



The USDAA®

OVERview™

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Excelling at Any Jump Height *By Brenna Fender*



Photo by David Hutchison

Maryland resident Jeannette Hutchison recently completed her fourth Platinum Lifetime Achievement Award, each one with a canine partner in a different jump height. The Platinum LAA requires 50 qualifying scores in each Masters titling class and 500 qualifying scores overall. I talked to Hutchison about what it takes to succeed time and time again, and here are some of her answers:

BF: After having success with so many very different dogs, you must have developed some kind of consistent training program. What is your training philosophy?

JH: My philosophy is to teach the dogs a great foundation. Over the years I have broken agility training down into categories: obedience, hand jive around cones (a form of flatwork), independent obstacle performance, obstacle focus versus handler focus, extension

and collection of stride, handling of crosses and agility maneuvers, and confidence for distance work. I want my dogs to clearly understand their job and to have the ability to do it consistently. This allows me to do my job, which is handling the course, and to give my dogs information on where they are going as soon as possible. I review foundation work with my young dogs as well as my experienced dogs.

BF: Do you think that you've achieved these titles because you have exceptional dogs (either by luck or because you've chosen them for specific attributes) or is there an underlying training plan (or secret) that you have found will work for most dogs?

JH: I have been blessed with great dogs. Personality, structure, and drive are

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OVERview contains abridged articles selected from the many presented by competitors, trainers and freelance writers from the *Subscriber News* and other pages at **www.usdaa.com**, in order to provide insight to the USDAA dog agility community.

Off the Leash

We in the world of dog sports are driven by the love of our dogs and our passion for the game. It is the same driving force that compels competitors the world over to take up dog agility or other canine sport and travel half-way around the world to the *Cynosport*[®] *World Games* each year. While *Cynosport* is the top accomplishment each year in dog agility, there is another important message to be heard, and that is one of being a responsible pet owner by improving the lives of our canine companions.

Cynosport promotes responsible pet ownership by introducing the public to a wide array of canine sports, as well as the opportunity to engage in “dogs-on” introductory sessions and presentations to learn more about canine behavior and a variety of ways to spend quality time with one’s pet. It promotes canine fitness and a little bit of human fitness too. As an article in this issue suggests, fitness has been a keen topic on the news pages of USDAA.com this past year. Be sure and check those out.

And for the first time, we will be sending a live stream from the *Cynosport World Games* over the Internet for the world to enjoy. It has been a painstaking task to gather the necessary resources at this site for such an endeavor, but we are glad to finally be able to share *Cynosport’s* great competition and our message to those not fortunate enough to be able to attend. Check in at **www.cynosport.com** in the days leading up to the event as we establish the transmission schedule. All you will need is a Flash Player on your computer and a DSL or other high speed connection to enjoy the show. If you miss the live streams, video clips will be archived and available on demand. It’s the next best thing to being there.

Ken Tatsch, *President, USDAA*

Mudfest! By Sue Fregien

The September 13–14 Cream City Canines USDAA trial was one to remember! After several weeks of beautiful weather, we in the southeastern Wisconsin area were up against the weather odds, and sure enough, we got hit. The rain started about midnight Friday and literally did not stop until 30 minutes after the judging ended on Sunday. Fortunately there was no heavy rain, strong wind, or lightning. It was just a constant rain. Did I mention it never stopped? Ever?

The fairgrounds where we held the trial had some open dirt areas as it was the midway area for the county fair. Normally this wouldn’t be much of a problem, but of course with gallon after gallon of water falling from the sky, we got a lot of standing water and mud. Bucket after bucket of wood chip mulch was dumped on the courses and in between the rings. Even that didn’t help all that much, as the mulch just started to float on all the water!

Sunday started off better than expected—the standing water soaked in a little bit overnight. The last couple classes were rather sparsely attended as folks had gotten their fill of running in rain and mud. But the dogs still had a great time and the qualifying rate, even at the end of the day Sunday, was incredible!

