

OBEDIENCE REPORT

MARCH 2006

Dawn Howard

Obedience Report from the 34th National

The 34th national Show and Trial is over. What an event. The organising committee did a sterling job and are due for huge congratulations. While the weather was hot, the obedience being run very early on the Saturday escaped the worst of the heat. The coveted Winner of Winners position was as usual, tightly contested, and the standard was extremely high. The eventual winner of the Gold medal was Andrew MacDonald and OC T.Ch Aldahoven Jaeger 'AZ' ET. Congratulations to this team, the silver medal went to Jane Wilmot and OC Iniff Excalibur and the bronze to Cathy Fletcher and Goldenbluff Solitaire CDX AD JD. The final runoff provided a great spectacle with Andrew and Jane putting in such fine performances that the two judges initially found it impossible to separate them. A second runoff for the gold medal had to be performed with the eventual placings being separated by one point.

As I was judging, the only work that I saw was the Open and the winners of winners. The standard was very high overall and was a credit to our dogs and their handlers. It was great to catch up with interstate triallers including Leonie Holdsworth with Ch Aldahoven High Flyer BSCL1, EX, CDX, ET., B Fielder with Ch Taurorn Jazzman CDX AD JD AZ H Neg, Eric Herson with Quosh von drei Birkenzwinger (Imp Gmy) Sch3 KKL a BSCL1 AZ H Neg Exc CD, Annie Tamblin with Vonerlich Elko CD and Mary Waldon with Vernegan Bonadea AZ CDX. Sincere apologies if I missed anyone, but I was a bit preoccupied this year.

The highly coveted David O'Rourke trophy for the best performance in show and obedience was very excited Robyn English with her young boy Vomkogelberg Baron "AZ".

Announcing the 2006 GSDCA National Top Obedience Winners

BEST NOVICE DOG AWARD

Quosh Vom Drei Birkenzwinger (imp Ger.) KK1 A Z H.Neg.

Handled by Eric Herson Average score 192.3

BEST UTILITY DOG AWARD

O.C. Iniff Excalibur handled by Jane Wilmot Average score 190.86

Runner up for best Utility Dog was O.Ch Astasia Starr UD ET AD JD HT "AZ" BSCL 1 handled by Mandy Doyle Average score 188 points. Congratulations to these dogs and handlers.

Advance notice: There is an Obedience meeting planned prior to the Main Breed Exhibition in Newcastle. Clubs are asked to sent delegates and to put forward motions for the agenda.

To join the GSDCA obedience/agility/tracking email list the address is howard@vicnet.net.au or via snail mail "Killara", 5b Cloud Street Arthur's Seat 3936, Tel 03 5987 3322 or Mob. 0412 088 055

Happy training and trialling, enjoy your dogs.

Dawn Howard , GSDCA Obedience Chair

SUMMARY OF OBEDIENCE REPORT

GSDCA AGM FEBRUARY 2006

Dawn Howard

Summary of the Obedience Report for the GSDCA Annual General Meeting February 2006 presented by Dawn Howard, Obedience Chair

There have been some very positive events in 2005. The highlight was the Queensland National, which ran like clockwork and was a credit to all concerned. The clubs deserve due credit for the efforts by their volunteer instructors and administrators. I also would like to thank the clubs for their continuing support for me as Obedience chair. WA and Victoria have the obedience numbers, and continue to excel, and even lead the way among all breeds in many areas. German Shepherd dogs have more than held their own around Australia against all breeds. Jane Willmot won the Obedience section of the 2005 Sydney Royal Show, Andrew Saliba won Best in Trial at the 2005 Royal Melbourne Show. A GSD has won this event for the previous four years. Jane Willmot and OC Iniff Excalibur won their fourth consecutive GSDCA Gold Medal at the Queensland National. Five of the ten finalists in the 2005 Victorian Top Obedience Dog of the Year Award were GSDs'. It is disappointing to hear that some clubs, who were struggling with obedience strength in 2005 for a variety of reasons, are still having problems. While some of the other states don't appear to have the obedience numbers at their GSD clubs, GSDs are still doing well in some of those states. Kennel Club numbers are still a concern, Australia and world wide. We may just have to accept that fewer people are into dogs, particularly the larger breeds, people are spending a lot more time at work than ever, and a trend towards apartment living, has resulted in a definite sociological change. This means that our clubs have to look at ways of adapting to these changes. Long gone are the days when the average puppy buyer is happy to go along to a club and line up to receive group instruction, especially if it is of a compulsive nature. They tend toward the most time effective method to train their dog, and are more and more tending to turn to the private trainers who generally give good service for a price. TV and Radio programs definitely lead the public towards positive methods of reinforcement as well. Generally most GSD clubs use positive reinforcement methods in some form, but that is not the case for every club. If our clubs fail to recognize and act on the need for change, they may find that even more GSD owners gravitate towards all breeds clubs or private trainers. In 2005, Gina O'Keefe, a highly motivated trainer from WA gave a series of practical seminars around Australia and in Singapore. Her tours were heavily subsidized by Pedigree Advance and not only were they very professionally run, they were very helpful to handlers at all levels. In Melbourne 350 people attended the 30 clinics which included a series of Club instructor's sessions involving theory and practice. Many GSDCV members attended, and hopefully seminars such as this will help some of our clubs to take a fresh approach to their training methods

