

Wait 'Em Out

HE'S a tall, lanky kid with a mop of black hair topping a lean, leathery face. He has an infectious grin, but his eyes are restless lights that dart around you like rain.

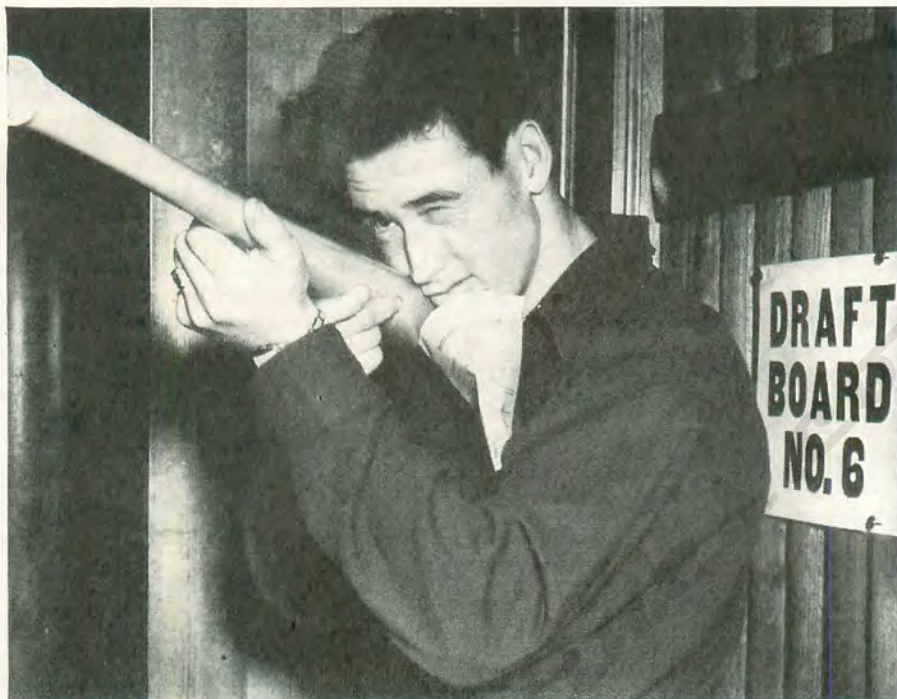
That would be Theodore Francis Williams, aged twenty-three. Otherwise known as Ted Williams, the much-talked about slugger for the Boston Red Sox.

Slugger? Yes, but first he's a hunter. Clouting homers is just a livelihood. Hunting is a love. He'd rather make a double on a pair of greenheads than hoist one over the fence with three on and the score tied in the last of the ninth. He'd get his wish oftener, too, if he had been endowed with just a shade more patience.

But, we're coming to that—

I first met Ted Williams in Buck Davis' decoy shop out on West Broadway. The week before he wandered into the shop while Agnes Johnson, Buck's helper, was painting blue wing speculum marks on mallard blocks. Ted stood around on one foot admiring the blocks. Then he said:

"I'm Williams of the Boston Red Sox."



His draft board problems now settled by his enlistment in the naval air corps, Ted Williams uses his famous bat to illustrate how he handled those mallards on a little Minnesota lake last fall.

"Oh," Agnes said. "That's baseball, ain't it?"

Ted gave her a funny look. He shifted to the other foot.

"What do you do—catch the balls or throw 'em?" Agnes inquired. Might as well be nice to a customer.

Ted just looked at her.

"I know," Agnes said. "You catch the home runs, don't you?"

"No," Ted corrected. "I hit 'em!"

"H a w! H a w!"

laughed Buck, who walked in then. Ted ignored that. He picked up a mallard block and asked the price. Buck

said he had to get \$25 a dozen because you couldn't get cork any more.

"I'll take three dozen." Just like that.

That's Ted Williams for you—quick, eager, impulsive. Crazy about guns and hunting and anything connected with them.

Well, after that he hung around Buck's place like a leech, chewing the fat about decoys and duck hunting. That's where I walked in one day.

"Hey!" Buck said. "C'mere and meet Ted Williams and

get him off my neck, will you? Wants me to go huntin' and I can't get any work done around here. First he wants to hunt moose in Canada, then he wants to go duck huntin'. F'r gosh sake, take him out huntin', will you?"

