

Weimaraners at Work



Working Trials

Little did I know 19 years ago what path I would follow after hearing the words “*You will never do anything with one of those*” when my first Weimaraner and I burst through the doors of the local dog training club and demonstrated how ghastly we both were.

Smokey (aka Tickners Esel UDex WDex TDex) was my first Weimaraner, a male and of the stamp that is not seen a great deal in this country any more!

I had picked him up a week short of 6 months old after finding a dearth of puppies in the whole of the UK, and he was not the shy retiring type! It took me a long time to realize that perhaps hurtling around the countryside dispatching various forms of wildlife along the way was not the best nursery in the world and I sought help; believe me we needed it!

Added to this he was somewhat less than enthusiastic about anything on two or four legs and we were a walking disaster!

It was quite by chance that I stumbled upon something called Working Trials and driving to my nearest club, discovered that it was MADE for my dog; all the members kept on asking if we had really done nothing at all!

However, there were a few obstacles to be overcome! Before I go any further perhaps a brief description of the sport would not go amiss!

Working Trials is often considered as being the ultimate all round test for the canine athlete; with the dog having to demonstrate the control of the Obedience dog, the dexterity of the Agility Dog and the initiative of the Field Trial Dog!

Progress is made through various stages, called stakes, at both Open and Championship level with success required at one level to qualify for entry into the next.

From the lowest, Companion Dog (CD), through to Utility Dog (UD), Working Dog (WD), Patrol Dog (PD) and Tracking Dog (TD) at the very top, the team is required to obtain 70% of the available marks in each of the three sections and 80% of the overall marks in order to be permitted to place the titles CDex, UDex, WDex, PDex or TDex after their dog's name

During the Control round handlers and dogs must demonstrate heelwork at slow, medium and fast pace, perform an out of sight sit and down stay, recall, retrieve, bark on command and send-away (often with a redirect) as well as being steady to gunshot.

The Agility section requires a dog to clear a 3ft hurdle and a 9ft long jump as well as a 6ft scale obstacle that must be tackled twice. (These jumps are meant to represent what an “operational” dog and handler may come across in real life eg a gate, ditch or wall).



The final part of the equation consists of nose-work where the dog must follow a trail laid by a track layer (who is a stranger to the dog), walking a pre determined "pattern" designed by the judge. The track is approximately half a mile long and may be laid on grassland, stubble, plough, etc. As the dog follows the track, it has to recover between 2 to 3 articles placed along it by the track layer. The tracks are ½, 1 ½, 2 and 3 hours old in UD, WD, PD and TD respectively. The CD stake does not include a track.



The other component of the nose-work is the search square, where the dog has to search and retrieve 3/4 articles placed in a 15/25 yard square in 4/5 minutes respectively.

In the PD stake, in addition to the above, the dog has to quarter the ground for a hidden person, complete a test of courage, escort a person following a search by the handler, detain a running person and perform a recall from a running person.

Two wins in Championship TD and/or PD stakes enable the dog to bear the title of Working Trial Champion. (WT Ch).

Weimaraners are eminently suited to this discipline as they have the noses for both air scenting and tracking plus they make light work of the jumps. The control section is usually the most challenging for them, especially on the send-away where, if not carefully taught, the dog can start to hunt for wildlife and switch off from the task at hand.

The issue that proved to be the nemesis for my dog was the down stay; without it one could not qualify as you need a minimum of 25/35 marks in the Control section to qualify; many was the time we ended up on 24.5 without the 10 marks for the down stay; which demonstrated a) how good the rest of his work was, and b) that if we did not get it sorted we may as well give up the ghost (if you will pardon the pun)! I took him out of trials for 15 months and when we re-entered he never failed another one in, rain, wind, sun and even snow! Eventually we qualified TDex, winning or being placed in all the stakes along the way and, after he followed it up with a 5th place I retired him and worked his kennel mate Vera (aka Fursdon Fabrication CDex UDex) who I lost to torsion just before she was 5 at the peak of her training.

Twiggy (aka Fursdon Twylyte Tramontano AD FH2 CDex UDex WDex TDex), her niece, came home with me a few weeks later and she started her career with a bang entering, qualifying and winning her first trial at 19 months old and garnering 14 TDex qualifications, 10 of them in the top ten, 2 x 3rd places and one WTC (Working Trial Certificate) which qualified us for the KCCs (Kennel Club Championships).



The road was anything but smooth but I learned a lot along the way; about myself, my dogs and the sport. Probably one of the most attractive things about the sport is the fact that apart from the top two stakes, winning is not an issue; plus everyone else is usually genuinely rooting for you to qualify.

So, if you think you might want to have a bash at it both the SKC and the Scottish Working Trials Society hold trials in Scotland and they welcome spectators with open arms; go along, you never know, you may follow me down that path!

Allyson Tohme
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