



KiwiDogAgilty

Australian Agility Nationals

We began planning for the big adventure of taking our dogs to compete in the Australian Agility Nationals about a year before we left. Despite our planning, anything that could go wrong went wrong! Euro didn't get on the plane, four of the dogs ended up in quarantine on their return to New Zealand, the girls had no van for the dogs when they arrived, Lyn & Christine had a small accident in their camper and there were numerous incidents of being locked in or out of things! However, in-between these issues of arriving and departing we had the trip of a lifetime.

Lyn Sayers (Jayme) and Christine Gabb (Josie) were first to arrive into Sydney and headed to Erskine Park for a split height trial which was a "dress rehearsal" for the Nationals and the organisers were putting the final touches to the ringside computer results system. Christine and Josie set the bar pretty high by winning their first outing on Aussie soil taking out the 300 height Excellent Jumping by a large margin. Later in the day Lyn and Jayme won the 300 Master Agility and came second in the Master Jumping. On the Sunday they moved to Wollongong where Jayme had another win in the 300 Master Jumping

A week later Natasha Coulter (Jonty) and Louise Marsh (Fly and Vino) joined the 'camper brigade' at Goulburn, a two hour drive from Sydney towards Canberra, for their first local competition. Doing these local shows was a great way to get the dogs used to some of the different equipment; the see saw is tiny (aka the 'wee saw'), the dog walk was higher and had no slats, the A frame was smaller, and the start and finishes were slightly different. Clubs could decide if they were going to split by height. So the first two

local shows were split, but the third was not. The collies (500) and schnauzers (300) jumped lower than at home, and Jonty jumped slightly higher.

Another thing we had to learn was games, and just to make it harder we had to compete in the top classes! Gamblers and Snooker were reasonably straightforward: maximum points at full speed. Strategic pairs however, was a whole different story! This involves two dogs and handlers on a course at the same time. The course is not flowing, and you must change dog on the 'active course' at least twice, but at any place that you choose. If a dog makes a mistake then the other dog must fix it. The only way to describe this is confusing! This was not helped by Natasha and Louise running both of Louise's dogs on the same course!

Australia also has Open Agility and Jumpers classes; open to all heights and levels. These courses have a distance handling challenge in the course where 4-5 obstacles would need to be negotiated without the handler stepping over a marked area. The courses at the local shows were not too difficult, but posed some big challenges for us at the nationals. We didn't realise that these courses played such a big role in Australian agility; making up nearly half the courses at the nationals. A little more practice before leaving might have been helpful!

The other difference we noted was that few people were pushing their dogs or working quite as hard (or loud) as the kiwis. It wasn't till the first prize giving that we figured out why. To move up through the levels in agility and to earn titles you only need clear rounds, so the emphasis is on getting around a course 'in time', rather than winning. However, at the nationals there were plenty more trying to win.

Although we were not an official New Zealand team, we wore the 'Paw Blacks' clothing. This was a great way to meet the local agiliteers as they could easily identify us. People approached us and introduced themselves; we got numerous offers of help and advice,



At the war memorial overlooking Canberra



Josie and Jonte - Pairs

and made some really good friends. Of course the other side of it was that we looked great in our D-fa jackets, as well as the woofers in their Icebarker coats and their leads and toys made by Sue Connor!

We were starting to get the hang of things and managed to come away with a few placing for the weekend. Vino won Master Jumping and Master Gamblers and Jayme was 5th in the unsplit Master Jumping.

From Goulburn we moved onto Canberra for the week and our next competition the following weekend. We had a great time exploring Canberra with the dogs, meeting some kangaroos, visiting parliament, trying out Segways, and paying our respects at the war memorials. The show in Canberra was held at fabulous grounds where each ring had its own permanent fencing, and plenty of other fenced paddocks for off lead exercise. We were getting the hang of the gear, rules, and games by this weekend. Paul Taylor turned up to watch and ended up with the team manager's role for the day. We improved this weekend with Jonty wining Masters Snooker doing

“suicide sevens”. He was also 2nd in Master Agility, 3rd in Master Jumping and 3rd in Open Jumping. Fly won Open Jumping pushing Vino into 2nd place. Vino was 2nd in Master Gamblers, and Vino and Fly 3rd in pairs! Jayme was 2nd in Master Agility and 4th in Master Gamblers. Time to bring on the nationals!