At the end of the whole thing, we found out the fairgrounds got about 3.5" of rain in a little over 48 hours. The Chicago area, not too far to the south, had areas that got 8–10 inches of rain, so we were quite lucky in that respect!

The true key to the great weekend was the volunteerism. There were so many people who pitched in to help, whether it was grabbing a rake or pitchfork and spreading mulch, or setting courses and trying not to lose equipment in the mud, or wading through the standing water to knock everything down and pack it up. Cream City Canines is a small club and we couldn’t hold trials without the help of those who volunteer like this, and this trial was exceptional. The best agility people in the world are in the upper Midwest!

Almost two weeks later the equipment and trailer are still not completely clean, but we’ll get there. Maybe we’ll leave a little of the encrusted mud as a remembrance of a truly unforgettable weekend. Or, maybe not.



The Legacy of Ruth Van Keuren

by Leona Hellesvig

Photo by Dick Van Keuren

Few agility competitors will impact the sport as much as Ruth Van Keuren has. Those who have been around in agility for many years will remember Ruth as an energetic woman showing Schnauzers and as a big supporter of junior handler agility.

In fact Ruth, along with Lisa McCann from Detroit, Joyce Zmek from Shreveport, and USDAA President Kenneth Tatsch, developed USDAA's junior handler program. The program flowed out of the experience of several people, but much of what is now in place came from Ruth's experiences with 4-H youth in Pierce County, Wisconsin. The USDAA Junior Handler Program was born in 1993 and the Minnesota Agility Club held the first USDAA Junior Handler classes at their trial in Lake Elmo, Minnesota that same year.

Junior Handler events and 4-H groups grew in popularity and the

USDAA Junior Handler Program became standard for the western part of Wisconsin. Ruth held training seminars at her home in River Falls for Wisconsin 4-H leaders and invited the interested Minnesota 4-H leaders as well. Agility training for 4-H leaders became officially offered each year through state 4-H leader training in Minnesota. The first two to three years of the agility sessions were led by Ruth with the assistance of Martha Healy.

Later, Ruth authored a junior handler training manual first made available through USDAA. Ruth and Martha continued to support the USDAA Junior Handler Program and organized the Junior classes at Minnesota Agility Club trials. The two ladies gathered a carload of juniors to show at USDAA Nationals for the showcase, and headed for Cleveland, Ohio, and Del Mar, California. Ruth

coordinated the Junior Handler National Showcase at Nationals until she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2000.

When Ruth died, her memorial service was heavily attended by agility enthusiasts. Martha spoke of Ruth's vision of youth being included more in agility and having greater access to training, as well as Ruth's passing of the torch to others who would continue the work she had begun.

Perhaps the greatest legacy Ruth left us is as a great role model, something stated in an article on the Agility Ability Web site. "I can think of no greater legacy for Ruth than when you see something needs doing; step in and see that it's done and encourage those we know; especially the youth!" That is certainly the embodiment of the Ruth I knew, and why the Minnesota Agility Club Sportsmanship award is named after her.

Some People Make it Look Easy

Photo and caption by Karen Moureaux

Contact Point's Rio and his junior handler are seen here qualifying for the Steeplechase final round on Saturday. The junior handler is an exchange student from Denmark and has been in the USA with Amy and Jonathan Hanridge for three weeks. He has no previous experience with dogs or agility. He looks like a pro!



Thanksgiving Treats *By Courtney Kawa*

Magic is in the air. The weather is cooling off. Pumpkins and scarecrows are showing up on porches across the country. Fall has arrived and along with it comes a bounty of seasonal fruits and vegetables that can be enjoyed by the whole family.

Pumpkin is one of these nutritious and delicious choices. Full of beta-carotene, potassium, and fiber, it packs a healthy punch and is a great choice for fall-inspired recipes. To include our four-legged family member in our family's seasonal fun, we decided to create a special treat just for her using this wonderful fruit. It has been doggie-approved in our neighborhood, but try it for yourself and let us know what you think. We had loads of fun making them and hope you do too. Happy fall!

