



St. Paul DOG TRAINING CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Dec. 2008

Training to Perform the Weave Poles

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by Willard L. Koukkari

Today, in the competitive sport of agility, a dog is required not only to enter and successfully perform the weave poles from almost any angle of approach, but also to do so as fast as possible. It is within the scope of these requirements that I wish to share with you a procedure that I have found to be effective in my teaching and training. I am currently teaching it to a group of handlers at SPDTTC.

The entry, performance, and speed in the weave poles are not taught or treated as three separate entities; rather, they are integrated into a single unit or requirement every time that a dog is directed by the handler to perform the weave poles.

Because the set of 12 weave poles that we use in training can be separated into two rows of poles to form a channel (**Figure 1**), the procedure, and variations thereof, are commonly referred to as a “channel method.”

In addition to a double row of poles, wires that can be easily added to or removed from the poles are an essential component. They delineate the sides of the channel, as well as make the entrance and exit openings of the obstacle much easier for the dog to find.

The two paramount speeds in agility are “fast and faster,” so the latter is strongly emphasized throughout the process of training. For example, handlers are encouraged to “rev-up” their dogs (e.g., a restrained send) prior to releasing them to enter the weave poles. Also, the handler is encouraged to run with their dog.

To enhance speed the handler should toss a ball so that it will land about 10 feet directly beyond the last weave pole. The toss should occur when the dog is about two-thirds of the way through the length of the channel (**Figure 2 A & B**). The ball is secured to a short length

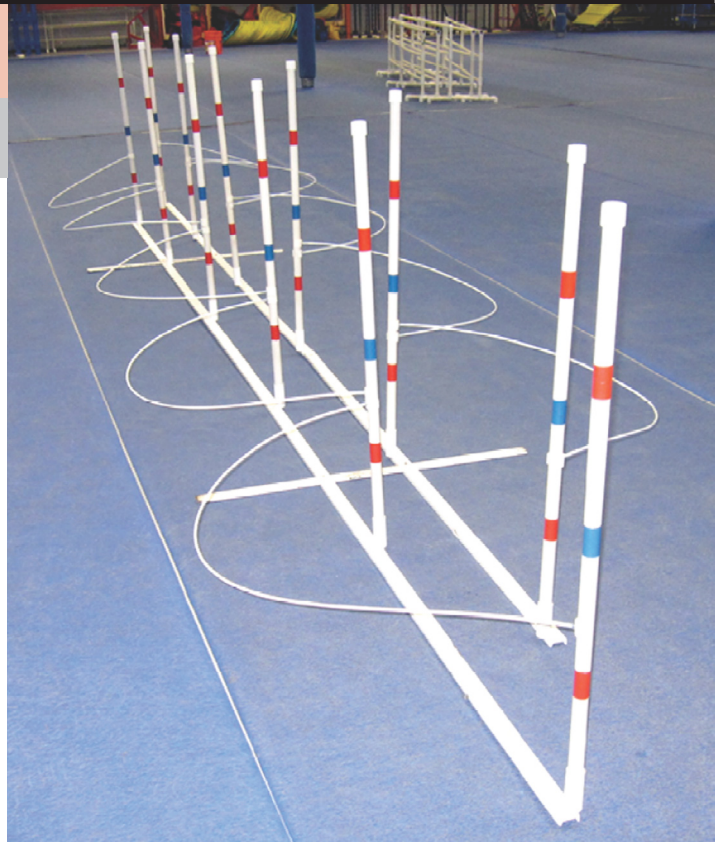


Figure 1. Photo of a set of 12 weave poles, 10 wires, and a channel between the two rows of poles.

of rope, which serves as a handle and helps prevent the ball from rolling beyond the intended landing spot.

The salient points of the procedure are illustrated in **Figure 2**. For each width of the channel, the team (dog & handler) performs two separate series of steps. The first series includes wire loops (**Figure 2 A or C**), and the second series is conducted without the loops (**Figure 2 B or D**).

