



Agility news from Top Dog  
May, 2009  
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First some **good news**: Over Spring Break Mike Shortland took his dogs to a trial in Edmonton. There, **Dazzle** finished second in the Alberta European Speed class in the highly complete 22"--26" Division, going up against world team members. Way to go, Dazzle and Mike! This following earning her AtchC at our March trial! Congratulations to Mike and Dazzle.

Joy Miller and Chase earned their AtchC at our November trial; it became official after the rule changes January 1. Great work Joy!

After a winter's lay-off you might think that our March trial would show how rusty we all became. Not so! The trial results show that our dogs did very well. I am listing the dogs and their Qs and titles. As always, this list does not reflect all of the really good runs, often teams that did not qualify still performed admirably.

June and Benson...7 Qs, EXS Bronze  
Mke and Dazzle...7 Qs, MJDC, AtChC  
Mike and Shenia...1 Q  
Marc and Jasper...4 Qs  
Sheldon and Able...5 Qs  
Roger and Biscuit...4Qs, MADC  
Joy and Chase...5 Qs  
Joy and Hannah...2 Qs, EXJ Bronze  
Maria and Teigs...7 Qs, EXS Bronze and VBA

Katherine and Baxter... 1 Q  
Robbie and Nova...3 Qs  
Kim and Peak...6 Qs, ExSt Bronze  
Kim and Bounce...3 Qs  
Kim and Bryn...8 Qs  
Kim and Sierra...3 Qs  
Pat and Spryte...3 Qs  
Donna and Rayn...3 Qs  
Donna and Warjac...2 Qs  
Dirk and Rex...3 Qs  
Dirk and Jack...1 Q  
Al and Bud...2 Qs  
Shauney and Cruise...1 Q  
Naomi and Alfie...1Q  
Naomi and Tegwen...8 Qs  
Michelle and Zap...1Q  
Denise and Keeper...3 Qs  
Denise and Christie...1 cQ  
Laura and Chime...2 Qs  
Brenda and Soleil... 2 Qs  
Ken and Blitz...10 Qs, MADC, MSCDC, EXJ Bronze  
Michelle and Rook...3 Qs  
Michelle and Pepper...4 Qs, MADC  
Angel and Sunny...1 Q  
Glan and Alee...4 Qs  
Glen and Max...2 Qs  
Karen and Rob Roy...1Q  
Karen and Belle...1 Q  
Karen and Roch...3 Qs  
Shannon and Marty...3 Qs  
Shannon and Cai...2 Qs  
Carolyn and Levi...4 Qs  
Roger and Zeus...4 Qs  
Chris and Zoom...2 Qs  
Maureen and Mr. Too...5 Qs, MADC  
Christy and Denver...4 Qs  
David and Ziva... 3 Qs  
David and Cassie...9 Qs



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**Puppies:** It is always good news when we hear about new arrivals. Diana Spelay has a new little Aussie girl named Morgan. Now all puppies are cute but Morgan really takes the prize; she is a true beauty. Yay, Diana! Also, Ken Sharp has doubled his collection of papillions; he has a new twelve week old puppy named Rocket. He has two black spots on his little white back so he looks like someone was playing dice and rolled a deuce.

**Bad News:** I think by now you have all heard that on the 16th of April we lost a very good friend when Tony Haynes passed away. Tony and Rosie were always fun to watch. Tony was quiet and reserved and he always had a kind word for everyone. It was a joy to run dogs with Tony or to chat with him between runs; he will be missed very much.

**Coming Events:** Now that spring is making a faltering appearance we can all gear up for a busy agility season.

Saturday, May 9 is the date for our annual demonstration at the Twenty-four hour relay for cancer. Gys will pick up the equipment trailer Friday night and park it in the field at Masich Place. Opening Ceremonies start at 10:00 and we should start running dogs around 10:30. It might be wise for some of us to go over around 9:00 to set up the ring. There will be a helicopter overhead right at 10:00 so be aware as it might frighten some dogs. We will use rope and posts to make a small ring, lay out some equipment and then take turns running our dogs. We tend to get a fairly big audience when we first start. It is fun for us and our dogs and we provide a bit of entertainment and distraction for the walkers. I hope to see lots of you out there.

Please bring a crate or ex-pen for your dog and perhaps a shade tent if you can manage it.