- 15 oz. Canned plain pumpkin
- 2 Bananas (ripe)
- 3 c Whole wheat flour
- 2 T Honey
- 1/2 c Dry milk
- 2 Eggs



Mix ingredients. Roll out portions of dough onto a well-floured surface. Cut biscuits with cookie cutters of your choice (we used pumpkins and dog bones). Place biscuits on a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350°F for 15–20 minutes. Cool and enjoy! Makes about 60 treats.

Socialization Tips *By Deborah Neufeld*

With more and more children attending trials as spectators, competitors, and workers, handlers need to make sure that their dogs are calm and confident around this vulnerable portion of the population. Deborah Neufeld, an obedience competitor since 1981 who now judges Rally and obedience, suggests one way to work on this problem with a dog that is not comfortable around children:

If the dog is afraid of children, try going to a playground with a good book. Sit a bit away from the play area, read your book, and just let the dog “soak in” the sights and sounds so that he becomes used to it. I had to do this with my Boxer, who isn’t people oriented (she doesn’t care for people to show her attention, but won’t resist it). She didn’t like children because of all the running and screaming, and I spent long hours letting her become accustomed to it at playgrounds. Stay at a distance that the dog can handle, and not close enough that all the kids want to come running over the play with the “nice doggy.” Work your way closer as the dog builds confidence.

From the Editor

The 2008 Cynosport World Games are here! Keep your eyes on www.usdaa.com for lots of coverage of this incredible event. We’ll keep you current on results with live coverage of some events (be sure to refresh often!) and standings for other classes as soon as possible after completion. Every year we strive to bring you even better reports from this world-class event so the reporting should be phenomenal! The Games run from October 29–November 2 and take place in Scottsdale, Arizona. Keep the time zone in mind when you are waiting for your favorite events to take place!

When the Games are over, continue visiting www.usdaa.com for post-event coverage on the winners and more fitness-related articles to help you get in shape to be the best agility competitor you can be. Subscribers will also be treated to more training articles, event coverage, interviews, human-interest stories, and more. Do you have something to share with the USDAA community? Contact me at brennafender@gmail.com to find out how you can submit an article to the subscriber news page.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *OVERview*!

—B. Fender

To Run Well, Walk Tall and Stand Proud *By personal trainer Kristen Beck*

Posture is the body's alignment and positioning with respect to gravity. Incorrect posture causes your body to exert more energy than necessary, and can also cause a variety of musculoskeletal problems. When you have good posture, you move with ease and comfort. Good posture contributes to deep, full breathing, healthy organ function, good circulation, increased energy, and an overall feeling of well-being. It also provides a foundation for all of the body positions needed to propel you through the agility course as fast and as efficiently as possible.

What Does Good Posture Look Like?

Standing. Good standing posture may feel abnormal at first, particularly if you have not been conscious of your posture in the past. Try standing with your feet hip-width apart, with your weight evenly distributed across the bottom of each foot, your breastbone lifted, your chin level, and your head held as though it is floating on top of your body. From a side view, imagine a vertical line that travels from your ear through your shoulder, to your hip, down the front of your knee and through the front of your ankle. The