So I rounded up Doc Evans and Bud Henderson and we set out for Lake Traverse, with Ted in the back seat, giving me an argument about guns and wolf hunting up around Princeton, where he spends his winters. There's another attraction up at Princeton, but he didn't mention that—Doris Soule. Maybe you've

heard of her. She's Ted's girl.

Well, it was the eve of the last day of duck season. We pulled into Wheaton at 11 o'clock that night and ran smack into an old pal of mine—Bob Coppess.

Bob was just opening up the back end of his car and he called us over to look at the greenheads he had. We feasted our eyes on 10 of the fattest, corn-fed drake mallards you ever saw.

"Holy smoke!" Ted spouted. "They must be flyin' good, eh?"

"Nope. Nobody got a bird today. Nobody but me."

"Huh? Wha'd'ya mean?"

"Lake's frozen tight, clean across

Ted Williams, Red Sox slugger, would rather make a double on a pair of greenheads than hoist one over the fence with three on and the score tied in the last of the ninth. He's learning to "wait 'em out" in order to get better shooting

Ted Williams takes a bead on a high squirrel up north.

By JACK CONNOR

from shore to shore."

Ted's jaw dropped. Here we'd driven 200 miles for a last day's shoot and everything was frozen tight. We might have known the uncertain qualities of Minnesota weather in late November would turn against us.

It looked like we'd have to take a flyer at cornfield shooting, a chancy thing at best. Sure, cornfield shooting can be good—if you're lucky—but I've put 400 miles on the car in one day just driving country roads looking for a bunch of mallards feeding in corn.

BOB must have suspected our disappointment, for he spoke up:

"Tell you what I'll do—I'll give you my spot on Traverse. It's the only open water hole left in this country. You can't miss there. They've got to come in for water."

He explained there was a flock of about 5,000 mallards still hanging around and keeping this water hole open every night. They were northern birds that had started south down the Red River valley and found the cornfields too tempting to move on. Most of the farmers around this section use machine corn pickers, you see, and they leave two to four bushels of corn to the acre on the



Ted was trying to reach out for this one as it winged past his blind on one of his hunting trips in western Minnesota. He's learned since he must "wait out" late season mallards.

So Bob had the only open water hole left. Well, Wheaton's natives must know about that, too. I had visions of pulling out to that hole in the morning and finding hunters lined up six deep on its windward side, with decoys jamming every inch of floating space.

But Bob didn't agree. "They'll think I got it again tomorrow, so not many

Bob. "Set it up on the ice and cover it with rushes. Then go to sleep in the boat until dawn. When the boys start coming out to look for a spot, just get up and show yourselves. Why, some of these guys around here will be starting out at three a.m. You gotta beat 'em to the punch."

Doc Evans groaned. "And to think," he said, "I could be in a nice warm bed at home now!"

"Well, Doc," I cut in, "all duck hunters are a little nuts, aren't they?"

THERE was a raw, penetrating northwest wind sweeping across the lake as we trudged out onto the ice in pitch blackness shortly after one a.m. Bob led the way, pulling the boat with a tracking line across one shoulder and flashing his light ahead to guard against airholes. The four of us pushed from behind.

It was no simple trick. Bob's skiff was loaded to the gun'les with four dozen mallard blocks, shell cases, lunch boxes, guns, parkas and bunches of rushes for cover. The windswept glare ice cracked beneath us as we walked along, but Bob assured us it was six inches thick and strong enough to hold up. Still, I was glad the duckboat wasn't further from me than the length of my arm. Something to hold onto, anyway, if we broke through.

"Listen!" Ted suddenly cried. "Hear that?"

Above the whine of the wind in our ears came the sound of thousands of wings splashing against open water and beating the air. Mingled with that was the alarm note of hen mallards.

"Quack, quack, quack!" it came, regularly (Continued on page 46)



That's Ted Williams on the extreme right. The others are Warden Al Christianson of Big Lake, Minn.; Jake Menne of New Brighton and Buck Davis of Minneapolis. They were fox hunting.

ground. This corn proves irresistible.

