

Durango Agility Dogs Newsletter

"Teetering on the Edge"

1st Half 2006

Bi-Yearly Newsletter



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FROM THE EDITOR

I'm sure you were all wondering if we would ever get this newsletter out to you. Putting together the new DAD web site was quite time consuming, but I think well worth the effort. We now have a centralized place for all members to go to get consistent information in a timely manner: www.durangoagilitydogs.com

Because the website has provided a place for some of the information that used to be reported in the Newsletter, we have decided to remove some of the redundant information and replace it with more interesting articles, training tips etc.

Holli Pfau is responsible for gathering info from other members for the Newsletter and her writing ability has really enriched its contents. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Holli for her willingness to spend the hours and hours of work she has put into writing informative and entertaining articles as well as conduct interviews. We didn't have time to include a member interview in this issue, but plan to include them in future issues.

We hope you are all having a delightful summer full of fun doggy activities.

Marilyn

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings to all!

Yippee! Summer is here! It's always such a great feeling to be outdoors with our dogs on the green grass, enjoying the blue skies and warm temperatures. The agility season has begun!

DAD members have been very busy during the winter and spring planning events, classes, fun runs etc. The biggie though is our new web site. Marilyn did a great job with it and is keeping the site updated for us. Be sure to check it out!

Our Demo Day was a huge success and a big THANK YOU goes out to Holli and Gay for organizing the event. Thank you also goes out to the many club members who managed parking and manned the booths, judged, announced etc. Our first Fun Run was equally a big success. Thanks again to Holli, Gay and John.

We have a great line up of classes for the summer! Pam has done a fabulous job of organizing them and you will find we have something for everyone.

So let's get out there and enjoy playing with our dogs and all their rowdy friends and get lots of clean runs and Q's!

Cindy

News & Events

Demo Day #1

It was an exhibit of “Sunday afternoon paw power,” the headline in the Durango Herald proclaimed. The feature article and photo (of Christine’s Sera) appeared the morning after our April 30 Demo Day at the field. Over 50 people came to learn more about agility. Pam exceeded the event, teams of all levels of ability strutted their stuff, Julie (at “The Trainer Is In” table) consulted with prospective students, and Marilyn answered questions regarding joining DAD at the Membership Table. The registration table was also a popular spot and classes filled quickly. Thanks to Gay and Holli for organizing what may become an annual event.



FEATURE ARTICLE

Newbies at the Start Line

by Holli Pfau

The Play

“First Trial”

Dedicated to all those who have gone before, and those who still dream of the start line.

The Cast

The Wild Bunch (Eric’s summer class of 2005) – Gay & Zeke the Streak, Holli & Crazy Daisy, Kathy & the New-and-Improved Archer, Christine & Miss Mocha

Supporting Cast

Betty & Nikki, Sherrie & Cubby, Diane & the very pregnant Tango. Also mentors Ellen, Jill B

Prologue

After two summers of classes, two winters of intermittent practice and lots of angst, The Wild Bunch decides to enter their first trial. Those in the know say the Moab NADAC fund-raiser is a great place to start, so entries are sent, gear is packed and the gang speeds off to put their dogs and themselves to the test. The play opens as Holli & Gay depart for Moab.

Act I: “Just Getting There”

“How can there be so much stuff for just two people and two dogs for two nights?” Gay asks as we survey the heap of bags, gear, water and food piled in her driveway. “You never know what we might need,” I say cautiously. After stuffing every nook and cranny of my Yukon, we load the dogs into their crates and, taking a deep breath (the first of many), hit the road.

We left early, so we wouldn’t be late for something or anything or because we were wound up like tops. Doing our homework, Gay reads from the NADAC rulebook as we cruise along. “It says here ‘at the novice level, the dog is asked to perform the obstacles at a moderate distance.’ What do you think ‘moderate’ is? And here it says ‘you and your dog are expected to move as a fast-moving, smooth functioning team.’ Do we know how to do that? What if we screw up?” The questions are endless and the answers elusive. “Have we actually done that?” I query. We look at each other and choke in unison: “Aaccckk!”