The last of the team to arrive was Natasha Neame and Tricot; both on their first trip out of the country. They were joined by Fiona Hodgson, who was judging (sometimes from the ground!), Lucinda Robertson, who had come over for the week to help us, and Paul Russell of Four Paws Running, who made sure the dogs were in tip top shape.

The nationals were held at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre in Penrith; 3 rings outside and 2 rings inside. This was

Results	
Louise & Vino	1 st & 5 th Master Agility 500 heat 1 st & 8 th Master Jumpers 500 heat 2 x 2 nd & 5 th Open Jumping heat 7 th Open Agility heat 4 th Master Gamblers 500 4 th Master Strategic Pairs 500 with Tricot
Natasha & Jonty	1 st , 2 nd & 3 rd Master Agility heat 300 11 th & 19 th Open Jumping heat 13 th Open Agility heat 1 st Snooker 300 3 rd Master Strategic Pairs 300 with Josie
Natasha & Tricot	1 st , 4 th , & 5 th Master Agility 500 heats 2 nd Master Jumping 500 heat 2 nd Open Agility heat 4 th Master Strategic Pairs 500 with Vino 5 th Master Gamblers 500
Lyn & Jayme	2x 1 st Master Agility 300 heats
Christine & Josie	3 rd Master Strategic Pairs 300 with Jonty



Team

Left to right: Louise & Vino, Natasha and Jonty, Christine & Josie, Lyn & Jamie, Natasha and Tricot

Peter Dynan

an amazing venue set in a regional park. The classes were split by height with three heats for each of the main classes (Agility, Jumpers, Open Agility and Open Jumpers) with finals on day 5. Gamblers, Snooker and Pairs were one off classes. Competition started at 8am each day, with the open classes (270 dogs) starting at 5pm and often not finishing till 10pm. One of the highlights was Paul and Mia Beswick turning up on Saturday to surprise us! They spent the whole day at the show and sat in the cold to watch the last of our dog's run at 7pm at night. It was a very exciting end to our heats with Vino pipping Tricot by 0.13 sec for first and second place in jumpers. We did pretty well in the heats (results are listed in the attached table). Vino made all 4 of his finals, Tricot made 3, Jonty made agility and open jumping (very difficult for small dogs to do well in the open class so Jonty did extremely well to make the final). Jayme made the agility final by winning two heats, the first with Lyn and another later with Christine whilst Lyn was judging elsewhere. We also improved in the games department with Jonty taking out Snooker, Vino and Tricot 4th and 5th in Gamblers, Jonty & Josie 3rd in pairs, and Vino & Tricot 4th.

Day 5: Finals day. We were all feeling pretty tired after 5 hours sleep a night for 4 days, but we were ready to put in one last days effort . It started well with the first of our dogs to run being Jayme, who won the 300 Master Agility class in awesome style! Tricot got 4th in the 500 Master Jumping final, and Vino was 5th in the 500 Master Agility class. We did well in the others but small errors cost us placing's.

We had just enough dogs to enter a 'Paw Blacks' team for the teams event to compete against all the Australian States. This involved each dog doing an agility and a jumpers run at masters level, with combined scores of four dogs counting. We had two clear rounds in agility and three faulted runs, leaving us sitting in 3rd place going into the jumping round. Jumping went a bit better with four clear rounds; although Louise face planting with one jump to go did waste some time! However we still ended up in 3rd place at the end. It certainly was a nice gesture of the Australian organisers to offer us a place in their Inter-State Teams competition.

We would highly recommend more Kiwi's making the trip across the ditch with their dogs for future Australian Nationals (Brisbane in 2014 and Adelaide 2016). We had an amazing experience travelling around with our dogs, meeting all the locals, competing, and watching some of the awesome Australian teams. Thanks to everyone who helped make this trip possible, it was certainly a huge, but worthwhile undertaking.

By Louise Marsh

Latest issue of the Agility Committee Chair Report – Cams List, has hit the website...

Check it out!

<http://www.dogagility.org.nz/camslist.html>

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