May 15-17 is the BC/Yukon Regional Championship in Campbell River. From Prince George we have quite a few teams entered:

Ken and Blitz  
Mike and Dazzle and Shenja  
Glen and Alee  
Rob and Timber  
Dirk and Jack and Rex  
Roger and Zeus and Biscuit  
Michelle and Zap  
Carolyn and Levi and Wren  
Donna and Rayn and Warjac  
Maureen and Mister Too  
David and Cassie  
Rob and Sierra  
Kim and Bounce and Bryn and Peak  
Pat and Spryte  
Al and Bud  
Denise and Christie  
Joy and Chase and Hannah  
Diana and Mason  
June and Benson  
Good luck to all competitors.

Saturday, June 6 and Sunday June 7 is our first outdoor trial of the season. Please get your entries in to Peter as soon as possible. Our judges for this trial are Nicki Gurr and Donna Holmgren. Dry camping is available at the site, Al and Anne Henke's farm. For this trial you are on your own for lunch. On Saturday night we will have a do-it-yourself type barbeque. Please bring your own meat (unless you are a vegetarian) and something to share, pot luck style. Al will have a barbeque fired up.



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Between the last run on Saturday and the start of the evening's social time we will have a brief Top Dog General Meeting.

On Saturday, June 20 and Sunday June 21, Pawsitive Steps will have an agility trial. It is also at Henke's. Isn't it nice to have trials that do not require travel? Go to Kim's web site for entry forms.

July 4/5 are the dates for the Clear Sailing Trial in Quesnel. So, we are going to have a busy few weeks! I am really hoping that we get a lot of dogs running in all of these trials. This is a kind of a test. If entries are insufficient for these three trials this year, next year we shall not have a June trial.

July promises to be really busy. Pawsitive Steps camps run from July 15-17 and 20-23. In between camps, July 18 and 19 there will be an agility trial there at Robert's Roost.

In August we have a trial on the 8 and 9th. On the 22nd and 23 I will be down in Nanaimo for a judges clinic. With any luck, by year's end I will be a Masters judge. :). The following weekend there will be an agility trial in 100 Mile house. There is a new agility club in the interior now and they are putting on their first trial this summer. It would be a good thing for many of us to show them some support.

Summer will be winding down on September 12/13 with a Clear Sailing trial in Quesnel.

Our trial calendar ends with our annual November trial at the Agriplex. The dates are November 7 and 8. I will be using this trial

as my Masters test. Joannie-Leigh Elliot will be judging and supervising the runs I judge.

In between all of these trials we will try to have some inexpensive fun matches out at Henke's farm. I will email when we have some dates. I hope we can have one between Regionals and the June trial.

### **Other News:**

2L Ranch Arena- We held three "pre-regionals" sessions at this enclosure. It is a huge place and it is very open and airy. The problem we had was the footing. The loose sand was very dusty and hard to run on. So, in the long run, I think we are still looking for a good indoor place to practice and hold trials. Still, it was good to get some practice in.

First Avenue- We had a big spring cleaning session there a few weeks ago. We carted out things that were not being used and chipped away at tons of dirt, dust and grime. We took down the torn and tattered sign that was reminding people to put away equipment, turn down the heat, turn off the lights, sign the register and lock the doors. All of these requirements are still in effect. Please remember to leave the centre clean, safe and secure. Those of you who have been practicing there will note that we moved an A frame and dog walk in for contact practice. In spite of some skepticism about the idea it worked out very well. Soon these items will go back out to the farm so people can practice there.

When I first joined Top Dog I suggested that we have a sort of a lending library of dog training materials. Back then I was told that it would never work. However, a collection of



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books and magazines has sort of “grown like Topsy.” If you look at the shelf in the lobby there are quite a few good resources there. Please feel to borrow and return any of these. Also, if you have item you can donate, do that too.

Al and Anne’s Paddock- We had hoped to be out on the grass for a May 3 fun trial but the snow overwhelmed us this year. The field is now ready for people and dogs; it is still too soft to bring vehicles out. So, anyone who is wanting to practice there is welcome to come out, but please park out by the house until further notice. To use the paddock for practice you need to:

1. Be a Top Dog member
2. Pay your paddock fees
3. Respect Al and Anne’s property and their privacy
4. Clean up after your dogs
5. Close gates behind you.