Arriving by 1:00, we spot the trial site, a large horse arena just off the highway, and pull in, eager to secure our spot, get set up and walk the dogs around a couple of times. (OK, we want to spend the next ten hours there so the dogs can get settled.) There’s not a car in sight, and the desert wind sighs all around us. “Maybe everyone is parked in back,” Gay says brightly. We pull around to see only NADAC chair Sharon’s big RV, disabled and being repaired. A dirt-smudged man emerges from beneath the behemoth. “Yeah, she’s inside,” he drawls.

We approach her door tentatively, not wanting to put a foot wrong before we even get started. After exchanging pleasantries, she tells us we can set up after 4:00 today. “Oh, good!” we gush, as eager as puppies seeking attention. We trundle off to town to check in at the motel and begin to sort gear. It seems to have increased in quantity and volume, just during the drive. We could outfit a small retail store, just from the back of the Yukon.

Four o’clock arrives, and so do we at the arena. A lone car sits outside. All the doors are closed. We panic that we’ve missed a tiny window of set-up time.

Demo Day #2

On the heels of such success, we have been invited by DKC to join them on Sunday, July 23, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., for a day of dog events during Fiesta Days. While DKC features "Meet the Breed" and rally obedience demonstrations in the pavilion, we will present agility demos in the main outdoor arena (using the cooler and covered pavilion for crating). We'll probably present three programs designed like a trial, but with explanatory (and humorous) commentary. **We will need lots of help and participation that day, so please contact Gay at tgrobson@frontier.net or 385-9589 to be part of this fun expo.**

Help needed in the following areas:

EQUIPMENT – Jill B.

Saturday:

- Load equipment at Mary's - 5 people (Time to be announced)
- Transport equipment to Fairgrounds – Jill B

Sunday:

- Unload equipment at fairgrounds 5 people (8:30 a.m.)
- Load equipment – 5 people (after 1:00 p.m.)
- Transport equipment back to Mary's – Jill B
- Unload equipment at Mary's – 5 people

ON DEMO DAY SUNDAY:

- Course Builder – John S
4-5 people needed
- Timers
2-3 people needed
- Scribes
2-3 people needed
- Scorekeeper – Eric B
- Leash Runners
2-3 Helpers
- Judge – James Cammack
- Membership Info Booth – Marilyn
1-2 Helpers needed
- Commentators – Pam L & John S
- Greet spectators and info hand out
- Bring water/snacks for volunteers
- Dog/Handler teams – 20
Handlers will be asked to be available 10:00 a.m. thru 1:00 p.m.

No, we're just very, very, very early, yet again. Hyperventilating, we dash from door to door, finally finding one open. Trial helpers are inside, sorting a mountain of water bags that need filling for tunnel anchors. Can we help? "You bet!" we crow, heaving to like Girl Scouts working for a badge. "Is that all?" we ask, after filling, hauling and stacking forty tons of water. "That's all," we're told. "And it's ok to set up on that side, in the corner, not too close, not too far, in just the right spot." Oh, dear, we cringe – what if we do it wrong? "Aacckk!" we croak.

Act II: "My God, It's Trial Day!"

Since this is a casual fund-raiser, there's nothing in writing about the day's schedule, the run down of classes or anything about when, where or how to be a good participant. We feel like we're winging it, big time. Not wanting to overwhelm our dogs or ourselves, we have registered for just one class the first day. Not wanting to be late, we arrive at 8:00 a.m. We spend the next eight hours pacing, sitting, snacking and dog walking before our class which, of course, turns out to be the last one of the day.

With each course revision we pop from our seats, stare like deer in the headlights and ask "What's happening?!" We spin to face each other and, bug-eyed, chirp "Are we up next?!" No, it's not our turn, and the panic subsides. Twenty minutes later the scene plays out again, and again.

