

How To Watch An Obedience Trial

Part of every dog show—such as the Livonia Kennel Club show April 7 at Detroit Race Course—is a beauty contest, the bench judging for conformance to breed standards. The other part—which tends to get ignored because people don't understand it—is the obedience trial.

Among dog fanciers, there's polite disagreement as to which type of show is the nobler art. And at the risk of slighting the breed show people, we concentrated on the obedience end of it, the theory and practice.

"THE IDEA IS that the dog and you work together as a team, with the dog happy and without expecting a puppy biscuit every time he does something. It's to make him a better dog at home. Our dogs should all be ladies and gentlemen," says Mrs. Barbara Wheaton.

Mrs. Wheaton, of Plymouth, is an officer in the Livonia Kennel Club, teaches obedience classes and is herself a qualified judge.

She means it when she says the dog should be "happy." You lose points if the dog forgets business to play or sniff, or if he "shows shyness or resentment," as it says in the judge's scorecard.

You also lose points if the handler adapts his pace to the dog's rather than the dog to the handler's; if the leash is kept tight; if the dog forges, crowds, lags, sits crooked, or fails to perform properly.

Each dog performs a series of about a half-dozen exercises during his trial. A perfect score is 200. Stormork Better Beware, a two-year-old Doberman who answers to "Duke" when called by Mrs. Alma Schreff

of Livonia, earned spectacular 197s and 198s in getting his novice degrees.

THERE ARE THREE degrees a dog can earn. Mrs. Wheaton explained:

1. "Novice" corresponds to elementary school, and the degree is a CD, for "companion dog." To get it, the dog must compete in at least three shows before three different judges, earning a minimum of 170 points and getting half the possible points in each exercise.

Among the exercises are heeling on leash and off, recall, sit-stay (one minute) and lie-stay (three minutes).

2. "Open" corresponds to high school, and the degree is CDX, for "companion dog excellent." Anyone—not just the owner—should be able to handle the dog.

Among the open exercises are heeling off leash (word commands only), retrieving on the flat and over a high jump, sit-stay (three minutes) and lie-stay (five minutes). The dog must jump 1½ times his own height and broad jump twice his height. The "stay" exercises are performed with the handler out of sight.

3. "Utility" is college level stuff and calls for real work as well as obedience.

From a scattered batch of articles, the dog must pick out three—one wood, one leather and one metal—that the handler has scented. He must jump hurdles when given directions. He must respond to hand signals—no words allowed.

In each of the three classes, there are "A" and "B" groups, which designate the handlers rather than the dogs. "A" is for amateurs; "B" is for professional trainers and handlers.

The degrees are awarded only through the American Kennel Club, and the trial is open only to purebreds.

FRANK CRONE, of Livonia, who is show chairman, said there is roughly a 5-2-1 ratio between entries in each class. That is, for every five dogs in the novice trial, there are two in the open and one in the utility.

"You're liable to find any breed in the obedience trial," Crone went on. Most common are Dobermans, Weimaraners, standard and miniature Poodles, Cocker and Brittany Spaniels.

Poodles and dukes are the big winners.

STORY: Tim Richard

PICTURES: Gary Garretson



RETRIEVING OVER JUMP is Captain Wheaton's Caravelle, a seven-year-old Weimaraner owned by Mrs. Alma Schreff of Livonia. Carey must go at first command, jump both directions, sit within reach, deliver dumbbell neatly.



"A HAPPY DOG" must neither jump exuberantly on the judge nor cower in fear. Mrs. Barbara Wheaton plays role of judge in "stand for examination."



SCENT DISCRIMINATION is a "utility" exercise, for dogdom's collegians. Carey must go at first command, pick out the article with her handler's scent, and deliver it neatly.



CORRECT 'HEEL' position is demonstrated by Mrs. Schreff and Duke, a Doberman. Note that Duke works without leash, doesn't move beyond the handler's instep, pays no attention to other dogs or the photographer.



IN 'LONG DOWN' the dogs must remain in place for three minutes with handler in sight for novice class, five minutes with handler out of

sight in open class. Breeds are Doberman pinscher (front), Weimaraner (second, fourth and fifth) and Belgian tervuren (third).

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WEDNESDAY 3	COLONIAL SENIOR CITIZENS, Community Room 12 noon. Did your kiddie get their free Egg from the 10 ft. Bunny yet?
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FRIDAY 5	See exhibits from many local artists. SEE EXHIBITS OF WEAVING, CLAY AND LEATHER WORKERS. ROTARY ANNS in Mall with Easter Lily Pins.
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