Paddock fees:

\$25 for the entire season or

\$10 per month or

\$5 per day.

After we all get back from Campbell River we will get a Porta-potty out there. Until then I suggest you relieve yourself before you head out to train and keep training sessions short.

**Books:** Denise Mclean sends us this very enthusiastic book review:

Oh my God! This book is fabulous!

Temple Grandin (Animals in Translation) has a new book out called Animals Make Us Human – Creating the best life for animals. Its all about what various species of animals need to have a happy, healthy life. All based on the research

that has been done over the years. The chapter on dogs is fabulous!! Makes you do some hard thinking. Especially us with multiple dog households. She even talks about Cesar Milan and some of his theories. Her stuff on fear and aggression is also interesting.

I’ve only had a chance to read the dog, wildlife and zoo chapters and frankly, I’ll be re-reading the dog chapter again and again. (the zoo chapter contains interesting info on how to habituate animals to stuff like medical procedures which can apply to all species). Other chapters include Horses, cows, pigs, poultry. Can’t wait to read them.

If you don’t know of Temple Grandin... she is a university professor who is also autistic. She was the first to develop curved handling facilities for cattle that revolutionized the cattle handling world. She has the incredible ability to see the connections between different research and apply them to both autism and animal behaviour. She has numerous books on Autism. Her previous book on animals - Animals in Translation - has a longhaired Weim on the cover.

Borrow it from the library or get to your bookstore. Its only available in hardcover and its not cheap but well worth it... Oh, and if you haven’t read Animals in Translation yet, get that too.

We (Min of Ag) will be hosting Temple Grandin in 2010 in Prince George. I’ll let you know the dates when I have them confirmed. (YEAH!!!)j



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I also have been reading dog books over the winter. One was *Modern Dogs* by Stanley Coren. Now Stanley Coren is a difficult man to take seriously. He is the Dr. Phil of the dog world. Although he seems to be a dog training light weight he does come up with some interesting topics about which he writes. You can certainly tell from his writing that he loves dogs and dog trainers. I think Coren makes some fundamental mistakes in his perception of dog psychology; principally he is one of many dog writers who goes overboard with the notion that you should treat your dog as if he/she were a wolf. Still, his books are entertaining and easy to read. *Modern Dogs* is really a collection of articles written for *Modern Dog* magazine. Hence, there is a lack of cohesiveness among his chapters. It is an eclectic collection of canine based musings. One chapter would be of special interest to Mike and Veronica as it talks about the history of the Pomeranian.

A really good "one day" book is old "*Dogs Are the Best Dogs*," by Gene Weingarten and Michael S. Williamson. This book is available at the library and it will not take you long to go through it. There are more pictures than pages of text. Mostly it is a tribute to some wonderful aging dogs. The writing is poetic, the photos are beautiful and the whole effect is a wonderful tribute to our veteran dog friends.

[The Ultimate Dog Lover: The Best Experts' Advice for a Happy, Healthy Dog with Stories and Photos of Incredible Canines \(Ultimate Series\)](#) by Marty Becker, Gina Spadafori, Carol Kline, and Mikkal Becker is also a light yet

entertaining book. You will not find any worthwhile training tips, handling advice or grand revelations. It is a series of essays, most of which are about "my first dog" or "the dog I rescued: or "the dog I loved" or "the dog who changed our lives....." The book gives you various perspectives on the important role dogs play in our lives.

In the next newsletter I will tell you about "Be the Dog" by Steve Duno and "What Philosophy Can Tell you About Your Dog" by Steven D. Hales. I can give you this hint: one of these two books is worth reading.

### **Ugly News:**

Folks, one of things I like the most about agility is the way competitors get along with each other. We help and support each other, we get along well, we are a community of dog loving friends. However, I think the long winter fostered some grouchiness and there have been some unfortunate incidences. At the national level there was a spate of red hot emails on the BARK list that got personal and unpleasant. It got wicked enough that the moderator shut the whole system down for a while. The core issue was that an arena that had been approved for trials turned out to be too small and the approval status changed. The way the issue was handled and discussed was the genesis for some very hard feelings. Here at Top Dog we were not immune to the bickering and I really am reluctant to



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shine the light of day on the topic; however, there is enough gossip going around that I think it is vital to have things out in the open. It has been the intention of the board of directors to communicate openly with members. All members are welcome to come to executive meetings, to have access to minutes of meetings (If anything is more boring than a meeting it is the minutes of a meeting) and to express their views about club matters. Any opinion holders seeking a forum can simply email me your views and I will print them in the next newsletter.

