

# You CAN'T train a Sighthound!

Smart, willing, and able. Tremendous athletic ability and beauty to boot – the perfect working dog? ABSOLUTELY!!! I had never heard of Italian Greyhounds up until about 6 and a half years ago, and while I am besotted with them now, it all started with my fascination in Greyhounds (the bigger cousins). After the pain of losing my beloved Rottweiler, I decided after 9 years that it was time to look for another dog, and couldn't decide between a Saint Bernard or a Greyhound. After some research on the internet and some ringing around, I learned that two greyhound puppies were coming to Brisbane from a show kennel in Victoria. I only wanted a brindle male...but my heart was stolen by a white girl with red patches and the most beautiful long tail I had ever seen! Little did I know that only a few years later I would see an exact version of that beautiful white and red girl, only in miniature - and I would come to discover the Italian Greyhound!

Many people with sighthounds have been discouraged from competing in dog sports with their hound as the feedback they have been given is that the dog will never be any good and it is too much hard work. Such an attitude from so called 'professional' trainers is one I can not understand and is unforgivable. I say keep looking - don't stop until you find someone to help you that believes in your dog and WANTS to help you in your journey. Not every dog is going to be highly successful, but every dog has the right to be given the chance. There are sighthounds successfully trialling in a range of dog sports from Obedience, and Agility to Tracking and Flyball – and these dogs range from Afghan Hounds, Whippets, Italian Greyhounds and Greyhounds – even a few Ibizan!. As a relative 'newcomer' to dog training, I have come to understand through trial and error, that ANY dog will succeed with the right attitude and persistence. My favourite Canine Activity - is the fast growing sport of AGILITY along with its Jumping and Games Courses, where we enjoy great success. We also take part in the odd Conformation Show where we have picked up various Challenge Certificates, Best of Breeds, Group wins and Group placings. My dogs have competed and placed in State and Royal Events where they have WON their classes and/or placed on several occasions. Given sufficient time we would probably compete in other dog sports – in particular flyball - but you can't fit everything in!!

My working dogs include Jana, Rhody and Lara. Jana ADM JDX ADO GD SD SPD (aka The Supermodel) - Jani, or BigDog, as she is affectionately known, is truly an ambassador for sighthounds in Agility in Australia. I met a lot of opposition when starting out with her, but I eventually managed to 'be found' by all of the right people and we never looked back. I have often heard the lament that "...Your first agility dog is your 'mistake dog'..." Some people really HATE to make mistakes - but to me they are a wonderful learning tool. The BEST thing about mistakes is that you learn from them. Well poor Jani has been the guinea pig for all of the worst mistakes you can make training a sighthound - but she has proved to be the best solution as well!

Jana is proof that all dogs can succeed. I don't believe there is any dog or breed of dog that cannot learn to think for themselves - but sighthounds somehow challenge one's abilities to think not only OUTSIDE the box, ...but also through it, ...over it, ...around it... She is certainly not the first greyhound to compete in Agility, but we believe she is the first in Australia to make it to Masters Level, where, after having gained her Novice and Excellent Titles, she recently earned the last pass required to be titled as a Masters Agility Dog (ADM).



**Oh Yes  
you CAN!**

Jana also competes at Masters Level in Jumping classes where she is only one card away from another Masters Title (JDM). Jana also has all of her Novice Agility Games Titles and has officially earned 7 ANKC titles including Agility Dog Open (ADO).

Rhody (Vacquero Vanilla Sky ADM JDM3 ADO2 JDO3 GD SDX SPD )(aka The Fella) Wow, what a great little dog! How lucky I am to be graced by his presence. The sport I chose for him was Agility, where he competes and is titled at the highest levels, and although he has been sparingly entered in the Conformation ring, he has notched up Reserve Dog Challenges, Runner Up Best of Breeds, Best of Breed, and his best effort by far - Runner Up to Best in Group, at 5 and a half years of age, under All Breeds Judge and Italian Greyhound Specialist, Mr John Forbes (NSW). Since I do not actively pursue a show career with him, I am especially proud of his Group placing. In the agility ring, he has far surpassed Jana's achievements (more to do with my progression through and understanding of, the training methods employed by Susan Garrett of Canada). Good things come in small packages - late in 2008, Rhody won an Open Agility Class of 65 dogs - that's one CLASS, of 65 dogs!!! Not totally surprising, since he has won and/or placed in many of his events, but that one class contained at least 10-12 of the top Agility Dogs in South-East Qld - Border Collies and Kelpies no less (considered amongst the top breeds for agility) - and Open classes contain a DISTANCE CHALLENGE where the dog must work an appreciable distance from the handler, with precision and speed. And his performances at the 2008 Brisbane Royal Show just blew me away...I had entered of course, but was undecided about whether I could actually compete on the day, as I was not fully recovered from a devastating muscle injury that had already cost me my first Agility Nationals in Melbourne. Rhody has placed at the Royal before, but I went feeling that I would not be able to run to my full potential or I could be risking permanent damage that would forever take away my ability to compete in my favourite sport. A Second place in Masters Agility and First Place in Masters Jumping was far more than I ever expected. Rhody has received at least 15 titles in ANKC agility with many others waiting to be sent in.

Lara (Ch Galig Midnight Rhapsody AD JDX SD SPD) (my Warrior Princess) I have received many compliments on my work with Lara, she is a smart little dog and a very neat worker. None of which would have been possible without the gracious assistance of Mrs Gwendoline Letzer of Galig Italian Greyhounds, who took a great leap of faith by entrusting one of her precious dogs to a relatively unknown and unproven handler. Lara competed in only one Agility Event at the 2008 Brisbane Royal Show, her first time in Ekka agility, with all of its noise, crowds and tempting distracting smells, and me being wary of carrying injury, and she smashed the course time by almost half, the ONLY Novice entrant to get through with a Clear Round Certificate, and take FIRST PLACE!!! Lara will be turning three later this year, so she is still quite young and has a great future ahead of her. Lara has so far earned 6 ANKC titles with a few more just needing final qualifiers.

I have been told many times that it is a delight to watch my dogs, I think I get just as much of a kick out of hearing that, as the people who enjoy watching my dogs work. Yes, it can require a little bit more effort than that required from a "traditional" working breed, but every bit as much fun.

**So Yes, it IS possible to train a Sighthound!!  
ANGELA HAMOND**