On the trialing scene, Obedience trialing is just holding its own on a National level at this stage with all breeds, and is not growing significantly if at all. In some states including Victoria, it is gradually declining. That does not mean that GSD's are not trialing though. A few years ago we triallers had two choices. Obedience, and if you were lucky to find someone to help you, you could do tracking. Now you have many more choices. Obedience, Tracking, (a growing sport, with the larger tracking trials in Victoria attracting over 100 entries, larger than most Obedience trials in that State). Agility is very strong, as is Jumping. Typical entries number 400 at an all breeds trial, four

times the number at an obedience trial. New rules this year include another stream of agility called Games. The new agility rules include lowered jump heights for our breed. GSDs will now jump 600mm instead of 700mm making the sport a lot more attractive to our dogs. Also equipment changes will make it safer for the larger dogs especially the removal of cleats on the Dog Walk and Scramble. The latest growth sport is Herding, where Queensland has hit the ground running, and is more advanced than any of the other states. Again there are new rules which now go to all the way to Herding Champion, where dogs have to prove themselves on sheep, ducks and cattle. German Shepherds seem to be developing a strong presence in this discipline. As well as the above there is Flyball, Dog Dancing and the various non ANKC agility related sports eg NADAC and ADAC which attract large numbers in some states. Of course our breed excels in all of these disciplines and consequently this trend tends to dilute the numbers entering obedience trials.

Communication issues: A major issue facing the GSDCA "Obedience" sector on a National level has always been communication. A great deal of discussion has ensued and various avenues have been explored over the last four to five years. Obedience meetings have been held at the last four Nationals, and have attracted input from a number of members which was very useful to exchange ideas. However we have had ongoing difficulties in obtaining the club's official input. There have been difficulties attached to holding a National obedience meeting on a regular basis, as several clubs found the expense of sending delegates beyond their limited resources. Of course the meetings at Nationals provides members views rather than the club's opinions, but at least it does give the clubs an indication of current trends.

In response to this problem, National Council made a decision to trial different methods of communication in order find a more cost efficient and effective method of gathering information from the wider Obedience community. As the current obedience chair I am to get as many opinions as possible from the triallers and other interested parties at GSDCA and Club events. I have been canvassing opinions at trials and via email. On a personal basis, originally aided by Ian Cameron, we started the GSD-Ozdog email list where issues relating to all areas relating to the GSD are discussed.

Disciplines other than obedience.

Agility/Jumping /Games, Herding and Tracking. These are areas where our breed excels, and we should be showcasing these aspects. If cost is a problem, then either the various disciplines will have to accept lesser value trophies or find sponsorship. It is entirely reasonable that an event has to be at least largely, self funding. I believe that this will not be a problem with the competitors if it is explained properly.

Overall the German Shepherd fraternity should be justly proud of the achievements of our representatives in trials on both a National and a State level. It is heartening to see our breed represented at the top of the trialing scene in so many disciplines.

As a priority, GSD clubs must focus on general training for life. Taking a puppy into the branch and teaching new owners how to bring out the best in their puppy, and helping to mould the pup into a well balanced and socialized GSD should be our main focus. Trialing is after all, our showcase but it will always be for the dedicated minority. Dogs do not have to trial to prove that they can be a good and useful citizen.