



Agility Expert Articles

Training Beep by Toni Dawkins (February 2009)

It seems like a long time since the last article and I have loads to say, I guess that is not unusual for me though. I will give you a Beep update and of course a Kite and Minx update too, I also want to have a little rant about something that is annoying me in the agility world but will save that for last. Good stuff first.

Beep

Well I don't know where to start it feels like so much has happened with Beep and I since the last article. Last time I told you how I was doing much less with her and only after one of the other girls so she would get jealous. Well that has worked a treat as it seems she is a very jealous dog and is getting more and more excited. She now makes an awful noise when waiting for her turn at training and I do have to stop this but I just stuff a tuggy in her mouth. The only problem with this is that lately with the noise also comes a bit of biting, not at me but at any dog that looks excited and gets too close. She is not trying to fight but just biting in frustration at anything so I do keep her on a short lead and as I said try and keep her mouth full. This excitement is not just in agility now though; it's when we are going for a walk, at dinner times, when I let her down the garden and when I leave for work in the morning?

With food times there is no biting, on walks and in the garden she will try and nip Minx which really is pay back as Minx has got Beep on several occasions. When I leave for work in the morning the biting is directed at me! As soon as I go to leave she goes out of the dog flap and hides round the corner, when I open the door she charges at me and nips my coat, bag or leg. Whatever is nearest to her mouth at the time. Now I know you are all probably thinking how awful that is but I love it! At last Beep's mad side is coming out, I knew it was in there somewhere and I just had to find it. Obviously I can't let her

bite me every morning but I wanted to stop her without knocking her and wasn't quite sure how to do it. My mum is good for things like these so I asked her and have solved the problem really easily. I just call Beep in before I leave and she has to stay in the house behind me till I am completely out of the door. Of course she would still bite me if I let her out first but I didn't want to take that excitement away completely just save my legs

So I have a mad Beep but she is still a bit of a thinker and the other thing I have found out about her is that it's best not to let her think for too long. If I use the weaves as an example I can explain a little better, her weaves are perfect, she has a really low position, I can run anywhere and she won't come out and her entry is perfect from every angle. Sounds good? Except they are not that fast and I have been leaving her to do them slowly thinking that as her confidence grows so will her speed. This was not happening and while training with Lee a few weeks ago he suggested winding her up and see what happens then. We did this a couple of times and saw a different dog; straight away she swam through the weaves rather than hopping and went twice the speed! Even if I raced her like mad at the weaves she still completed them perfectly but really fast. So I can't let her think for too long I need to show her that she can go faster and then she will. I am now for the first time happy with her weaves. This actually applies to everything she does and is generally going at a much better speed, her jumping is coming along nicely, she can do pull throughs, push throughs and snakes as tight as the best dogs can. She can bend her funny 'whippet like' body into all sorts of shapes and is very clever with her feet too.

Her contacts are getting there, the dog walk is now about a foot under full height and although I am still not always happy with the contact she is not missing any. I am going to take my time here though so she may just do jumping classes this season.

On the whole I am very happy with her; I can see her potential and will use this season to get her confident in the ring before I do any contacts in that environment. She is not going to look stunningly fast but she is going to be like Kite where she floats round wasting no time anywhere and once her contacts are sorted I think she will be great

I have attached a video of her first run at Ribble. She just knocked a pole trying to turn too tight but even bounced a couple of jumps. Also my garden setup showing where the dog walk is now. Her next show will be Mid Downs so a bit of a gap but I am looking forward to it.

