OUTDOORS

Believe riever good as go

a valuable Breed can be nunting dog

nyone who ever put his faith in the Denver Broncos or in a bird dog probably has heard all he ranted to know about golden

Don't believe a word of it.

Don't believe a word of it.

Contrary to anything you've ever heard about America's second most popular retrieving dog, goldens don't — unlike, say, Deltha O'Neal — run around a field without a brain in their heads. I have it on irrefutable authority that golden



Like most latter-day bird huntng enthusiasts, I never thought
nuch about goldens one way or
mother. Among serious dog peolle, the rap against the breed
eems firmly ingrained. As surely
s Griese can't stand tall or throw
ong, golden retrievers won't stay
ocused or perform the really
ough tasks serious hunters expect
f a versatile gun dog. Suggest
unting with a golden and your
ompanions are likely to suggest
ou take your office.

pair?
Pretty to look at, gentle with the ciddles (but not quarterbacks), not exactly something you'd want to

At least that's what I thought ago om a pheasant hunt.
At least that's what I thought a call a few months ago om a Boulder resident named ichard Sierzant. A bird hunting an and golden retriever fancier, erzant had a new pup that

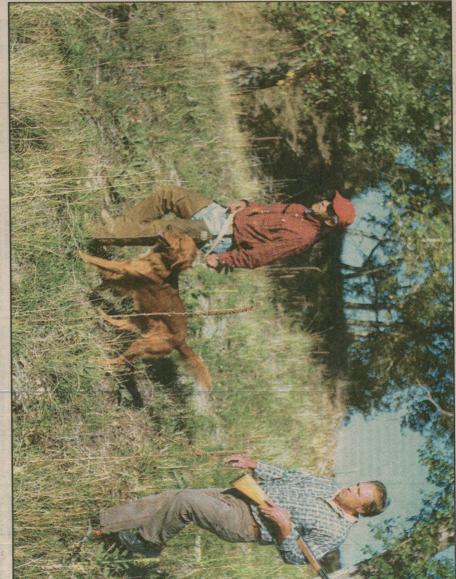
I know what you're thinking.
ple have goldens, drive SUVs
go to soccer games," said
zant, who confessed to having
ned seven of the lush-coated
s. "I already had two other
dens at home. I wanted a dog

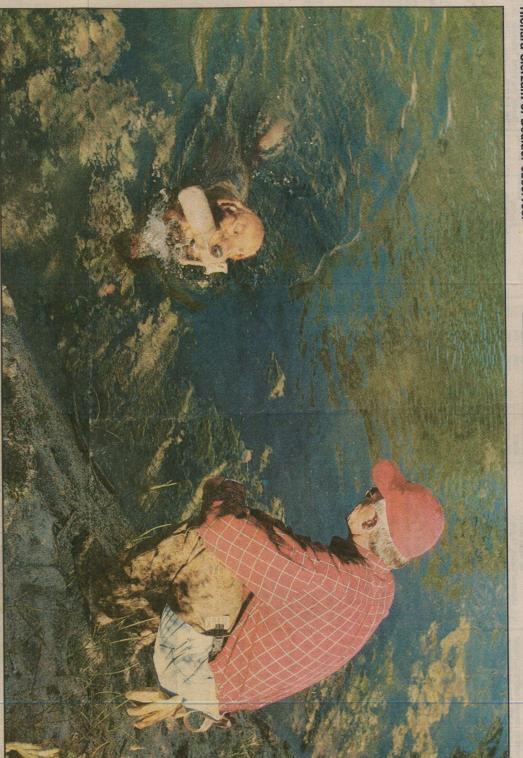
Dumbfounded that anyone even might consider such a thing, I sent Sierzant to my personal court of last resorts. Professional trainer Gary Ruppel, based in Kiowa, is one of those dog-whisperer types who can coax canines into just about anything. I figured if anybody could do something with a golden, it was Ruppel.

In the process, I also learned much about a breed that, as hunting dogs go, became something of a victim of its own popularity.

"Most of the breeding was done by dog show people or by individuals who had no thought about

From a hunting kennel in South Da above, shows promise for the field. Tra pel, right, leads Tupper through his p Richard Sierzant of Boulder observes Dakota, Tu Trainer Gar, is paces as





rding to er Gary Ruppel the breed has

discriminately," Ruppel explained. "The result was a dog with lots of hair, shorter legs, a tendency to put on weight and less athleticism."

Goldens generally are

eager to

In short, most of the attributes that made this one of the most popular hunting dogs in England and the U.S. were being bred out over time. Certain serious breeders maintained active lines of hunting goldens, but these increasingly archived into a minority.

ow with Labrador retrievers as he breed becomes more popular," tuppel said. "You'll find a lot of abs whose hunting instincts have een blurred. You have to be careful that a pup comes from hunting

hich is why Sierzant connected a South Dakota breeder to in Tupper, a spry dog that, months, displays high enthu-n both for finding and retriev-

In his new book, "Gun Dog Breeds," Charles Fergus boosts the golden for its keen nose and overall abilities. "Like the English springer spaniel, it is very much a

dog for 'rough shooting,' the English term for describing a hunt when several kinds of game may be taken in varied terrain, the sort of hunting most Americans do," Fergus writes.

Fergus writes a golden as thriving on gentle techniques, not inclined to rough methods.

"Goldens tend to be 'soft dogs,' responding to praise, reassurance and positive reinforcement during training" Fergus sove

Birds, waterfor