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OVERview™

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Kerrville Christmas Trial with Santa's Elves Hill Country knows how to have a fun event!

By *Caroline Hanson*

Kerrville, Texas was the site of the December 7–9, 2007 Hill Country Agility USDAA trial. One hundred fifty-four dogs were entered over the three-day event for a total of 1,147 runs. The judges, **Tammy Domico** from Clovis, California, and **Richard Deppe** from Ventura, California, did a great job.

On Friday, the *Dog Agility Masters* and the *Performance Versatility Pairs* tournaments were held. Eleven teams vied for the Gold in the team event and eight teams contended in the PVP. Five Championship teams and three Performance teams qualified. **Libby (Pam Meeks), Reagan (Chris Dyer),** and **Sterling (Gerry Brown)** captured the Gold in Team, and **Corky (Jill Rossi)** paired with **Nimbus (Dave Hanson)** took the Gold home for Versatility Pairs.

Steeplechase, Round 1, began after a barbeque dinner. It was a long day, but filled with agility fun, excitement, and friends.

On Saturday, two events stood out—the GP/PNS and the Christmas Game. Grand Prix winners were **Vaasa** and **Hattie Polhamus** in 12"; **Davis** and **Sharon McMahon** in 16"; **Sterling** and **Gerry Brown** in 22"; and **Raptor** and **Gerry**



Elicia Calhoun dances on the table during the game.

Photo by Tom Bridge, www.FastClicksPhoto.com

Brown in 26". Winners in the Performance National Standard were **Austin** and **Lance McMahon** in 12"; **Libby** and **Pam Meeks** in 16"; and **Riggs** and **Elizabeth Armstrong** in 22".

The last event on Saturday was the
Continued on page 3...

Off the Leash

USDAA has just published a new policy statement on course design that is sure to help competitors and trainers in their understanding of the performance requirements in all classes at each level of competition at USDAA events. The document is the result of many years of dedicated work by USDAA's course reviewers and is already receiving high praise from judges and competitors alike. The initial release addresses the titling classes, with an additional statement planned for tournament courses (which are presently outlined in the respective tournament rules).

The Policy Statement sets forth the idea that course design is more art than science, with the process beginning with creativity, and incorporating challenges commensurate with the level of competition for which the design is being rendered. The document seeks to present an understanding of the measure of difficulty in the different challenges and the types of challenges that might be encountered at each level—Starters, Advanced, and Masters. We believe this will help trainers and instructors to prepare curriculum and training programs to better meet the needs of competitors so that they may meet with greater success.

The knowledge gained by understanding the contents of this document can yield great benefits in the ring over the long haul. We will be incorporating the material into our Rules & Regulations seminars for judges throughout 2008 and 2009. Competitors and trainers are welcome to attend, regardless of any desire to become judges. Watch the Event Calendar at www.usdaa.com for dates and locations, or contact the USDAA office at info@usdaa.com or by phone at 972.487.2200.

The Policy Statement on Course Design Guidelines can be found in the "Rules & Regulations" section of the USDAA Web site. Under Rules & Regulations, click on the "eBook" link to access this free download.

Ken Tatsch, *President, USDAA*

From the Editor

In 2007, USDAA subscribers read about a variety of subjects on the *Subscriber News* page, including stories about special titles earned, course analysis, human interest articles, practice courses and exercises for competitors of all skill levels, nested courses, training articles, interviews, games, book and DVD reviews, and lots more. We also provided unprecedented coverage of all events at the 2007 Cynosport World Games, some of which was available to subscribers only.

If you're a new subscriber, you didn't miss out! You can access the archived news articles by scrolling to the bottom of the news page. Subscriber-only articles have titles that appear in green print, while those accessible to all site visitors are printed in blue. Hundreds of articles are waiting there for you!

What's in store for 2008? We plan to provide subscribers with another year of varied content. There should be something for everyone! More training articles, more exercises, more reviews, more interviews, more juniors, more, more, more!

Suggestions of new content are gladly accepted, as are questions or comments about the Subscriber News page. Submissions are also welcome. Please contact me at brennafender@gmail.com and share your thoughts.

If you don't subscribe and would like to, visit <https://usdaa.com/subscribe.cfm> for more information, including explanation of the various benefits of subscribing (hint: it's much more than just great stuff to read!)

I hope you enjoy the first newsletter of 2008!

—B. Fender

Kerrville Christmas *...continued from page 1.*

Christmas Game—Strip Pairs from *The Clean Run Book of Agility Games* by Bud Houston. The first partner put on a huge, red T-shirt, silver beads, and an elf hat. Then he or she ran the first part of the course, ending at a table in the middle that served as the exchange box. There, he or she had to remove the shirt, beads, and hat, and help his or her partner don the attire before she or he ran the second half of the relay. The relay was judged (when the judges could stop laughing) on time plus faults. Style points were also awarded. The game got very funny as participants tried creative ways to exchange the

clothing and win style points.