The initial step in each series starts with a straight entry into the weave poles. Next, the angle of approach to the entry is changed consecutively in 45-degree increments until each of the five approaches, which are

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Training to Perform the Weave Poles

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by Willard L. Koukkari

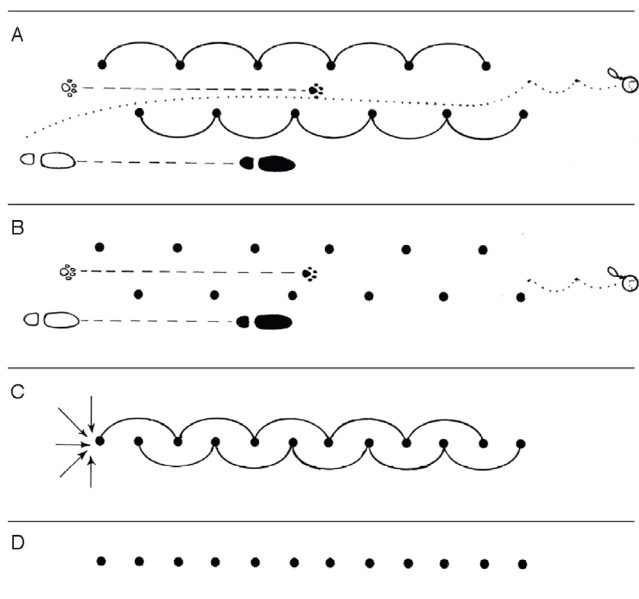


Figure 2. Top view illustrating four sets of 12 weave poles, with the channel being either open (A & B) or closed (C & D), and with wires either in place (A & C) or absent (B & D). Paw prints indicate the location of the dog and shoe prints indicate the location of the handler. The location where the ball has landed is approximate (far right in A & B), depending upon the accuracy of the toss.

(cont'd from page 1) illustrated by arrows in **Figure 2 C**, can be performed successfully.

The progression from open channels to closed channels occurs in one-inch intervals, and depending upon the dog and handler, could be extended over a span of many weeks. It is important that the handler does not decrease width and sacrifice speed.

For dogs that have difficulty completing the weave poles, only the middle wires are removed initially, followed by the successive removal of other wires as the dog progresses. It is important that the width of the channel not be reduced by more than about one inch at a time, and then only after all five approaches have been performed successfully without wires.

In other words, wires are always used for the first series, which starts at the new width of the channel. The wires are removed for the second series, but the width of the

channel remains the same as it was for the first series. During the latter stages of training, and to provide some fun, a tunnel or jump may be incorporated into the routine.

Finally, I have used channel weave poles and wires for training both puppies and adult dogs. One of the advantages of the method is that it can be started with puppies right away, the only difference being that the duration of time for maintaining a wide channel (e.g., 18 - 20 inches) is much longer (e.g., many months) for young dogs. *SPD7C*

Showing in Novice Obedience

by Donna Larson
AKC Judge & Utility Obedience Instructor

I would like to help you with common errors. If you are aware of these errors, you won't make them and you will save yourself many handler error deductions.

Heel on Leash: The main thing is to have a loose leash. This means, snap pointing down not up. Keep slack between the snap and where you hold the leash. When you are getting your dog ready, remember you can tell him/her to sit multiple times, but you cannot touch the dog's rear quarters or position them in any way. Heel at a brisk pace and have a true change of pace on both the slow and the fast.

Figure Eight: You must keep an even pace (speed) around both the inside and the outside posts. If you slow down when going around the outside post, you will get a penalty for adapting to your dog.

Stand for Examination: Take as much time as you need to pose your dog on this exercise. When you are ready to leave, get both hands off your dog and give the "stay" command with one hand (as well as your voice). Leave the dog in heel position and return in heel position.

- **Quick Tip** – If your heels are lined up with the dog's front feet, you are pretty much in heel position.

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Showing in Novice Obedience *(cont.)*

by Donna Larson
AKC Judge & Utility Obedience Instructor

(cont'd from page 2) If you feel you have to give an extra command, do it before the dog gets too far away from you. One extra command will be substantial points, more than one extra command and you most likely will not qualify.

