

NATIONAL AGILITY TRIAL - WESTERN AUSTRALIA 2005

A RESOUNDING SUCCESS



WA Team

Photos Tim Abidin



NSW Team

Agilityers from all around Australia arrived in WA for the National Agility Trial 15/16 October. In fact the majority were here for the previous weekend to compete in the WA State trial and the GSDA West Coast Challenge, all held at the WACA grounds in Gosnells which looked magnificent, thanks to our hard working groundsman Bevan George. Once the judges were introduced and all the competitors welcomed it was on with the 'show'. It was nice to have the CAWA's registrar Christine Davis join us although the President could not make it. Christine more than made up for it, she was not just a representative of the association but ended up being a worker both days, the committee sure knew how to make use of willing hands!

The weather for the first day of qualifying trials was very warm but the atmosphere was hotter, it fairly sizzled. With some rings having over 100 dogs entered, organisation had to be spot on and a huge bouquet to the ANWA committee as each ring ran to time, due also to the very efficient stewards at ringside, and the judges. To gain a place in the finals dogs had to place at least once in the top seven places, although no dog could qualify twice, so ensuring twenty one dogs in each final.

Not only was accuracy required so was speed. That is exactly what the competitors gave us. It was marvelous to see that every State had super stars competing and I must say that if you loved agility then this was the only place to be, it was a smorgasbord of talent. Talking of talent, at events such as these you always get a personality that stands out just that bit more, one such person was Daniella McCulloch from SA. Not only is she a talented, competitive and successful competitor, her happy go lucky attitude endeared her to everyone, and to watch her work her dogs from such a distance is an inspiration to us all, and proves if you train your dogs to work so far from you then this wonderful sport is for everyone.

There was another aspect of this weekend that was pleasing and that was how many breed Champions competed, and one of these was the super fast Ch Rhonawby Raven Ov Bear absolutely one of the top dogs around, I overheard someone say "Simone is so lucky to have a dog that can turn over a bar so tight." What a lot of people did not know is that it is not luck but pure training, it took almost four years to gain an open title with Raven as she kept dropping bars, but Simone never lost her cool, never got disappointed in her dog, she just went away and worked out how to train her better, so don't begrudge them their successes now, they are well earned.

The first day of trialing was so exciting; you could almost hear the nerves as handlers made their first attempt to make a final. The novice agility classes judged by Valeta Pethrick and Peter Dynan were well contested and both judges gave lovely courses well suited to novice standard. Winning the first trial was the BOB winner from the Royal show Ch Borderfame Moondancer (WA) run by Megan Bell. The second trial saw another BC this time Daheim Lucky Star (WA) with Amanda Houston, who also has another bow to his string as he was the top obedience dog at the 2005 Perth Royal. The novice dogs had a harder task set them in the first of the jumping trials judged by Peter Dynan as there were a couple of tunnel call offs that most of the dogs have not yet perfected, however they gave it a good try. Winning this trial was the oh so talented and fast GSP Moruada Mgm Grand (WA) with Lisa Poprzeczny showing us all how it should be done. The second jumping trial, judged by Robyn Docker, had more success, it was a course that just asked to be run and anyone who saw the winning run felt quite breathless, this dog has a stunning future. Her second win of the trial, Ch Borderfame Moondancer, anyone who saw the delight on Helena Fitzgerald's face, the owner of this dog, would have no doubt that the working side of her kennels is just as important to her as all those show wins.

There were very large entries in the open classes, so to get into the top seven was a real task, the agility classes judged by Robyn Docker and Valeta Pethrick gave us some really quality dogs to watch. Winning BOTH classes was Ch Rhonawby Raven Ov Bear (WA) with Simone Tolhurst. They also won Masters Agility judged by Alan Schmidt ACT.

Now I have seen this pair run but today they were on 'speed dial', they were just so unlucky not to win the State Open Title class last week so it was great to see them in top spot today.

The Open Jumping classes, judged by Judy Tsakalos and Anne Lacy Herbert were great courses that were fun to watch, and it appeared to run, these classes were very well contested and an interstate dog came to the fore Hollie (SA) with Wendy Skelton. I reckon Wendy's surname goes with her dog, they fair 'skeltered' round this course, they kept this up for the second Masters Jumping, winning that as well, this class was judged by Richard Barville.

I talked about speed earlier but I am not sure I have seen a dog run a course faster than the winner of the second Open Jumping, he is a fairly novice dog and is still learning his craft but when he gets it right he is hard

to beat, and today he was awesome, this is Liz Alcock's Domino (WA), run by Gina O'Keefe. The remaining classes of today were the morning Masters Jumping judged by Gail Brindley and won by Troymere Take Control, a Min Poodle, showing that you don't have to be big to have speed; this delightful dog is run by Dagmar Neale NSW. The other Masters Agility, judged by Gail Brindley, was won by Allan Schmidt ACT with his BC Jack, this was an excellent run on a super course which made good watching, Allan was also judging classes at this event as well as being a member of a team so he had a busy weekend.