Huddled together like a brood of motherless chicks, the Wild Bunch has converged on one side of the arena, while the obviously more experienced competitors lounge calmly on the other side. Some even read books, as their dogs doze quietly. It's a marked contrast to the perpetual motion in Newbie Camp, where everyone nervously watches to see what they should be doing or not doing.

During the day a few of the braver newbies actually run their dogs. Miraculously, they survive to tell the tale to those of us still breathless on the sidelines. (Remember, we've been hyperventilating for hours.) We sideline folk cheer lustily for every newbie who ventures forth and returns to camp. No matter the outcome, we cheer. We've seen each other's struggles for two years and believe in our souls that just being here is tantamount to a splendid, soaring victory.

Kathy discovers that winter training has paid off, and she is now running Archer the Fast Dog (formerly Archer the Intelligent or the Distracted but only sometimes the Focused). They complete runs in record time for them and the crowd goes wild. (Well, Newbie Camp anyway.)

Christine (not a true newbie, but sitting with the others and just as nervous) has brought her two female Aussies to compete. Today she can run only Mocha, since Sera has gone into heat overnight. During several runs Mocha exhibits her preference for contacts, whether they are part of the run or not, becoming the only dog there with "contact suck." She also draws attention to herself by rambling amongst the obstacles and finally relieving herself in the middle of the course. Christine is mortified, and carries Mocha outside.

Four o'clock arrives and so does our one and only run of the day, a novice Jumpers course. Ellen has kindly offered to walk it with us and coach us along. Hearts pounding, we step out, getting the lay of the land. And guess what? It's not so hard. Eric has had us doing far more difficult courses in class, so we're relieved and actually believe we can do it.

Gay and Zeke take their place at the start line. With a nod from the timer they dash off to the first jump. They finish the course with only a few miscues. "How'd we do?" Gay asks, claiming amnesia for the entire course.

Hooray for Fun Runs!

Sixteen club members enjoyed two runs on a terrific USDAA gamblers' course set by John on June 11.

Winners were declared in each height class, thanks to Jill B.'s timing and Marry Harris' scorekeeping. First place teams in run 1 were Nellie and Gail, Nikki and Betty, Daisy and Holli, and Archer and Kathy. Winners in run 2 were Yoda and John, Nikki and Betty, Monica and Jill and Kathy and Archer.

Afterwards John commented on how impressed he was with everyone's performance, and encouraged us to hone our skills even further. Each run was \$3, with the club netting \$87. Special thanks to Gay and Holli for organizing and John for mentoring.

Next fun run dates are posted in this Newsletter, on the DAD website and e-mail updates will be sent out noting additions and changes. The next Fun Runs will be held on Fridays in the early evening from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. when it's cooler. Bring your dog, your supper and join us for the fun.

Special note to Newbies: Fun Runs are the perfect next step to take once you've completed some classes but aren't sure you're ready for a real trial. There's no pressure, everyone cheers for you and your dog and it's great practice. So ask your instructor if you're ready, and then put these dates on your calendar. Be sure to bring a crate, sunshade for you and your dog, water and your running shoes. You'll have a blast.



We're next up. I've been praying to my doggie angels (dearly departed Golden Retrievers from my life who are always there when I need them), and they've promised us a clean run. I remember what Daisy once told me: Expect the best. I do and we're off, Daisy actually following my directions, coming back to me when she strays (that's very big for Daisy) and sure enough, it was a clean run – hooray!

Suddenly, in less than a minute, we're no longer newbies but new initiates. We've joined the club, didn't embarrass ourselves and can't wait to do it again. Fortunately there's tomorrow, and we've even added a class. Cool.

Act III: "Day Two – We Can Do This"

We saunter in at 8:30, knowing we don't run until later. We downplay our eagerness, now newly confident and settled in Camp. We even visit with some of the elite runners, who actually speak to us – wow! It's a new day and we're on top of our game.

