



KiwiDogAgility

Pawblacks in Texas

In January of this year I became aware that the Intercontinental Championship of the Americas would be held in Texas late April 2013. I had been keen to do some travel, so this seemed a good opportunity to combine travel with people I knew, with a bit of agility thrown in. The event that was in Texas last year that Keri Nielson, Deb Jackson, Bronwen and Kevin Burnette attended was the IFCS World championships which is held every 2 years in different locations. The Intercontinental championships were held this year for the first time and there was a European one in Spain, and an Asian one in Japan later this year. Because it was a slightly different event from last year, more Americans could qualify for the event and therefore less dogs were available for the Australian and NZ teams who could not take their own dogs. Our team coach was Emily Hurt, and Em was amazing with her tenacity to ensure that we had dogs to handle.

The countries that were represented were US, Canada, Mexico, Hungary, Australia and NZ. The majority of the competitors were from the US, and we were treated to some amazing handling from some of the best in the country. This event was also a qualifying event for the next IFCS World Championship to be held in the Netherlands in 2014.

The kiwis who went this time were Allan and Elaine Rohde, Clare Wellington, Bronwen Burnette and myself. We had a gruelling schedule for the first 2 weeks as we arrived on Friday evening and went to bed around 2.30am, and then got up at 6.30 to go to our first training session and to meet our dogs. We then trained each day until Wednesday, had a warm up show on Thursday, the real event from Friday to Sunday, and then a seminar with Stuart Mah from Mon-Wed, and a seminar with Anna Eiffert from Hungary on Thursday/Friday. After that I didn't want to see an agility obstacle for a very long time! I had an extra 2 weeks in Las Vegas and Los Angeles, so that has seemed like long enough now. Keri W put the screws on me, so I am typing this in LA airport while I am waiting for my flight home.

The championship event was shown on live streaming, and it was awesome to see so many Kiwis watching us in the middle of the night. We had a hotspot (an electronic one!), so could access facebook while the show was on, and let people know what was happening.

The dogs we had to handle were

Fiona - Rikki, a 2 year old BC owned by coach Emily. Rikki was very fast, with some awesome skills but it took a while for her to adjust to kiwi style handling. We had one clear round in the team relay, and on a really tricky jumpers course we were clear right to the end, and then popped out of the end of the weaves. On one other course we muffed the start, but then did the rest of the course really well.

Clare - Josie, a 7 year old B owner by coach Emily. Keri Neilson ran Josie last year. Clare had 2 clears with Josie, but had issues with her contacts, and also the huge number of jumps that we had to do from the other side - they call them backsides.



Photo by Agility Gallery

Bronwen - Maya a 4 year old rescued Pomeraniam. Maya did not have a lot of experience, but was very fast and enthusiastic. Bron did some lovely rounds, and had one clear for a 4th place.

Elaine - Dare, a 4 year old BC. Dare was very fast and didn't really have directional commands. Elaine did some awesome stuff in practice with her, but they didn't quite get in sync for the competition rounds. Elaine trusted her like her own dogs though, and did some lovely remote handling particularly in the weaves.

Allan - Pogo, a 2 year old BC who is Rikki's littermate. Pogo was not that comfortable working for a man, but Allan worked through that really well and had some great "nearly" runs in the competition. I thought Pogo might be the dark horse that surprised us all, but Allan needed just a bit more time with her. Allan also handled Ein who was a 4 year old Corgi. Ein was such a cool wee dog, and owned by a lovely man called Scott. Scott came to many of our practices, and dinners and did a lot of videoing which is all available on youtube (search for Pawblacks and you will find them). Scott thought it was hilarious everytime Ein got carried away barking at Allan and said it was nice seeing him doing that to someone else.

The course walking was quite different with course maps being available at the start of the day, and then we could look at the course when it was being set up from our high seats, and work out how to handle it. So when we got our allocated time for walking, it was really just to check that it looked the same on the ground, and that we could handle it the way we thought we could. The owners were also available for course walking to ask for tips, and confirmation.

