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Brace Yourself!

By *Leona Hellesvig*



At far left, Dawn Falk's English Toy Spaniels tackle the A-frame; while at left, Carol Voelker's red BC, Kinetic, and mix, Nyska, are in sync.

Photos photos by
Camille Haglin

Everything stopped in the Masters ring at the Canine Agility of Central Minnesota trial on May 3 so everyone could watch what was happening in the Starters/Advanced ring. Even people who didn't know that this class was going on were drawn over to the ring to find out what all the laughter and big crowd around the ring was about. What was the big attraction? The brace class! This class is becoming a popular tradition at CACM.

Judge **Jim Hibbard** set up a course that really didn't have lots of handling challenges if you would have been running a single dog through it, but getting two dogs through added another whole level of difficulty. There was no seesaw or dogwalk included (for safety reasons). Hibbard said, "I tried to make the course simple."

The greatest issue appeared to be that one dog of the pair would nearly always run faster than the other (several teams were made up of a large and small dog). Handlers were often faced with the question of what to do with the fast dog while the slower dog was still working. Asking the faster dog to sit/stay while working with the slower dog was a popular, though usually not successful, choice. In most cases, the faster dog incurred a wrong course by repeating the obstacle the slower dog was still being encouraged to do. In a few cases, the faster dog went ahead to an obstacle of their choosing since they were being supported by the handler's forward motion in working the slower dog.

Dawn Falk, owner/handler of a matched pair of English Toy Spaniels, said, "I, for one,

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Off the Leash

Though dogs get most of the attention in the world of canine sports, the focus should be on humans, just as it is in track and field, swimming, or even baseball. “How so?” one might ask. As fun and exciting as it is to watch the dogs in action, at the helm is the dog’s trainer, strategist, and team captain, directing the dog around the course. This concept is the focal point of USDAA in its efforts through the International Federation of Cynological Sports (IFCS).

The human element in dog agility and some other dog sports is quite dominant when you look at what is really going on in the ring. It is the human that studies the lay of the land, directs the dog appropriately (or not), and analyzes and trains the dog. We must study and understand canine behaviors, and identify or devise the appropriate exercises and/or techniques in order to have the dog understand commands and obstacles. We work to improve obstacle execution, developing better speed, control, and maneuverability.

A “sport” is largely defined as “an activity that is governed by a set of rules and engaged in competitively through organized events.” Historically this definition has included a reference to the human condition in determining the outcome of the contest, as one often associates with Olympic sports such as swimming, wrestling, or gymnastics. But even the Olympic organizers recognize that the human condition is more than muscle and might, as evidenced by the inclusion of equine sport as an Olympic event. Though the emphasis may not be on the human’s fitness in the equine or dog sporting communities, it does play a vital role on how well the human can ride or jump on horseback, or move or change direction while running in the dog agility ring.

Therefore in dog agility, in as much as in equine sport, the outcome of an event is determined through physical conditioning of both human and dog, as well as the mental ability for making strategic assessments and identifying and employing knowledge of a dog. Superiority in one element may help overcome a deficiency in another, but when all come together well, a team is likely to be unbeatable.

This definition clearly defines dog agility as sport. In fact, throughout Europe and Asia, the human component of a performance team in dog agility is called a “sportsman” (or sportswoman), which commands respect as sport. In a similar fashion, here in North America, and in other countries where the USDAA’s program has spread, we prefer the term “competitor” as opposed to the longstanding breed term “exhibitor”. Focus on dog agility as a sport will further promote the IFCS cause for Olympic consideration some day. Meanwhile, it promotes canine sports asking for respect as human beings, for our knowledge and skills when working with dogs.

Congratulations to **Mike Murphy** and **Bailey** for leading the medal count for our team in Belgium at the IFCS World Championships in May. And congratulations to the entire team by bringing home 16 medals, continuing to show our programs as some of the best in the world today.