Today we'll do three runs. After walking the course and feeling confident where to put every front and rear cross, Gay and Zeke tackle the Touch N Go course. Afterwards Gay laments "He didn't touch, he just went." (He also almost "went" on one of those water bags, but was distracted in the nick of time.) Tunnelers is more successful and, despite a wrong way tunnel, they finish with most of Gay's memory and Zeke's attention intact.

Daisy begins her first Touch N Go run like a rocket – through the first tunnel, the second tunnel, into the third tunnel. As I turn toward the teeter, I have a moment of hubris: I'm as fast as my dog, even faster because here I am next to the teeter and she's not quite here yet. Wait – I'm past the teeter and it hasn't moved. I spin around and see – nothing. There's no dog. "Daisy!" I sing out. Nothing. I dash back toward my last sighting of her. "Daisy?" Nothing. "Yoo hoo!" I warble, and a Golden head pops up from a pen outside the course. Her expression says "Oh, right, we were doing something," and she careens back onto the course. Undaunted (although already eliminated) I pick up where we left off, and she goes like a champ, never hesitating at new equipment, and occasionally adding a spin or twist for flourish. I'm thrilled, and the Wild Bunch cheers.

A fierce, hot wind howls outside the arena for most of the day, and some of us find pink sand dunes in our vehicles that we have left open. But somehow the grit there is a reminder of our own grit in getting started on this new course in our lives. It really is all about having fun with your dog, sharing the good times with like-minded friends, and taking a chance. We did, and we wouldn't trade it for anything (except maybe a Q).

Curtain Calls

Many thanks to Eric, our patient and encouraging instructor, our mentors in DAD, our wonderful dogs, and all the rollicking, cheering support from the Wild Bunch. We had a blast.

Epilogue

Kathy & Archer: Q in novice Jumpers and 2nd place; Q in Tunnelers and 1st place
Christine & Mocha: Q in Regular
Gay & Zeke: 2nd in novice Jumpers, 1st in Tunnelers
Holli & Daisy: 2nd in novice Jumpers, 4th in Tunnelers



The Marketplace

In each issue we will feature information about equipment and gear. If you have something for sale, trade or free, let us know and we'll get the word out. If you have advice or suggestions about a particular item or manufacturer, we'll share it.

Cabana Crates - We have learned from Doggone Good, the manufacturer of Cabana Crates, that they will no longer be making the crates. Many of us use these and like them, so if you want to buy, now is the time. (They're also on sale.) Doggone Good assures us that they will continue to carry replacement parts and repair items for years to come. Go to Doggonegood.com for details.

For Sale: THE ULTIMATE CHAIR!! You saw them at the Stacy seminar - Aluminum frame fold up chairs with a fold out side table and side pockets for your cell phone, keys, leash, etc and insulated water bottle. Shoulder strap included. Avail: 2 red & 2 green. DAD mbr price \$54.95. All others \$64.95. Cindy Shelton (970) 259-0033

MEDIUM SHERPA BAG - Barely used, in excellent condition (green). \$50. If interested, e-mail Kathy N at: k5cents@phone.net

12 PORTABLE WEAVE POLES - 12 used weave poles. Have spikes on end for sticking in ground. Nylon measuring tape with grommets evenly placed to stick spike through for even placement of poles. \$20. If interested, e-mail Marilyn at: chamar@sprynet.com

For Sale: Two large (size 400) Furrari plastic crates. \$35 ea. Exc. condition. Marilyn Reed (970) 259-1858

For Sale: Crate cart for hauling equipment at trials etc. \$50.00. Very sturdy. Exc. condition. Marilyn Reed (970) 259-1858

TRAINING TIPS

Keep it Rewarding!

From Eric B (Guru to The Wild Bunch)

When we first start teaching a dog agility, they get rewarded after almost every obstacle. But then we start doing longer sequences and the treats start to get fewer and farther between. And then the training focuses more on the handler and the dog ends up mostly hanging out while we talk, with occasional long sequences with a frustrated or flustered handler who ends up not rewarding the dog because they didn't do the right thing, even though they did exactly what they were told to do. And then we wonder why the dog is losing interest.