Kite

Ahh Kite my angel, just one thing I am and will forever be battling with, The Seesaw! If you have read my other articles you will know why, it's not Kite's fault and it's not really mine as I knew no better when she was younger. I do believe that if you do not lay down the correct contact behaviour from day one then you can never get them completely right. My ball idea has worked and did the job for Olympia, Kite was third. Due to my wrong signals she turned the wrong way and was still third, would have been second and very close to Dobie. Not bad for a 10yr old small collie eh? Why was she still third with a wrong turn? Her contacts are the reason, if you time her Olympia contacts against any other dog in the competition there are none faster and even the new young dogs coming through now that are much faster over the ground still cannot match them. She also got second in the first Olympia qualifier this year at Ribble, again nearly turning the wrong way in one place or would have won it. (Yes I have had to look at what I am doing as she is picking up on something from me to do that.) I thought this year would see her lower down the places but now I don't think that is going to happen. It will though if I don't sort the stupid seesaw out. I have a new gadget now, Lee's idea was to get her to stop earlier on the seesaw so all feet are on it. Whilst I don't like this, I think for Kite it will make her put the breaks on earlier so could be good. The problem was that when I tired the only way to get her to stop early was to grab her. Not surprising as for 9yrs I have taught her to go to the end! So I made something to go round the seesaw for her to rest her feet on till she can do it alone. This is working well, not sure it will be perfect by Crufts as I have to fade it out but even if it just makes her think to stop a little earlier it will be fine. Fingers crossed.

Minx

Minx is great, I am really enjoying her at the moment, I have been working on her turns and this is going very well. I have also done a couple of Dawn Weaver training days, I love Dawn and her large dogs run very much like Minx so its always good to get some new ideas. What Dawn made me do was run Minx without using a wait at all (yes I did call her a few names) this put me completely out of my comfort zone but is very good to do as you start out of control but still have to be calm, I have really enjoyed this and made my Sunday group do it this week. (Think they might be calling Dawn names now too! As of course I blamed her for the idea) While talking about my Sunday group they have decided when they run in a team to call themselves the 'TWATS' Toni's Winter Agility Training Sessions mmm does that make me chief TWAT? Anyway back to Minx and for once other than my timing which with her is always an issue there is nothing else to say. Both Kite and Minx have Crufts in a couple of weeks. On Thurs I have large dog team and will be running Lee's dog Bold, Minx has mini/maxi pairs on this day too. On Friday I have the singles with Kite and Minx and on Sunday championship with Kite and Minx so a busy week.

Right it has to be time for my rant now. Everyone learns things from others, yes all ideas started somewhere but in agility now there are very few completely novel ideas. I am very good at adapting ideas to make them better but rarely come up with a completely different one. Lee is very good at coming up with novel handling moves and because he enjoys teaching he tells people what he has come up with. I do the same, I don't keep secrets, if something works well I will tell anyone what it is. So what I am annoyed about is the growing number of people teaching who take someone else's idea in full and pretend it's theirs. There is nothing wrong with saying this is a good way to..... And I got this from..... I do this all the time, for instance when I teach the seesaw and how to get a dog to run right to the end I always say 'I got this Lu candy'. If I teach anything that Lee has come up with I always say 'this is one of Lee's'. Now I appreciate you cant do this with everything but if you are doing something very different from what you usually do then I think you should credit the person you got it from. Two things have happened lately that have made me write this but there are many others. One is that someone Lee has taught recently has written up a blog of all the new ideas and things

they have been teaching their dog. No mention of Lee's training day and no mention of where the ideas came from, people have commented saying what good ideas they are and still nothing. This is not a person I know well but because I know how happy Lee is to help people it made me angry for him. Also a very well known person had asked me for help to teach turns for running contacts. I told this person my plans obviously not knowing how well they would work at all but again wanted to help. This person now has videos of them teaching turns and it's working really well, is getting a lot of credit and no mention that it might not have been their idea. In fact people are saying to me 'have you seen this its great' as if this person is amazing for coming up with the idea. Okay rant over but do you think I am right or do you think I am over sensitive about this and it shouldn't bother me?

Anyway on the whole both myself and my girls are very happy at the moment (I think I can speak for them too). I am off to Holland the weekend before Crufts to teach and will take the girls with me for some sneaky carpet practise before Crufts. Apparently the venue has the best carpet training surface around he he. Will have to leave Beep with Lee though as she is not covered for Rabies yet, luckily Beep loves Lee and is the only one of my dogs who does. Minx acts like he is not there at all and Kite just tries to sit on his head, I think they are just showing him where he fits in the pack, beneath them!

See you soon at the shows

Love Toni and Beep

xx



Dog walk



Dog walk



Dog walk

(posted 17/08/2009)