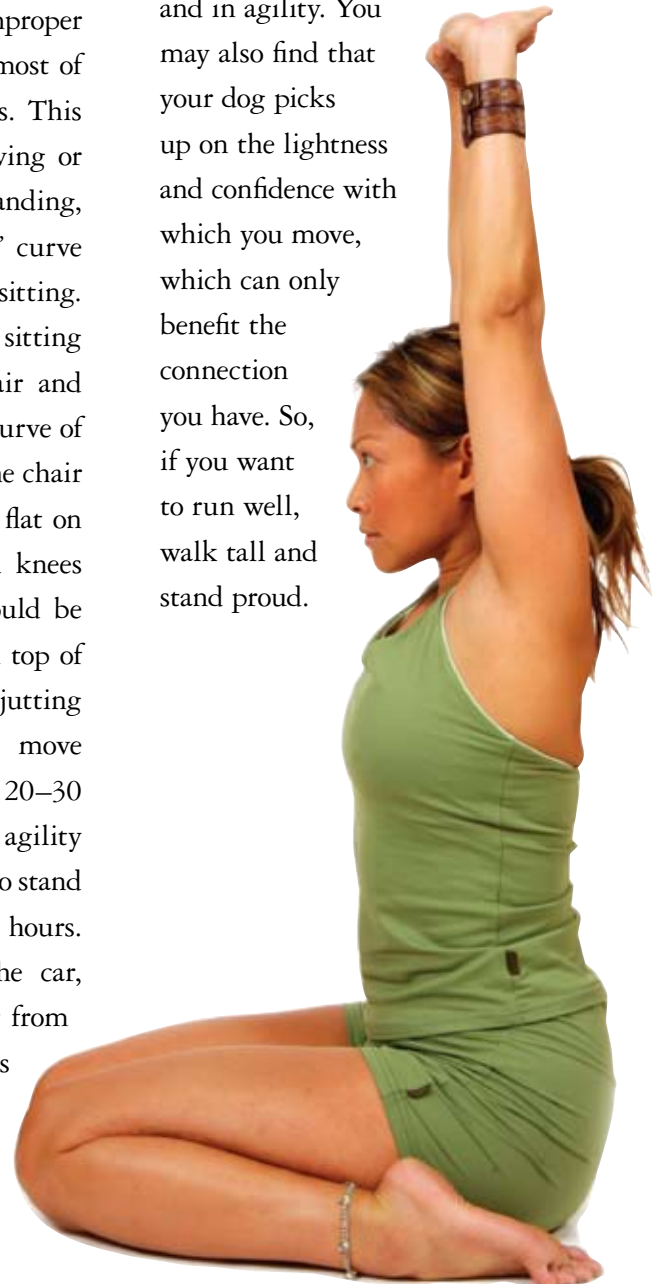
three natural curves in your back should be apparent. The front view should show that your shoulders, hips, and knees are level with each other (i.e. one of your knees should not be higher than the other). Hold your head straight and not turned to one side or tilted.

Sitting. Maintaining improper posture while sitting is how most of us create poor postural habits. This is particularly true when driving or using a computer. As with standing, you want to maintain the "S" curve in your spine while you are sitting. This is best accomplished by sitting all the way back in the chair and placing a folded towel in the curve of the low back. The height of the chair should allow your feet to rest flat on the floor with your hips and knees at 90° angles. Your head should be relaxed, as though floating on top of your body, without your chin jutting forward. It is important to move out of a seated position every 20–30 minutes. On long drives to agility trials, you should ideally stop to stand and move around every two hours. While you are sitting in the car, occasionally shift your weight from side to side, roll your shoulders

forwards and backwards and gently tilt your head from side to side. This light movement can help you keep your body and mind alert.

Maintain Good Posture

Once you improve your posture, you will begin to move more efficiently in your daily activities and in agility. You may also find that your dog picks up on the lightness and confidence with which you move, which can only benefit the connection you have. So, if you want to run well, walk tall and stand proud.



The rest of this (and all our fitness-related articles) is available for free to all readers on the news page at www.usdaa.com.

“Ginger,” a Jack Russell Terrier owned by Les and Diane Sanders, races across the USDA’s home page with every click of the mouse, but this agility pioneer “crossed the Rainbow Bridge” on Saturday, September 13, leaving the agility world a little emptier. Her passion for life, agility, and the ever-important “ball” inspired many.