Ken Tatsch, *President, USDAA*

IFCS WAC Medal Count

COUNTRY	TOTAL	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
Russia	27	12	10	5
USA	16	3	5	8
Great Britain	14	8	3	3
Canada	13	2	3	8
Japan	2	—	2	—
Netherlands	2	—	2	—
South Africa	1	—	—	1
Belgium	—	—	—	—
Australia	—	—	—	—
Spain	—	—	—	—

Brace Yourself! ...continued from page 1.

did enjoy the brace class. My reason for entering it, aside from thinking it would be a hoot, was because it was **Enzo's** first outdoor trial ever and I thought running agility with his auntie **Darla** would help him stay on course and focused. Mission accomplished."

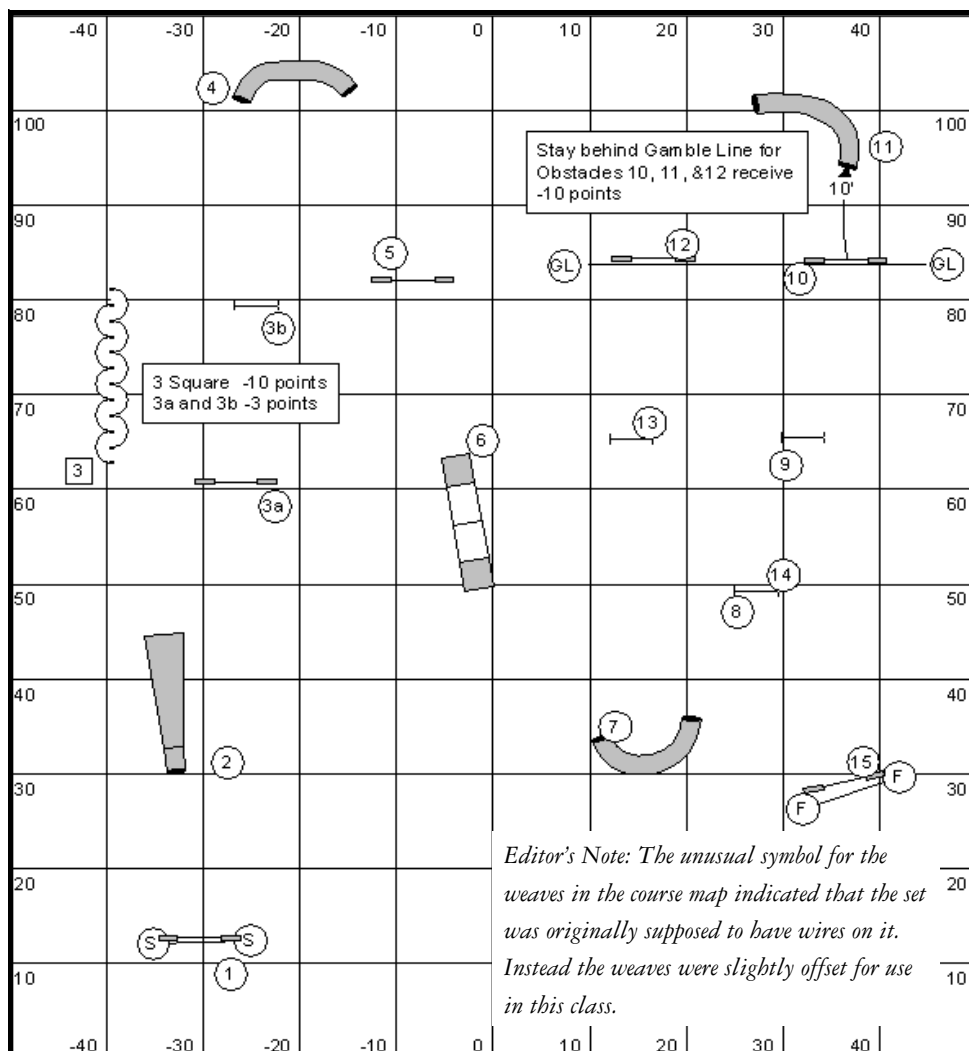
Dawn added, "The brace class and course were really fun. It was my first time doing it and, other than the fact that it felt like semi-organized chaos, I enjoyed the challenge of it and I really appreciated the crowd

participation as well as the patience and support of the judge, who commented that yes, there still are things we can do in agility that are just for fun." **Paula Prickett** said, "I thought the Brace Class was awesome! I find it hard enough to try and handle one dog, let alone two at the same time! I think everyone, including the dogs, enjoyed it. Very entertaining!"

