasants are different from partridges, hare are different from both of them, etc.)

Entrando in un lieve effluvio rallenta gradatamente l'andatura e rimonta verso l'origine presunta con grande prudenza, testa alta come sopra descritta, di passo, senza altra manifestazione se si eccettuano le orecchie erette al massimo e la coda immobile un po' cadente. Accortosi che si tratta d'un falso allarme, senz'altro prosegue riprendendo il portamento e l'andatura abituale. Se per contro s'avvede che l'effluvio porta al selvatico, rallenta sempre maggiormente, così che gli ultimi passi sono lentissimi, tastando spesso con la zampa prima di posarla e questo come per tema di far rumore. E quando ferma irrigidisce la coda, risollevandola. Questa in ferma ed in cerca è portata orizzontale o leggermente più bassa o leggermente più alta.

Let's call this action "The Filata"

Upon detecting a light scent, the dog gradually slows and returns extremely prudently towards its presumed origin, head held high as described above, pacing, without any other expressions apart from the ears cocked to the maximum and the tail motionless and slightly lowered. If the dog realizes that it is on residual (old) scent, then he should resume the hunt as before. If, however, he decides that the scent is leading him closer to game he should slow more and more so his final steps are very slow, often gently feeling the ground with his paw before putting his weight on it as if afraid to make a noise. And when the dog points he stiffens his tail, raising it slightly. When pointing and hunting his tail, may be carried horizontal, slightly raised, or slightly lowered.

The name "filata" is Italian that did not have a good English Translation. We settled on calling it the filata. This is the "thinking" part of the standard. The Bracco should be working the scent in this way. This is a quick sequence, only about 5 to 10 seconds but it is very beautiful to see in action.

Il portamento nell'insieme è nobile, imponente, vigile, ma calmo, ben eretto e lievemente proteso in avanti; il collo un po' montante e la testa ben eretta, con la canna nasale decisamente rivolta verso il basso (circa 30 gradi sotto l'orizzontale).

The over all deportment of the dog is noble, imposing, alert but calm, erect and slightly forward balanced. The neckline should be a little raised and the head carried up with the nose pointing down decisively towards the ground (approx. 30 degrees from the horizontal).



Alert but calm, remember the "soft" description is something that Italians emphasize.

Se durante la cerca taglia una zona d'effluvio che lo rende immediatamente certo della presenza del selvatico, rallenta immediatamente al passo e prendendo nel suo portamento generale un atteggiamento simile a quello della ferma, solo con il collo un po' più proteso e la coda un po' più bassa, compie la «filata» a rallentamento graduale sopradescritta seguendo la retta che lo unisce al selvatico. Talvolta questa filata è preceduta da un breve arresto, ma ciò non è desiderabile.

If while hunting he encounters scent which indicates that game is very close, he will immediately slow and take up a posture similar to when standing still, only with his neckline a little more pronounced and the tail a little lower. He will then gradually take up the “filata” behavior described in the previous paragraphs following the scent, which brings him into contact with the game (and only in this case) will stop immediately. Sometimes this movement is preceded by a short stop, but this is not desirable.

I think this is self-explanatory. The “filata” action follows.

Quando poi si sente d'improvviso a ridosso del selvatico (e solo in questo caso) ferma di scatto, restandosene il più delle volte eretto, o con gli arti un po' flessi con la testa rivolta in basso verso il selvatico. Eccezionalmente s'accoscia in pose contorte.

A dog that senses he is suddenly upon the game (and only in this case) will stop immediately. He will stay, more often than not, upright, or with the limbs a little flexed with the head turned down towards the game. Exceptionally the dog may halt in a contorted or twisted pose. (Not desirable but tolerated)

Quando il selvatico tenta di mettersi in salvo pedonando, il braccio lo «guida» a vento, dominando sull'emanazione diretta, mettendosi in moto gradualissimamente; e così procede con la massima cautela schivando per quanto possibile rami secchi o foglie scricchiolanti. Egli ripete insomma l'azione della filata, prudentissima, ma decisa, senza tentennamenti, non concludendo in nuove ferme senza farle precedere da rallentamenti graduati. È evidente che, dominando sull'emanazione diretta e mantenendosi il più possibile a distanza costante, condiziona il suo avanzare a quello del selvatico. E quando questo, favorito da speciali condizioni di terreno, si abbandona a fughe precipitose, sa dimostrare che la somma prudenza che lo caratterizza non gli impedisce di essere inseguitore tenace e serrato. In questo caso può venire a ritrovarsi nella circostanza di dover fermare bruscamente, per sentirsi d'improvviso a ridosso del fuggitivo, che ha ribattuto per poi lasciarsi caricare, oppure svoltando un ostacolo «et similia».

If the game attempts to escape along the ground while being hunted, the Bracco should track it “on the wind” by its own physical movement, exercising caution not to disturb where possible, dry branches or noisy leaves while maintaining contact with it. While the game is moving, the dog should track it without slowing or stopping unnecessarily. During this action, the dog must maintain the tension as in the pointing phase. The dog repeats the “filata” action prudently but decisively, without wavering, not halting without a preceding gradual slowing. The dog should maintain a distance from the game where possible. His advancement should be dictated by the game. When the game finds itself on especially favored ground and tries to make its escape, the dog shows his character, and he becomes a tenacious tracker. In some cases, the dog may find itself in a circumstance where an abrupt halt is required, when the game has turned upon itself after encountering an obstacle, or similar, etc...

The sequence of the actions described in the preceding paragraphs depends upon the location of the game. Think about the dog and its position in relation to the game. If the game is still, the dog must stop on point. If the game is moving the dog should move with it but in careful position not to disturb it. This is not easy to describe. It is a beautiful process if you see it. If you would like a video, Flavio Fusetti from the SABI showed some during the gathering. If you want to see one, send a request to Ericka Dennis.

Tra le caratteristiche del bracco italiano (e degli altri continentali) vi è pure quella di avere un collegamento assoluto con il conduttore che non deve mai assolutamente abbandonare. La sua natura calma e riflessiva si presta inoltre a condizionare il lavoro alle più varie circostanze, così che egli può restringere le azioni sopradescritte, corrispondenti alle migliori condizioni di selvaggina e d'ambiente, in una cornice più ristretta che sia imposta da momentanee necessità.

The characteristic of the Italian Bracco (and the other continental breeds) is to have complete contact with the handler, which the dog should always maintain. The inherent calm and reflective nature of the dog lends itself to working in various circumstances, so that he may restrict the above actions corresponding to the best conditions of game and environment in a narrower frame imposed by a temporary need.

I think this is the difference between the Bracco and other pointing breeds. The Bracco tends to “think” more about the hunt. They are slower with the trot and try to anticipate the actions of the bird. They are thorough with the field search by traversing methodically and hitting every objective. As the standard says above, this lends itself to lots of different circumstances and makes the Bracco a truly versatile breed able to adapt to the hunter's needs.

As we go forward into the future of the Bracco in America, we should be familiar with the working standard. The testing committee is working on a test that will judge the Bracco against the working standard and enable breeders to choose the very best for breeding stock. We need judges willing to learn the standard and people willing to travel to Italy to see the working standard in action. If you are interested or know someone who is interested in judging our breed, please contact Ericka Dennis or Ron Boehme.