Sunday ended on a high note with Steeplechase and Performance Speed Jumping, Round 2. These dog/handler teams took home the “big” money in the Steeplechase: 16" **Jeffrey and Judith Michel**, 22" **Jazz and Susan Mitchell**, 26" **Dez and Gloria Wilson**. In the PSJ, 12" went to **Corky and Jill Rossi**; 16" **Gracie and Jody Faulkner**; 22" **Riggs and Elizabeth Armstrong**.

Twenty-six competitors earned new titles at the show and took home the pretty rainbow ribbons. Three of the titles were extra special (all titles are special). **Elicia Calhoun**

and **BreeSea** earned their ADCH, **Gerry Brown** and **Sterling** earned the LAA-Gold, and **Deborah Bridge** and **KC** achieved the RCH-Gold.

Lance McMahon, a PNS winner, offered this reflection on the trial: “This is what it is all about; trials put on by people to allow handlers and their dogs to thrive in a well-managed competitive environment. You do that in Kerrville.”

Condensed from the full article at http://usdaa.com/sub_article.cfm?newsID=799 and http://usdaa.com/sub_article.cfm?newsID=801.

Attitude Matters *By Bonnie Henderson*

I was faced with a challenge recently with my dog, Spree, and the pause table. I have had difficulties with table performances with each of my dogs. So I put the idea (excuse) that sighthounds don't typically like to lie down on the table aside, and looked further at the problem only to discover how much I dislike the table. I don't like to stop and wait. It takes me out of the subconscious state that I typically am in while running a course. I have time to think. I am more likely to feel disoriented or distracted. I believe that my negative attitude has had an impact on each of my dogs.

I decided that I needed to change my attitude, and since you cannot fool your dog when it comes to this sort of thing, I needed to really look for something of value to balance the things I find difficult or unpleasant about the table. I made a conscious decision to use the table to connect with my dog, smile, and take a deep breath. I am using a new cue, “rest,” to help me and my dogs let go of any negative feelings we have had about the table.

When we work with our dogs, our own feelings and attitude towards a task will probably have a significant impact on the success of the performance of that behavior.

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DOG Sport

Please STAY!

A short “stay” training tip

Many dogs break stays in the agility ring, probably because it's hard to be patient when a course full of exciting agility obstacles is right in front of you. It's also hard for trainers to replicate the level of excitement and anticipation that is present at a trial, so it's even harder to train this important behavior.

Susan Wallace, from Dunedin, Florida, has a suggestion for training stays that incorporates major excitement—going outside. She says, “When you train your dog not to bolt out the front door, teach him to sit inside the door, wait for your command to go out, and then sit again outside the door. This is particularly handy if you need to turn around and lock the door behind you.”

If you train this way, you will not only have a well-trained dog at your door, you may also help your dog learn to control himself at the start line.

Preschool, Agility Style

A three-year-old agility handler earned a USDAA title.

By Leona Hellestvig



Danielle and Gretta. Photo by Amy Johnson of Great Dane Photos.

Danielle Wagner is one of the youngest competitors to have completed an agility title in USDAA. She finished her Elementary USDAA Junior Handler Program title in September 2007 at the Minnesota Agility Club Trial. Danielle's mother, **Darci** (a seasoned agility competitor), says that Danielle has been interested in agility for a long time. She said, “My first memories of Danielle are her with her stuffed dinosaur. She would put ‘Dino’ on leash and she would take him up and over the contacts and take him through the tunnel.” Darci continued, “When Danielle was two-and-a-half, she discovered ‘the real thing.’ There was no turning back. The dogs responded to her and the treat in her hand, and would follow her around up and down the field. She was hooked.”

Danielle spends a lot of time practicing with her Corgi, **Gretta**, and with other dogs. Darci said, “In the past year, she spent hours out in the agility yard training. Once the first dog is tired, she wants the next dog and will train all day. It can be snowing, raining, miserably cold, or hot—she doesn't care. She wants to be out there running the dogs.” Danielle's father had put away some of the agility obstacles, but she recently found them. Darci said, “Since the discovery of three jumps, she will re-arrange them into pinwheels, serpentines, and various other types of sequences. The weave poles are still hiding.”

Danielle thoroughly enjoyed her first trial. Darci said, “She had so much fun at the show. She watches her runs over and over again on video. The first thing she said to us on Sunday as we pulled out of the show site is, ‘Mommy, I want to come back to this show every weekend!’ We joke that she is either going to grow up to be a master agility star or be burnt out by the age of five.”

Darci is thankful for all the agility training and trialing friends because of their loyalty and patience. She is a fan of the USDAA junior handler program because it fosters and nurtures children as they gain experience in the sport of agility.