It's a feast for mallards gorging up for the long trek south. They hang around, breaking ice to get at water, and feed in the nearby cornfields until the winter blasts cover everything with snow. When it gets so deep they can't scratch down to the corn on the ground, they pick up and leave.

will show up. If you get out there early enough to beat the first man there, you'll have it all to yourselves."

"When do we start?" Ted asked. "Right now!" It was a little after midnight then.

"You mean to go out on that ice and stay there all night?"

"Sure. You can use my boat," said



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DOG HAS AN APPENDIX

A number of readers have asked if a dog has an appendix. Yes, a dog does have one. Its average length is about two and one half inches, it is useless and often harbors whipworms. But of course that doesn't mean you should rush your pet to the nearest canine hospital and have his appendix removed.

Defense Loads for Shotguns

(Continued from page 14)

those along the coast, are taking the threat of an invasion quite soberly. They don't believe an invasion is possible, but they don't intend to be caught napping. That is why Sweeley developed his highly potent shotgun load. Already he has loaded 2,000 of his slugs, and carefully distributed them to persons who he knows are reliable, and engaged in defense preparations.

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Mr. Sweeley's most recent development has been to adapt his load to the 16 and 20-bore shotguns.

Wait 'Em Out

(Continued from page 7)

spaced. We were nearing the waterhole. Bob's flashlight speared the darkness ahead, then swept in a semi-circle around us. There, not 40 yards away, we saw a black blotch against the ghostly white ice—our waterhole jammed with ducks. It was a sight none of us will ever forget. For once the talkative Ted Williams was subdued.

Huge masses of ducks were splashing off the water and wheeling past our ears, only a few feet overhead. While these were skittering off, others milled around in the hole trying to get takeoff room. Above all this confusion there was a pandemonium of squawking. We crawled as closely as we dared to the edge of the ice and watched spellbound.

There must have been 5,000 ducks in that little waterhole, and the hole was not over 80 yards long and 60 wide. They had been packed in like sardines when we arrived to disturb their peace.

"I can see now why you got the only shooting there was around here yesterday," I said to Bob. "But say, isn't this open water?"

"Open, yes, but not illegal. There's a patch of rushes that grows about 12 inches above the surface at the north

end where you'll set up. That makes it O. K."

Ted's boyish enthusiasm boiled over. He jumped up and down on the ice and seized Bob in a bear hug. He was as excited as a kid with his first toy train. Impatient for action and ready for anything. Before Bob could take his leave Ted had the rush bundles unloaded and he was about to rip them apart and start building our blind when Bob suggested we wait until dawn so we could see what we were doing.

Well, we spent the night in that little duckboat—the four of us. As far as we were concerned, it was a night that will go down in history. That northwest wind not only got stronger. It got colder. It seeped in through our parkas, penetrated our woolen shirts and chilled us even through our heavy underwear.

We couldn't build a fire because we wanted no black, charred spots on the glare ice to frighten ducks away next day. Anyway, we had no firewood. We couldn't tap our thermos bottles of hot coffee because we would need that for lunch on the morrow. So we just huddled in the bottom of the boat and shivered and cursed the institution of duck hunting.

As soon as the first grey light of dawn appeared in the east Ted was out of the boat tugging at the bundles of rushes. We pitched in and covered everything from stem to stern. Then we built another blind right on the ice 40 yards away so two of us could shoot out of that.

With a push pole in one hand, as insurance against a break through, I crawled up to the edge of the water while Ted skidded the decoys over to me, one by one. We set out the whole four dozen in the lee, just beyond the patch of rushes in the waterhole.

Right here let me say that the bigger the stool you can set out the better luck you'll have getting late season mallards in. It lends them greater confidence at a time when they are bunched up in large flocks, helps persuade them to work in closer. In late November mallards travel in big bunches and you've got to have a lot of blocks out to make a convincing showing. I'd say 60 blocks wouldn't be too many to set out. Northern mallard shooting is no game for a lazy man.

We had just nicely set up and crawled into the blinds when Ted nudged me. Doc and Bud had won the boat blind on a coin toss, so Ted and I were in the other blind, right on the ice.