The simple solution is to reward your dog more. By now you probably know what makes your dog happy, so give it to them. If it's just verbal praise, make sure that you can shake off your frustration with your own painfully slow progress and really praise them. If it's food, have an easy to get to pouch so you can whip out a treat and pop it in their mouth almost before they hit the ground after a jump (when was the last time you rewarded your dog for doing a simple jump?). Make sure they know they're being rewarded for their obstacle performance, not for waiting patiently while you dig a treat out of a bag crammed in your pocket. The same thing if it's a toy; they know they did something right because the toy is in their mouth right after they did it. And a clicker or some sort of marker will only make it clearer what's being rewarded.

And don't just reward them at the end of a long run, or just at contacts or weaves. Mix it up, make it more random. If they drive hard to the tunnel, stop and reward them - you can worry about the sequence later. If they're flying over the jumps, or working out from you, or doing any kind of performance like you want them to do at a trial: Reward them! It will end up being a lot more fun for both of you.



B.O.B.!! (Beware of Bugs)

By Jill Brazell

In addition to being a nuisance, ticks and mosquitoes can transmit diseases. Ticks can cause tick paralysis and Lyme disease. Mosquitoes can transmit heartworm disease, which is becoming more prevalent in Durango. (At Baker's Bridge Veterinary Clinic, three cases have already been confirmed this summer.) Fleas are the leading cause of skin problems in dogs, and they also carry tapeworms.

So be proactive in caring for your dog. Check his skin for any of these culprits when you return from an outdoor activity (including training). You can prevent problems with products such as Frontline and Heartgard. Holistic options also exist. Consult your veterinarian or practitioner for recommendations.

***** Upcoming Fun Runs *****

July 7th (Friday) from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. This fun run will offer an AKC course (course builders are needed). Bring your own supper or something to share.

August 11th (Friday) from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Eric will be setting up a NADAC course for this fun run. Feel free to bring your own supper.

The Marketplace (Continued)

For Sale: Covered large square wire puppy pen. Can be used for whelping a litter. Has raised wire flooring and metal pans for underneath. Excellent quality and condition. \$100. Must see. Marilyn Reed (970) 259-1858

For Free: Sturdy large fabric folding crate. Needs PVC joint replaced. Call for more info. Marilyn Reed (970) 259-1858.

METAL CRATE, drop-pin (i.e., NOT folding suit-case style), very heavy (used it for more-or-less permanent transport crate); two doors (one on the end, one on the side); plastic pan. Not sure of exact size at the moment, but would be happy to measure for anyone interested I believe it is about 42" or 44" long (80 pound dog was quite comfy in it). \$40 or best offer. Contact Diane at moab3mutts@hotmail.com or at (435) 259-8678

Call for Contributors

Do you have something to say? Have you and your dog had a particularly memorable experience that we would all enjoy hearing about? Drop us a line and we'll publish it. There's a wealth of knowledge in our club and we want to share it.

Marilyn Reed
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Holli Pfau
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HEALTH TIPS

Warming up for the human half of the team.

By Ellen Tomsic, PT, OCS, FAAOMPT
Rakita and Tomsic Physical Therapy

We are all very concerned about warm-up and stretching for our dogs, but what about you?? A common injury I see in my practice is low back pain. Did you know that the low back is supposed to have an arch in it? When we stand and run that arch normally increases, and when we sit that arch reverses and becomes round. Try putting your hand across your low back when you are standing, and then sit down and notice that the curve flattens or reverses. The lower the chair or the more the chair has a sling the more the curve reverses. So think about sitting around for a few hours waiting for your turn, and then jumping up to do your run. Sometimes our spines do not revert back to that arch very quickly, especially the longer we have been sitting. So what is a dog handler to do? A very simple standing back bend is the answer.

Stand with both of your hands at the top of your buttock, tighten and pull in your lower stomach muscles, and bend backwards 3-5 times. You should do this every time you get up from any prolonged sitting, especially after the drive to get to the trial!!