To read the full article, click [HERE](#).

The final results:

- 1st Place Dawn Falk
 Enzo (English Toy Spaniel)
 Darla (English Toy Spaniel)
- 2nd Place Alexis Erickson
 Pom (Sheltie)
 Halo (Belgian Terv.)
- 3rd Place Carol Voelker
 Nystka (All-American)
 Kynetic (Border Collie)
- 4th PlaceCarolynn Kavanagh
 Twist (Welsh Terrier)
 Augie (Norwich Terrier)
- 5th Place Jill Gottschalk
 Rosebud (Pomeranian)
 Dave (Belgian Sheepdog)



Fitness and Weight Loss for Agility

By Leona Hellesvig

Sometimes getting "into shape" for running agility requires a bit of peer support. Accountability to others and peer support makes such endeavors more likely to succeed. Minnesota competitors have established an e-mail based support group to help each other succeed in achieving goals.

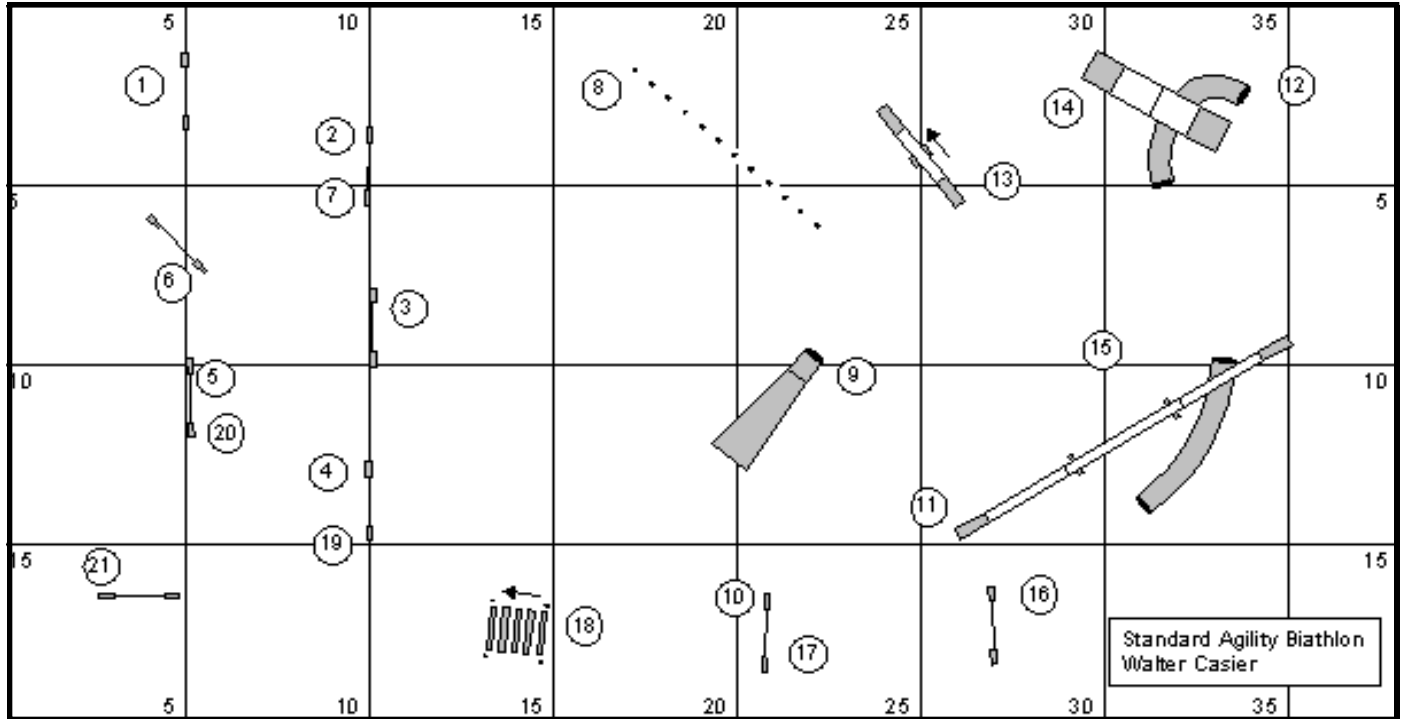
We are more about sharing encouragement with each other than advising each other about specific medical issues. It is most encouraging to see someone post that they have "lost a Sheltie" or perhaps "lost an Aussie."