"Holy mackerel!" Ted whispered. "Looka that!"

I glanced up and what I saw nearly took my breath away. A flock of at least one thousand mallards was wheeling in to set down among our decoys. I glanced at my watch. It was 5:45. Ted scrambled into his hunting coat pocket for his duck call and prepared to test his skill.

"Put that thing away!" I cautioned. "They'll come in anyway. We don't need it."

"Gee, I just wanted to see if I could blow 'em in."

"Yeah, but why call 'em when they're this close? Besides, we can't shoot yet anyway. Let's just see what they'll do."

The flock didn't even sheer away from the blinds, so set were they on getting to water. They made a couple of turns

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around us, came upwind, set their wings and swooped down right beyond the decoys. It was the prettiest sight I'd seen in years—1,000 fat mallards, not 40 yards away, landing by tiers practically in our laps. You do a lot of duck hunting without getting a look at a thing like that.

Neither of us moved a muscle. Just crouched there gazing. But Ted was as tense as a caged lion. And then—it happened.

In perfect unison, that bunch of mallards splashed to their feet and swooped off the water, swinging upwind to gain quick altitude. They didn't even circle once.

"Now what do you suppose caused that?" Ted moaned.

"Something must have scared them off," I said. We both looked around. Sure enough, out from shore four figures were trudging toward our waterhole. Ted cursed vehemently and stood up, waving his arms about wildly. He yelled at the distant specks on the ice. Far to the north our flock of ducks was disappearing in the faint grey sky.

"And that," I said, "is that. Well, maybe they'll come back. It isn't time to start shooting yet anyway."

We settled down to wait, glancing around occasionally to be sure we had no intruders. Seven o'clock came and went, but with it not a single duck. We heard desultory shooting ashore—somebody working the cane brakes for jump shooting. Ted grew restive.

Here it was, last-day of the duck season. But not a bird in sight. Eight o'clock came. Still no sign of action. Nine o'clock—ten. Conversation petered out altogether.

"Oh, something'll turn up any minute now," I said, by way of relieving Ted's impatience. "You got to wait out mallards. That's the only way to get 'em."

"Yeah?" he shot back, with another glance at his watch. "Wait 'em out 'til four o'clock. Then they come in by droves. Not me! I got a notion to go up to Mud lake and do some jump shooting."

"Listen!" I said. "This is the only open water left in the country. Those mallards have been feeding somewhere in cornfields around here. They got to get to water soon. That means if we sit here long enough they'll come in."

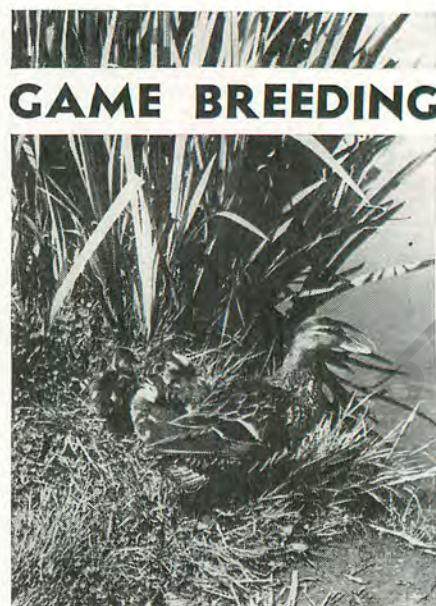
"Nuts!" Ted exploded. "Never get anywhere waiting. I'm goin' to get goin'."

"I'm telling you—"
"So'long, Pal. See you in camp tonight."

With that he left, trudging over the ice toward shore with long strides, gun in one hand and shell box in the other. I had the blind to myself. Doc and Bud pushed their heads above the rushes around their boat and looked over inquiringly. I shouted that we'd lost a customer—he couldn't wait.

So we settled down again to the long vigil. Eleven o'clock and noon passed. We broke open the sandwiches and warmed our innards with hot coffee. But no ducks.

The wind still held northwest and it blew the last shred of clouds away, leaving us under a clear blue sky as empty of life as the sky over a lost world. I began to have misgivings about my theory on mallards. Maybe Ted was



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right. Maybe you had to go out after them and keep moving around until you found them.