The first part of the team judging was held on the first day this was the jumping competition and a great course was set by Ian Stanforth, another judge who also competed over the weekend, it is great when agility judges also run dogs as they know how the competitors really feel!! The dogs certainly put some great runs on the board and NSW took an early lead.

The morning of the 15th and the third qualifying trial started, this was the last opportunity to qualify, and determination was there for all those who had not yet secured their place. Winning Novice Agility was the very novice dog Hotnote Electric Dreams (WA) with Nicola Ford, Judy Tsakalos was the judge and the course gave the dogs a lovely flowing run. Novice Jumping judged by Richard Barville gave the dogs an opportunity to open up and run and that is just what the winning dog Guimere Nifty Lad (WA) with Sue Hogben did, showing he has a great future. Open Agility and Masters Agility had the same winner which goes to show the top form this dog was in, Beladele Random Heart (SA) with Luke Schneider. These courses were judged by Ian Stanforth and Peter Dynan respectively. In the Masters ring one person had a nasty fall going through a gap that was just a little too snug, luckily no permanent damage was done to the handler, and I hope the swelling subsided quickly. There was also a double win in Open Jumping and Masters Jumping, this time Allan Schmidt winning open with Jack and Masters with Henry, well done a great double. These courses were judged by Gail Brindley and Robyn Docker. I have to mention the Open Jumping; the first dog came in and set a blinding time, the handler saying at the end they could not have gone any faster and everyone agreeing and thinking that they had just seen the winning time, wrong! The runs that followed got faster and faster with spectators joining in as the dogs ran, cheering them on to go even quicker, it was so exciting to watch and that run that we all thought had nailed the competition at the start came sixth! It made us all realise we were going to see some wonderful finals.

Wow, could we really be at the finals so soon, the first to be judged was the Teams Agility and every State had a cheer squad, it really was great to hear the spectators get behind the competitors. I have to say Victoria certainly supported their team, their cheers could be heard in the city of Perth, well done guys. This final was judged by Richard Barville and it was a great course, a true Masters test but not jammed up, the course allowed the dogs to show their class. The scoring of the teams caused a little confusion as each team nominated five dogs to run, then the worst score would be dropped leaving four to count, however if the reserve i.e. sixth dog's owner wanted to run their dog they could, but those in the audience who were keeping score did not know which was the reserve dog and which were the nominated dogs!! Another aspect which also caused scoring outside the ring to go awry was that the whole teams' score was not counted as one, for instance if team A had two clears, one ten faults and one DQ adding up to sixty faults this would beat team B that had one clear and three five faults, even though team B only had a total of fifteen faults, as the team A had more clear rounds. However as there was a clear winner it all became incidental, congratulations to NSW on a great win, every team was great to watch and it was excellent to see the camaraderie between team mates, well done to you all, you are a credit to our sport.

The organisation of the individual finals was to say the least first class, and to see the ringside packed for each final was a great sight.

Novice Agility: The oohs and ahhs from the crowd greeted so many runs as fabulous dog after fabulous dog made silly errors, Dancer was on a great clear round and running for home but got too excited and missed the last jump, another favourite to win, Ben, missed the tyre, we all thought Nifty would now certainly win then he missed the first weave, we were puzzled, our experienced handlers with their fabulous novice dogs were not going clear on what was a lovely novice course, thanks to the judge Ian Stanforth, he was also starting to look puzzled, would he get a clear round? Well in walked a young girl, only twelve years old, with her little crossbred, it was obvious to us all she was nervous but she concentrated on one obstacle at a time and never wavered on the course, to see such determination from such a young lady was great, whilst she was running it was as though the spectators

were holding their breath willing her on to each obstacle and yes they went clear, our first and only clear, the audience erupted everyone was so pleased for this young lass. Congratulations to Kate Wood and Daisy (WA) on winning National Novice Agility Title.

Novice Jumping: The handlers got down to business in this run, nerves left outside the ring as they went round this course, it was an interesting course built by Valeta Pethrick, with some flowing turns with plenty of room for the novice dogs to line up for each obstacle. The clear rounds were close on time then into the ring came the athletic looking BC Nifty. He took off on a mission and thrilled us all with his run, a great win for Guimere Nifty Lad (WA) with Sue Hogben taking out the National Novice Jumping Title.

Open Agility: The cheers came thick and fast as just about every dog that came in to the ring looked the winner, although we thought there was one stand out run and it proved to be the case, a fast tight run that had the judge belting down to the end of the dog walk to check the colour, actually seeing her run so fast we better all look out when Gail Brindley starts her young dog this year! Congratulations to Liz Alcock's BC Indie with Gina O'Keefe on a great win taking out the National Open Agility Title.