There is a place on the group site

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Training Corner

Use this IFCS Word Agility Championship course for training. For classes, have one group of students work on the opening and closing jumping sequences while the other practice the middle portion with the contacts, tunnels, and weaves.



Fitness *...continued from page 3.*

for us to all list our goals and track progress if we wish. No specific weight loss program is endorsed (though many in the group swear by the Weight Watchers program). Support is shared to continue with exercise programs. Ideas are offered for new exercises, exercise and diet ideas that work when away from home on trips, and more. Recipes are exchanged freely. Humor abounds. The list has been so incredibly helpful to many of us.

Perhaps best of all, is when we get to the weekend agility trials, we are there to help each other remember that we do not want the chips or fries and the deep fried food. Just seeing each other at trials and other dog events makes us all remember to “be good” and stay on track.

Since we have started this group, there has been a significant improvement in the types of foods offered at the food stands at trials. Even the worker tables now have healthy foods like fruits, veggies, boiled eggs, and nuts instead of rolls, muffins, chips and candy. We are making an impact beyond just our little group!

Five Championships, One Weekend *By Gordon Frazier*

Kim Terrill lives in New Mexico, but the weekend of April 12 and 13 she was visiting a friend in the Seattle area. That same weekend, in nearby Elma, Washington, the Rainier Agility Team happened to be hosting a USDAA test so Kim she entered the trial with her Border Collie, **Steeple**, who only needed two Super Qs and a Jumpers leg for an ADCH.

The Northwest is a competitive arena, agility-wise, so imagine Kim's delight at winning Snooker on Saturday. A score of 57 was what it took to earn a Super Q; two other dogs (**Shannon Willis's Vegas** and **Jo Roach's Slider**) did the same.

After that excitement, don't even try to imagine Kim's reaction at getting yet another Super Q on Sunday. What are the odds? This time it was a three of four red option. As it turns out, getting three sevens was the key to earning the Super Q. The number 7 combo was teeter-jump, but bidirectional in the opening, and the teeter was closer to the number 2 opening jump. A good option on the final seven was to take the jump, circle around to the teeter, then have a nice hairpin turn off the teeter to enter the opening sequence. Both Kim and Steeple, and **Barb Persson** with her Border Collie, **Emma**, opted for that strategy, and both earned the Super Q.

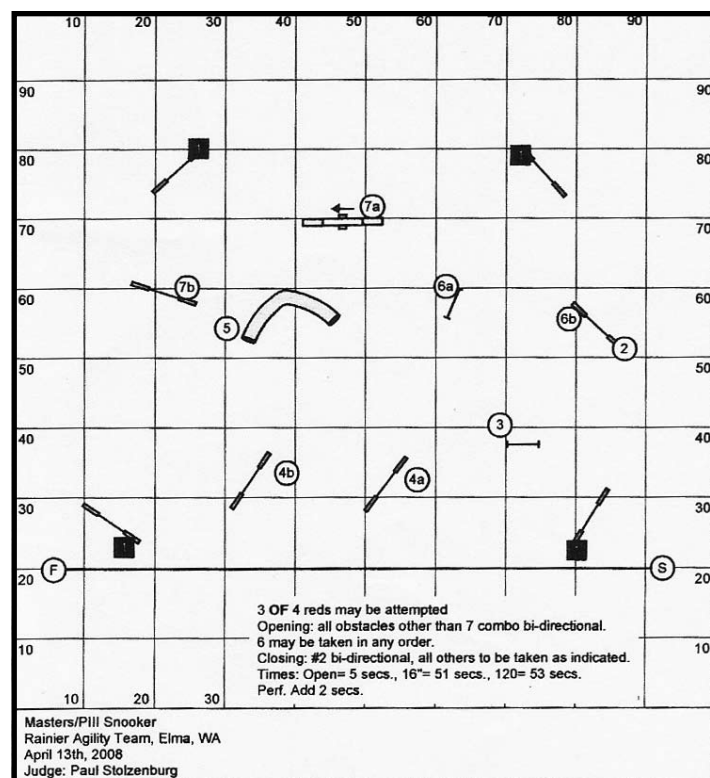
Another successful strategy was to take two sevens in the opening and then end with a six, which was a combination of two jumps. One of the jumps in the six combo was also the number 2 opening jump; taking it last and then taking it again to begin the opening was the option chosen by **Julie Kitelinger** and **Quake** and **Evelyn Robertson** and **Ren**. It was a apparently a good choice, since both also earned Super Qs!