When it was near our turn to compete there were 4 seats in the line up queue which suited me just fine. We started off in seat no 4, and then moved to no 3, 2 and 1 as dogs before us competed. It meant that everyone knew where we were, and it was easy to play with the dogs while sitting down. The warmup jumps were also quite controlled. There was one jump on the outside of the arena which you could do at any time, but the 4 individual jumps in the arena could only be done by dogs that were within about 10 dogs to go. The 4 jumps were separated by screens, so you could only do 1 jump at a time. At the seminar Stuart Mah talked about 1 jump figure eight drills for around 40 minutes, and has a huge number of different drills that can be done on 1 jump - very useful when you are only allowed to do one jump.

Some of the courses were amazingly difficult, and I would have struggled to handle Sharky around those. If I did the right thing at the right time, Rikki was very responsive and quite forgiving in some ways. So I got to experience different handling moves at speed that I hadn't done before. Also with only handling 1 dog, and there was only 1 ring going, we got to see some of the best. Stuart Mah and Anna Eiffert were very impressive with their smooth handling, and both did very well over the weekend. We were quite excited to think that we would be attending their seminars in the week after. There were not many handlers using the Greg Derrett system, and very few dogs that had a good leadout. On our first day Emily asked us why we wanted long leadouts because surely the sport of agility was to run with our dogs, so why didn't we do that from the start? I will be changing a lot of things that I do in the future but those leadouts are there to stay!

The training that we did prior to the event was very interesting because we went to 4 different venues. The first one was at a trial

where you paid money to have a turn on the course, and could pay as many times as you wanted. That was in the morning, and we had that venue hired for the afternoon, so only a couple of us did the course in the morning, and the rest of the time was spent in getting to know the dogs. We had not had much sleep since we left NZ, and didn't have any snack food or water, so at lunchtime we asked if there was a supermarket nearby. This was our first experience of speaking a different language. After driving for half an hour, we ended up at a Chipotle which is sort of like a mexican choose what you want to eat place, and the food was organic. The meals were huge. But, not quite like a supermarket where we could get bread, bananas, water etc. Emily was quite confused as she thought we wanted lunch, and it was rather funny trying to explain what we had really meant. The second training day was from lunchtime until after dark and was at a place where there were 4 rings of equipment set up, and people could just pay and use what they wanted. The members had full access at any time. The third day was at another venue which seemed a bit more like a club - and was called DAWG and there were 2 rings that could be set up. In both of those venues all the gear was left out 24/7 and was not locked away. They had no issues around it being stolen even though DAWG seemed to be in quite a built up area. On the fourth day we trained at Dog City which is where Emily teaches. That was indoors, and had a lovely spongy surface which was made of lots of interconnecting foam tiles. The seminars were also held at Dog City.

The seminars were a real eye-opener. We knew beforehand that Stuart did not subscribe to any of the popular handling methods currently in vogue like Greg Derrett, Linda Meiklenberg, Jenny Dam etc, but I was not quite sure what he would be covering. Basically he really concentrates on using all skills possible to give



early information to the dog about what is happening next, and this information is verbal, positional and cued. I was lucky enough to be able to handle a dog on the seminars - Artie was a big boy similar to Cannon in size, was not quite 2 with not much experience at all. Artie is owned by Emily's husband Jeff. The first sequence I ran with him, he kept hooning off to the tunnels. After Stuart had talked us through a few things, with my new found sssshhhh command, it was harder to get Artie to go on and his turns were very tight. I found it very helpful to be running a dog without much training, and by the 3rd day we were doing some very tricky stuff, and coping quite well. The handler spots were full for day 2, so I did the novice day on day 1, and then straight to the hard challenge day. Stuart gave a huge amount of time, and didn't believe in finishing at 5pm - in fact one night he impacted so much on our shopping plans that Clare and I didn't get to the mall until 7.30! On the first night we went out to dinner with him, and he kept helping us with tips and information about what he did with his puppy training. I had to whip out my notebook and jot some extra notes down! I found his approach quite different, but really really brilliant. I am intending to have some coaching sessions with him in the future by way of facetime on my ipad, but want to try out some of the new found skills on my dogs first. Sharky, Cuda and Mako have no idea what is shortly in store for them! Stuart also believes in training much harder sequences that we would find in the ring, and doing 36 obstacles at a time is not uncommon. He did this great exercise called "triple threat" which really made us think on the spot. He concentrates quite a bit on the mental game, and did some cool exercises. An example of one of those was setting out a course with 1-8 being set, but 9-16 being either white or red numbers. While we were handling dogs on the course, when we reached number 7, he would yell out white or red, and we would have to do the appropriate course for 9-16. I found that a bit difficult cos Artie was barking, and I didn't hear what he said (that is my excuse anyway!).