Excelling... *continued from page 1.*

important but without a commitment to train and the discipline to compete I would not have been able to achieve platinum LAAs. Agility is a team sport. The dog is 50% of the team. The handler is the other 50% of the team. The mental game is very important.

Early on when I began competing in agility, I was obsessed with the Q. That did not work real well for me. When I changed my focus to training and competing to be my best, things began to change because the focus was on me being the best I could be. If I did my best but didn't Q, I went home with homework from that show to work on.

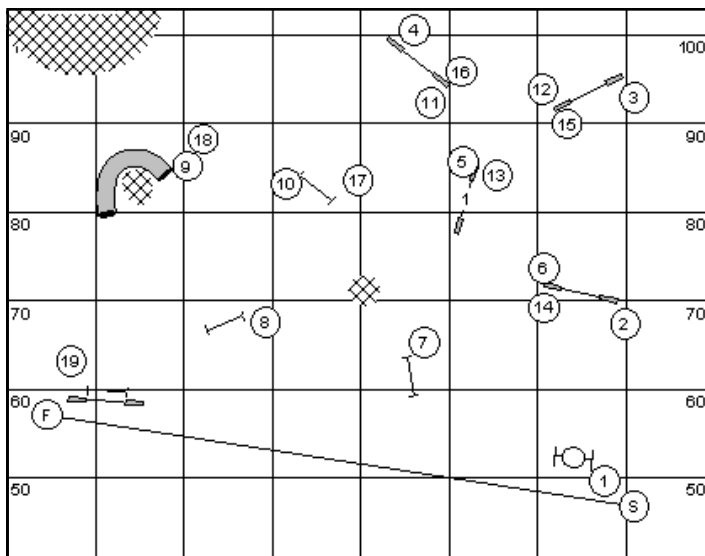
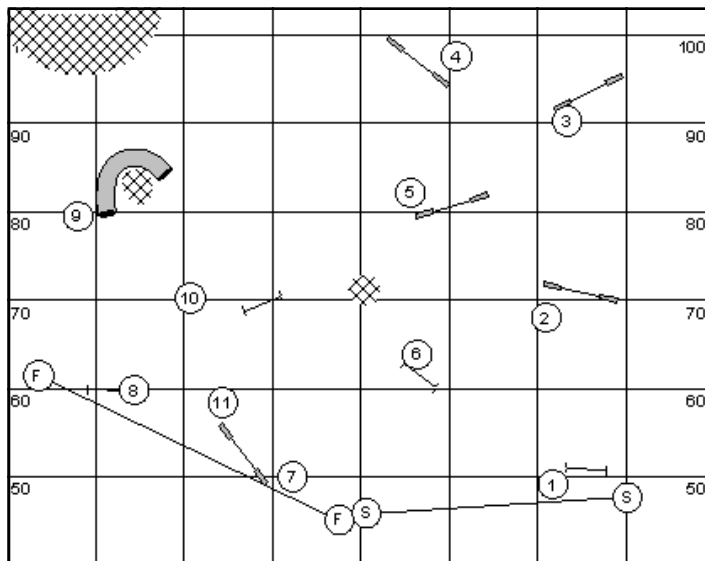
Some of my best and happiest runs have not been a Q. I realize there can only be one winner and I like to win as much as anyone, but that made me put too much pressure on myself and my dogs. When my focus changed to just do my best I was only in competition with myself. If I did my best and finished last I always learned something from that.

Keep trying to improve and don't blame (doing poorly) on the judge's course or the weather, and so on. Only you can make yourself happy and it's how you set it up in your mind. When you walk the course, listen to what you say to yourself. If you tell yourself that you are going to have trouble there, you may have just set yourself up to fail. I have a saying, “You are what you eat and you do what you think.” I hear so many people setting themselves up to fail. Learn the mental game. It is huge.

Trainer's Corner

Designed by Leona Hellesvig

Try these nested jumpers courses. The first version is for beginners and the second, with some tricky traps, is for more advanced students



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