After that remarkable sequence of events, the only possible way Kim Terrill's weekend could go any better would have been for her to qualify in Masters Jumpers on

Sunday as well. The Jumpers course, like all of judge **Paul Stolzenburg's** courses that weekend, was challenging but fair. **Blynn Baker** and her Border Collie, **Kitt**, set the bar with a blistering time of 21.64. Kim and Steeple were not far behind, with a time of 22.22, which earned her a qualifying leg, and a well-deserved ADCH!

Kim's experience alone would have made the trial memorable, but it was a stellar weekend for other dog/handler teams as well. **Evelyn Robertson** and her ever-dependable Australian Shepherd, **Rusty**, earned their APD, as did the speedy **Emma**, a Jack Russell Terrier owned by **Shirley Kostrick**. **Daisy Peel** and Border Collie, **Jester**, also earned their ADCH that weekend, as did Blynn Baker and Kitt. That's a total of five championship titles at a test with fewer than 200 dogs. Not bad!

This article was condensed from the original, which can be read in its entirety by clicking [HERE](#).



A Twisted Agility Tale *By Brenna Fender*

What is this colorful agility pretzel? It's a fun game created by MadCo Director and Trial Chair **Lynn Sigman**, who designed the Tunnel Pretzel Challenge for an August club trial in Advance Mills, Virginia. Sigman found a stair dolly shortly before the event and remembered the course that **Darlene Woz** designed for the 1998 USDAA Grand Prix Finals, which was a figure eight tunnel course with a 36" rise in the middle. Sigman used the dolly to create a 48" rise in her 80-foot-long tunnel challenge. She said, "The handlers had to devise a strategy to get their dogs through the challenge of something they had never encountered. Some dogs were hesitant to even enter, many of them made a first entrance and quickly came back out, and others went most of the way though, encountered the stairs, and turned around. The 'eye contact' issue was huge for the handlers as well as the dogs. It was fairly obvious when a handler was wondering 'Where's my dog?'"

Winners were named in four categories: Mini, Maxi, Veteran Mini, and Veteran Maxi. The slowest dog in each division to complete the entire 80' tunnel was awarded a purple rosette proclaiming "I Got Through!"

Condensed from original article. Read the complete story by clicking [HERE](#).



MadCo presents...a pretzel!

Photo by Greg Allen of www.gregallenmusic.net.

From the Editor

Recently the USDAA's site has been chock full of information about the IFCS World Agility Championships. All visitors to www.usdaa.com were able to read updates on the team's experiences in Belgium. Subscribers were privy to extra stories about other country's teams that competed in the Championships.

Now that the international event is over, I'm looking for national, regional, and local news and stories to share with our readers. Event reports, training articles, and USDAA-specific content are welcomed, as well as dog-related inspirational stories, humor, photos, and general interest stories that might appeal to any dog lover. If you have an idea for

an article, a story you'd like to write, or if you'd like to write for us but you don't know what to write about, please contact me at brennafender@gmail.com and tell me about your ideas. I'd love to hear from you!

See you on the Web!

—B. Fender