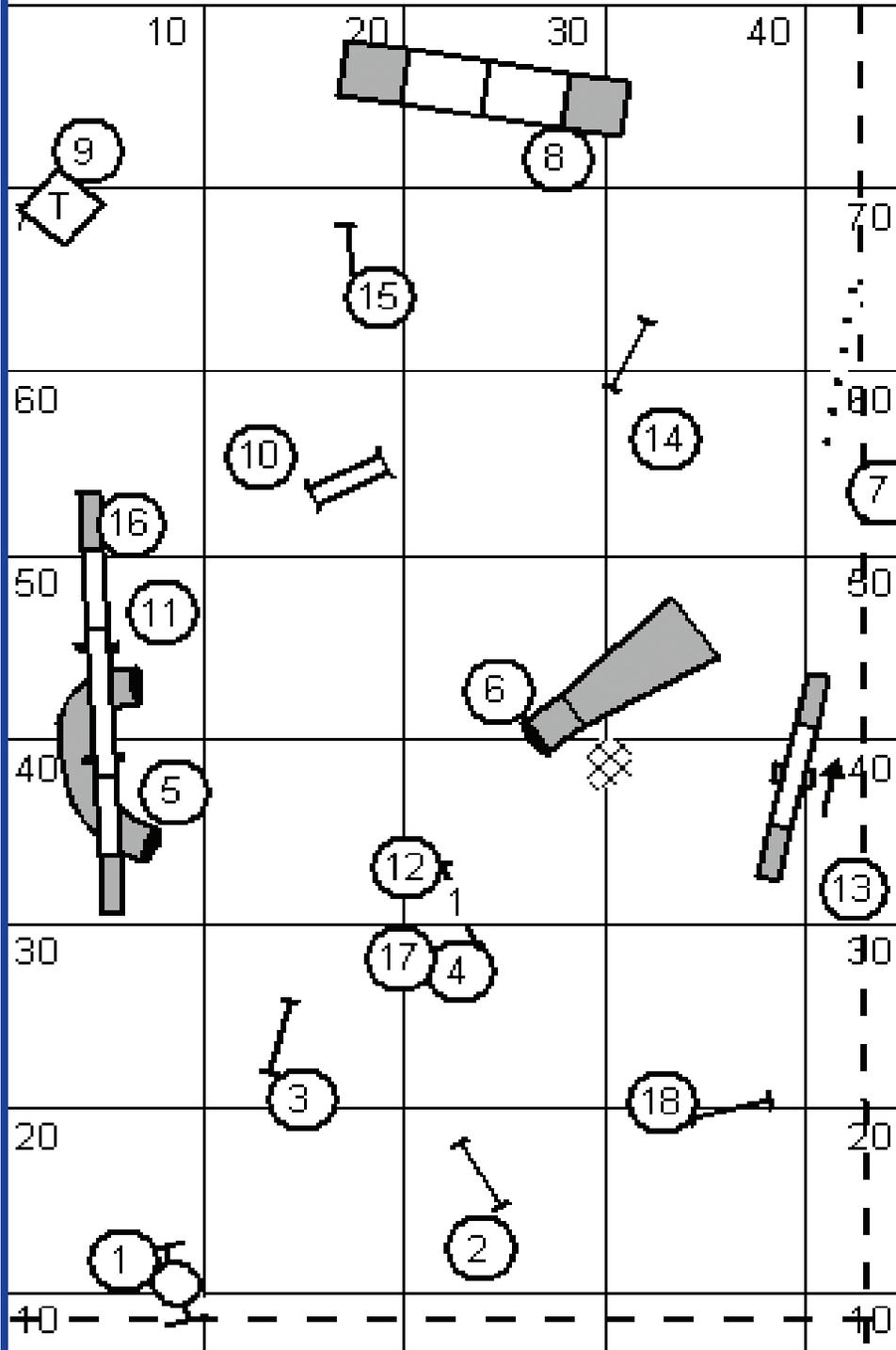
This article is an excerpt from *USDAA's Youngest Junior Handlers*, which can be found at http://usdaa.com/sub_article.cfm?newsID=789.

Attitude ...continued from page 3.

Take a look at any difficulties that you have encountered in training or competition. What kind of attitude are you bringing to your team? Are your feelings enhancing or detracting from your performance and that of your dog? Make the effort to alter negative feelings from your heart and hopefully things will start to turn around for the better.

Training Corner

This course, created by judge Karl Johnson and used for a Junior Handler league, is a good practice opportunity for clubs or individuals with little space. It also uses only one tunnel, which is nice for those with limited resources. If you have more space you can use 12 weaves instead of the set of six shown. Find related courses at http://usdaa.com/sub_article.cfm?newsID=795.



Looking for More?...

Articles included in this edition of OVERview are condensed versions of just some of the news available through USDAA's Subscriber Services area at www.usdaa.com. Sign up and enjoy expanded versions of these stories and much more, including:

Volunteers at the Cynosport Games
http://usdaa.com/sub_article.cfm?newsID=779

Ever wonder what it takes to pull together over 200 volunteers for the Cynosport Games? By *Karen Gloor*

Cynosport Then and Now
http://usdaa.com/sub_article.cfm?newsID=727

How have the Games changed in the last 20 years? By *Leona Hellesvig*

30 Years of Dog Agility, Parts 1, 2, and 3
http://usdaa.com/sub_article.cfm?newsID=608

USDAA President Ken Tatsch continues to describe his recent experiences in England celebrating agility's 30th anniversary—and investigating the history of agility.