I wondered if Ted was getting any shooting. Couldn't be, though. The sound would have carried up to us on the wind. I glanced at my watch. Two o'clock.

"Mark, west!" It was Bud's voice.

I stiffened involuntarily, then looked up to scan the western sky. On the far South Dakota horizon there was a dark smudge in the sky. It quickly resolved itself into a big flock of mallards. They were headed our way, coming in for water. There must have been 300 in the bunch. I dragged out the call and gave 'em the hi-ball.

They saw our stool, bobbing around out there in the water, but circumspectly began a big circle high in the air. So I let them have the grass feed call.

Down they came, wheeling in by tiers. I let them have a bit of a chuckle as they came and the first bunch set their wings to coast up to our blocks.

"Now!"

Doc Evans, Bud and I cut loose at the same instant, each pumping three shots into that mass of milling ducks. It was a sight you see once in a lifetime. Ducks all around us—in the air above, out in front, to each side, and seven or eight kicking their last on the water just beyond our blocks.

THE closest ducks sheered off at the first shot, while those above them beat the air furiously, surprised and indecisive, then veered away after the leaders. Before we could reload the sky above was miraculously cleared. We'd had our brief flurry and there were seven big mallards out there drifting inertly across the pool.

I clambored out of the blind, seized a push pole and started to the downwind side of the hole, noting, as I struggled to keep my feet, that one of our decoys had broken loose and was drifting to the far side.

As I slid the pushpole toward it the decoy suddenly came to life. It was another drake mallard, downed, but not dead. With a sudden burst of energy, the duck clambored out onto the ice and stretched one good wing into the stiffening wind.

A quartering gust caught up the wing like a sail and sent the drake skidding away from me across the ice. My first thought was to give chase, but an ominous cracking in the ice ahead brought me up short. I set out after the duck at a walk, testing the ice ahead at each step with the push pole.

As I neared the drake again, up went that wing and, aided by the push of the wind, he put another 60 yards between himself and me—always just out of range. At that moment something prompted me to look up the lake. There, in the distant blue, I saw another patch in the sky that grew darker and larger by the instant. A second big flock of mallards coming in for water.

Now, when ducks are coming in, and *you have no cover*, you do the next best thing—lie flat and keep motionless. I flopped down on the ice and stretched out flat on my back so I could watch the sky above.

"Q-u-a-c-k! Quack! Quack, quack, quack!"

Thank Heaven, Doc and Bud had spotted the flock too. Their highballs spread out into the wind. I waited seemingly endless moments, not daring to move so much as a finger. And then I heard the beat of wings. Into the range of my vision swept flight after flight of mallards, tier upon tier of them.

I let the first four or five flights go on over and down to our blocks for Doc and Bud to take. At their first shot I sprang up on one knee and pumped three shots into that darkening mass of wings above me. Three birds dropped out and plummeted down onto the ice. I looked around then for my wandering drake. He was gone—blown to freedom.

"Fair enough," I said. "You deserve it, old boy."

So now we had 15 mallards for two chances. Not bad—not bad.

It was 3:45 when we caught our last flurry and dropped seven more for a grand total of 22 birds. Tired, cold and hungry, we hauled our blocks in and dragged the outfit ashore. There was a glow of satisfaction in our faces as we pulled into camp. Ted was waiting outside the cook shack for us, his eyes exploring the car in a questioning glance.

"Do anything?" he shot at me.

With studied indifference Doc answered, "Oh—got a few."

Bud opened the car door and began tossing out ducks, one by one. I made an elaborate show of counting them.

"Nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two! That makes seven apiece and one over. Not bad, eh?"

Ted's eyes were popping. "Holy cats!" he exploded. "Got 'em after I left, eh?"

"Yep," Doc said casually. "How'd you do?"

"Me? Nothin'. Weren't flyin' up on Mud. Everything frozen tight."

"Couldn't you hear our shooting?"

"Naw. I didn't stick around. Took a spin over into South Dakota chasing a flock I saw go out that way. Ran outta gas and had to walk two miles to a farm to borrow some. Guess I drove 60, 70 miles maybe."

Then he picked up one of our big greenheads.