Open Jumping: It was hard to believe that the dogs could run any faster or give us any more excitement, but they did, I am starting to sound like the advertisement guy who always says "and yes there's more" but it is true there WAS more, more speed, tighter turns, faster call offs, the judge Richard Barville set a course that gave the dogs room to run but they had to be aware of a challenge that could come up and 'bite' them running at such speeds, it made thrilling spectating. There was a hair's breadth between the top places, and taking the 'cake' today was the fabulous Ch Beladele Random Heart with Luke Schneider (SA) now with a National Open Jumping Title.

There were only two finals left and we barely had time to draw breath before the first dog entered the ring for the Masters Jumping, the judge Peter Dynan set a course without any technical difficulties for the dogs to run, so with dogs of this caliber there was only one way to win and that was to go flat out and that is what they did, which of course made it very exciting viewing. Incredibly there was a tie and there had to be a run off between Jak with Ronnalynn Shawyer (NSW) and O Ch Xena with Daniella McCulloch (SA), Ronny and Jak came in the ring with a determined look and they flew round setting a good time for Danny and Xena to beat, heading for the tunnel they were certainly giving it a good nudge. Unfortunately a Doberman ran into the ring and though neither the handler or dog knew it was there the judge had only a split second to make up his mind whether to let the run carry on and hope the Dobe would be caught or stop the run, he decided to stop the run and Danny and Xena started again, this time they ran a little wider to the tunnel, but both ladies and dogs were great to watch and both were deserving winners, they showed fabulous sportsmanship and we should be proud of such ambassadors of our sport. So the National Jumping Title goes to Jak and Ronnie Shawyer, congratulations.

One final left and I suppose the Masters Agility is the Grand Prix of our sport, so it was great that the judge Robyn Docker built a Masters course that had everything - discriminations, call offs, a chance for distance handling but so cleverly built that the dogs did not at one point get jammed up, a very exciting concluding event. The dogs did not disappoint us, each one showed why they were the best in Australia, speed, class and fabulous handling from some of the best handlers I have seen, congratulations to you all. When the eventual winner stepped into the ring we knew something special was going to happen, there was something about the way he took that last look around the ring, nodded to the judge that he was ready and then went for it, if there was a corner to cut this pair took it, a bar to be shaved and they almost took the paint off, the turn to the weavers was awesome and Toby was a blur going through them, he was as determined as his handler to take this title, on the run home the cheers got louder and there seemed no doubt that we had all witnessed one of the greatest runs in agility, congratulations to Winpara Cosmic Soul (WA) and Rod Stockdale, a well deserved win for one of the most popular handlers on the circuit.

The presentations were wonderful, with super prizes being handed out, the ANWA committee should be very proud of themselves as should all the judges and stewards for making this event such a success, it will be a hard act to follow.

There were many people who worked hard to make the whole trial go so well but I have to mention the 'three amigos' Richard Barville who judged, built courses and oversaw the whole event, yet not once losing his cool, I reckon he was the 'ever ready' man he must have been renewing his batteries, every time you thought he was getting tired he just bounced back, Mel Rhodens who also was running from ring to ring and Terry McCarthy was also there to make sure each ring was ready on time. Of course thank you to the sponsors Advance and the wonderful Margie Bradley for their involvement, City Farmers with Chris Kent attending, handing out extra prizes, WA Pet & Show Supplies Glynn Makin had the store open all weekend so that in their spare time everyone could enjoy our next favourite hobby, shopping for our dogs. Bayer was also involved in sponsoring the event and we thank them all, without sponsors events such as these would not be so great. Thanks as well to Tim Abidin for all the fabulous photos you can see more on www.yourdogphotos.com

That is it, on the day after the event the grounds looked very empty but very tidy, so well done everyone on leaving the grounds clean. The Advance tent looked quite lonely flapping in the breeze holding great memories of a wonderful event. Thank you to all those interstate competitors and friends who joined us in the West, it was marvelous meeting you and hopefully we can all meet up again next year. I close with what I think is a great thought, I commiserated with Sam Weaver that her State winning dog Mudhoney could not compete in the National as it had injured itself whilst exercising, she shrugged and said "At least I still have my dog", her thoughts being with Lisa Kaddatz as before the National trial started, everyone was shocked and saddened to hear of the loss of a fabulous dog that had, the previous weekend, won the State Masters Agility Title Tallain Shaylah Blakdown, sadly Shaylah was taken ill on the Friday and died. As heartbroken as Lisa was it was great to see her at the trial, to be with people who understood how she felt, and I saw her run a couple of dogs in the event. Well done Lisa and the commiserations of the trialling fraternity are with you.

Then Sam's friend commented that "the worst run our dogs make could be its best run, as you never know, it could be the last one." So folks, enjoy them all as that is what we do this for, Fun and the love of our dogs.

JILL HOUSTON



Guimere Nifty Lad, WA (Novice Jumping)



Ch Beladele Random Heart ADX JDX, SA (Open Jumping)



Jak ADM JDM, NSW (Masters Jumping)



Indie ADM JDX, WA (Open Agility)



Winpara Cosmic Soul CDX ADM JDM ET (aka Toby), WA (Masters Agility)