After 3 days of Stuart, it was hard to think that we would then learn more from Anna, but what she did was quite complementary. Her style of seminar was to set out a course, and get us to run it and then critique what we did. She would also provide commentary on the best way to handle a sequence and that was not necessarily the same for all the dogs. She had a good eye for what would suit each dog. What we found really great is that she would coach us through the different turns that we had seen, so now we have a really good understanding of how to execute those, and when it is appropriate to use them in the ring. Elaine and Clare also handled dogs on the 2 seminars, and it was great to be able to see each of us work through these turns. On day 2, I really had had enough and felt like playing hooky and going shopping. But, after the first sequence I had learnt so much I got all keen again.

On the Saturday which was 2 weeks after we arrived, we had our first free day. Clare, the Rohdes and I went into Dallas and visited the Aquarium and the Museum of Science and Technology which were both great. On the Sunday we went to Las Vegas and joined up with Kirstin Graves and did a helicopter trip to the Grand Canyon and went to some shows. Clare, Bron and the Rohdes went home on the Wednesday, and Kirstin went home on Friday. I went to LA on the Friday and spent a week visting theme parks and managing to drive in one of the scariest cities to drive in and survived the experience. I think the maximum lanes that I travelled on was 16 across - 7 lanes going my way, with 2 extras for people with more than 2 people in the car, and 6 lanes going the other way. Very interesting!

I have been involved in agility for 20 years now, and spend a lot of time learning new things in whatever way I can including on-line courses. But, the experience of actually being there and seeing what different people did was invaluable. I can't wait for my next trip!

Fiona Ferrar

NZKC Agility Committee 2013

Chairperson: Peter de Wit

Deputy Chairperson: Lisa Duff

Secretary: Sue Willis

Treasurer: Joanne Rennell

Committee: Karen de Wit, Steve Chester, Nick Chester, Jocelyn Jensen

Sub Committee members and Portfolio Holders

Clubs - Steve Chester, Jocelyn Jensen, Karen de Wit

Ribbon Trial Judges Subsidies for clubs - Joanne Rennell

Club how to run a competition booklet - Steve Chester

Judges - Karen de Wit and Nick Chester

Measuring - Jocelyn Jensen

Equipment & COF - Steve Chester

Communications (Administrative) - Lisa Duff

Communications (Publicity) - Steve Chester

NZ Dog World - Karen de Wit

International & National Events - Nick Chester

Calendar - Lisa Duff

Regulations - Karen de Wit

Website - Peter de Wit

Disputes - Peter de Wit

Permanent Numbers registration and online entries - Cam List

Dogs on Report Officer - Joanne Small (Karen de Wit, Lisa Duff)

International Sub Committee Chair - Ali Barnett (Nick Chester)

AC Focus on Clubs

At the AC meeting held on the weekend we decided that the main focus of this AC will be on how we as a committee can support clubs. As a very first step we decided that each member of the AC would be allocated a number of clubs to focus on.

The role requires the AC members to ensure that the clubs are aware of, and involved with, the club-related initiatives the AC undertakes over the next two years.

We hope that this arrangement will create direct face-to-face communication between the AC and the clubs.

Heights Review

This has been completed and there is information for Judges, Competitors, Event Secretaries and Clubs on the website, changes effective July 1st.

Agility Committee website at www.dogagility.org.nz
Contacts us at acsecretary@vodafone.co.nz