Early in April the board received a letter from a member and former club executive complaining about decisions the current board has made. Essentially the board has been accused of failing to be cautious about managing club finances. Of course, such concerns are legitimate. It is vital that the elected officials be responsible with the members funds and it is a valuable service to remind the board of its responsibilities. However, some of the remarks were ill conceived in that they called into question the motivation and practices of some individuals in the club and those accusations were made partly in ignorance and partly in an irresponsible manner.

The letter complained about three practices. One was funding of professional development activities, one was management of agility classes and one was running of trials, particularly the compensation for judges. The writer felt that funding instructors to attend development sessions or judges to go to judge's clinics benefits only the those individuals and not the club as a whole and

that those seeking funding were motivated solely by self interest. The writer also took exception to the running of classes which appear to be costing more money than they brought in. Thirdly, the writer did not approve of the boards decision to pay judges \$1.50 per dog and to continue to give judges a gift as a token of our appreciation.

The first problem, that of funding instructors seems to be addressing the fact that Top Dog approved the expense of \$775 to pay part of the cost of sending our agility instructor to the Susan Garrett workshop in Vancouver. It should be noted that this approval came in November, before the current board was elected. The rationale was that our instructor is an experienced agility handler but has not had sufficient dog training development and that he could return to Prince George prepared to share his newly acquired knowledge with members and with agility class students. The board believes that such professional development is vital and the expense was justified. We do not, for a minute think that our instructor was acting only in his own self interest and it was wrong to imply that might be the case.

The second problem is that of class structure. Now, for several years we have had little or nothing by way of agility classes. We are now in a period of rebuilding. Having classes is vital to the club if we are to have enough income to keep paying the rent for our training center. The board was concerned that some classes were being offered with very few students. It was the opinion of the board that as a general rule, there should be a minimum number of students to insure that the club collected at least as much in fees as it spent on the instruction. However, we also allowed that in this period of rebuilding, some



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class size concessions should be made. In the case of the classes currently running, the situation is that there were eight students enrolled in two classes. This is a financially acceptable number. To accommodate the different skill levels of the students they were divided into a class of two and a class of six instead of two classes of four. The arrangement cost exactly the same. Only the appearance was suspect. The complaint that Top Dog runs classes at a loss is not a valid one. Overall the classes this year have brought in a fair bit of money and also several new members.

The third issue was about running trials. When we have a trial we pay AAC \$1.50 per run. We are obliged to pay judges at least \$1.00 per run; however these days most clubs in BC pay \$1.50. At my suggestion, the board voted to pay \$1.50 as well. I did not vote on this matter. The complaint was made that trials used to bring in more profit than they currently do and that we should be paying no more than the minimum that we must pay. Further, it was suggested that we no longer purchase gifts for judges. It is my opinion that we are able to run agility trials in such a way that the club makes some money, the entry fees are reasonable, judges are treated properly and the weekend is enjoyable for handlers, dogs, volunteers, spectators alike. So, the results of the letter I have just described have been dramatic and somewhat unattractive. There has been, predictably, a flurry of emails about the issues raised. Ken, our agility instructor felt that the remarks made to the board about funding and about class structure were a personal attack. In response he has proposed to return the funding to the club, to finish the current classes and then to resign as instructor.

Although the board unanimously wishes to see Ken keep the funds, put the bad feelings behind him and continue to teach and to build up the club's membership, we also completely understand and sympathize. A person who has done so much for the club does not deserve to be accused of having unsavory motives.

Along the same vein, when I attend the judge's clinic this summer I will not be applying for any funding. At our last executive meeting we revisited the issues of judge compensation and gifts. We did not choose to reverse our policies. We shall be paying our judges \$1.50 and we shall be getting them a small gift.

So, folks, that's it. The good the bad and the ugly.

I am hopeful that we can now move on and once again enjoy good times with our dogs and with each other.

In the next newsletter there will be results from Regionals and the June trials, more book reviews and maybe nothing but good news!