"Boy, what a beauty!" There was a tinge of envy in his voice.

"Well, Ted," I put in, unable to resist a last taunt. "You gotta wait 'em out. You don't get mallards touring the country. Wait 'em out—that's my motto."



COMING

Goose Hunt at Cairo

By JIMMY ROBINSON

CAIRO, ILLINOIS, is the goose hunting capital of North America in the fall. Located at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, Cairo is an annual concentration point for geese and gunners. Jimmy Robinson brings you the first-hand account of a goose hunting trip at Cairo with All-America trapshooter Hale Jones, Ray Fienup and other Illinois trapshooting luminaries.

H. Lutch Brown Wins All-Bore Title At Lordship Shoot

(Continued from page 43)

championship with 100 straight, which was the third straight year that he had broken 100 straight in this event. The Junior honors went to Bobby Cruikshank of Rochester, N.Y., who broke 96 out of 100 in the main event and 48 out of 50 in the shoot-off to defeat Baylor Van Meter of Lexington, Ky.

Mrs. Potter Palmer, III, of Chicago, captured the Women's event with the fine score of 123 out of 125, defeating Mrs. J. A. LaFore, Merion, Pa.; Mrs. F. B. Lee, Fayetteville, N.Y., and Mrs. M. B. Orr, New York City, in the shoot-off.

The National Capitol Rebels of Washington retained their team honors when they broke 491 out of 500.

Highlights . . . The gas ration didn't hurt the attendance. The 410 had 20 more entries than last year, but the All-Bore Sunday fell short with 247 entries, against 290 last year, but this may have been due to the rain and chilling breeze. . . . Sally Clark, famous woman explorer, who holds a world's big game record, two male lions, two minutes, two bullets, was on hand with her husband, Dr. James Clark of the American Museum of Natural History. . . . Ralph Fletcher, on crutches, posted a 95. . . . Harriet Behrend and Diana Bolling's 100 straights on Friday. . . . The colorful uniforms, Army, Navy, and the Women's auxiliary. . . . Captain Bob Canfield of the Gunnery Section, Air Forces Training Command, Washington, was on hand, but didn't turn in one of his famous 100 straights in the 20-gauge contest. . . . One of the features of the meet was the Army-Navy Individual Skeet Championship, open to any member of our Armed Forces. This title was won by George Deyoe with 100 straight, with Bob Canfield and Frank Kelly sharing second place with 98's.

Around the Circuit

JOE MELMER, Columbus, never before had won the Nebraska state championship. Several months ago we ran Joe's picture in Sports Afield and told what a great shot he was. Joe took the bit by the teeth, busted a 197 out of 200 and won his first state championship. Said Joe, "I didn't want you to look bad." . . . Lutch Brown, San Antonio, Texas, is the new Lordship skeet champion.

Captain Phil Miller, now instructing at Harlingen, Texas, has written a new booklet monickered "Fundamentals of Skeet." . . . Bill Heintz, Syracuse, is the new New York state champion, winning the title with 99 out of 100. Mrs. Lloyd Bissell, Williamsville, copped the Women's title with 96 out of 100, and the Forester gun club won the team championship. Lloyd Bissell and Dr. Westermier won both the All-bore and 20-Gauge Two Man team and titles.

Marvin Shoup, Kankakee, is the new Great Western All-bore champ, winning this race at Chicago recently with 100 straight. Mrs. Potter Palmer, III, won the Women's championship with 96 out of 100, nosing out Mrs. Jimmy Anderson by one bird. L. H. Smith, Chicago, won the Sub-small with 90 out of 100 and Small bore with 94 out of 100. The 20-Gauge title went to Frank Salkeld of Kankakee, who shattered 97 out of 100. . . .

Lt. Graydon Hubbard, former national All-around skeet champ, is now an instructor in Alabama and pens me that he likes army life. . . . Joe Hiestand expects a call to the Army next month, so does Vic Reinders. Both would make good instructors.

Two-Gun Captain Charles Askins, Jr., son of Major Charlie Askins, has gone overseas with the Army. We hope that Charlie knocks off as many Japs and Heinies as he did bandits along the Texas border, when he was with the border patrol.