Recall: Once again, you cannot touch your dog. When you get to the other end of the ring, stand up straight, arms at your side and call your dog. Do not bow stand up straight when doing the finish. Do not move your shoulders or head.

Stays: Most important facts to avoid handler errors, do not pose your dog, no touching on the head, chest or legs. At all times when in the ring for judging, guiding your dog is done gently by the collar only.

If anyone has any questions, please ask me and I will be happy to explain. I am always at the club on Tuesday evening teaching my wonderful Utility class from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm. I will be happy to answer any questions either before or after class.

Good Luck showing – its fun! *SPDTC*



SPDTC Annual Meeting & Banquet

St Paul Dog Training Club's
Annual Meeting & Banquet
Saturday February 28, 2009

Annual Membership Dues

Membership dues are payable between October 1, 2008, and the annual meeting date (which is February 28, 2009) for the current membership year. If you joined the club on or after October 1, you DO NOT need to pay dues until 2009. Everyone else owes dues in the amount of \$10 for a single membership, or \$15 for a family membership.

Note: Club policy states that junior handlers and their parents must purchase a family membership.

Bylaws Resolution

BE IT RESOLVED, that Article 6, paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 of the Bylaws of the St. Paul Dog Training Club, Inc., be amended to read as follows:

6.0 Directors

The Board of Directors shall consist of eleven members of two classifications: nine regular members and two alternate members.

6.1 Regular Members

Regular Board members are elected by the general membership and shall hold office for a term of 3 years or until the election of their successors. They shall have full voting rights on actions taken by the Board.

6.2 Alternate Members

Alternate Board members are elected by the general membership and shall hold a term of office for one year. Alternates shall have full voting rights on actions taken by the Board.

Such resolution shall be effective immediately upon passage of the membership, voting at the Annual Meeting of the Club on February 28, 2009.



President's Perspective

by Phil Rustad

Many of you are familiar with the AKC's National Obedience Invitational tournament. For those of you who are not, it's the annual event where dogs from all over the U.S. and some from Canada compete for the title of National Obedience Champion. It is the Super Bowl for Dog Obedience.

At the St. Paul Dog Training Club, we have been fortunate to have many of our members compete in this prestigious event over all the years it has been held. In fact, we have had at least one member compete at every N.O.I. that has ever been held.

In order to qualify for this National Championship, a team has to be invited. Like the U.S. Open golf tournament, invitations are based upon performance. In our case, a dogs' performance is based upon the number of OTCH points they have earned during the qualifying period. The AKC invites the top three pointed dogs of every breed. Then, if there are any spaces left, (not every breed has OTCH points), they invite additional teams based upon an all breed listing of total OTCH points for the qualifying period.

For many breeds, say a Puli or Basset Hound, only a few points were necessary to go. But if you have a breed that has many representatives showing in Obedience, say a Border Collie or Golden Retriever, you had to have one of the very top pointed dogs in the country in order to get an invitation. For me and Nike, we received 4 invitations. The fewest points for the year that we had were 127 OTCH points, making Shelties one of the tougher breeds to get into the show.

This year that changes. In order to allow more exhibitors access to this great experience, the AKC has established Regional N.O.I. Qualifying events. At these events, the top 4 teams for the weekends' three days of showing will be offered an invitation. And these invitations will be going to teams that have not otherwise already qualified.

So if you are showing at a Regional Qualifier you don't have to beat all those really great teams that seem to

win every weekend. They will have invitations based on total points. All you need do is be one of the top four other teams, the teams that don't campaign all year to amass the points necessary to get into the show. All you need to do is have one good weekend.

So if you have a pretty good dog and show in Open B and Utility B, you can get to the N.O.I. by having three good days at a Regional Qualifier. But where, oh where, can I find a Regional Qualifier that's not too far from home?

The perfect regional Qualifier would be one close to you, where you can go for run throughs every weekend to practice, that has a great staff and instructors and is a place you can get your dog comfortable with in preparation for the Regional.

How about St. Paul Dog Training?

That's right! The St. Paul Dog Training Club has been selected for the Region 13 Qualifier. It will be at our regular April '09 show. Just for fun, we took a look at last year's scores and a three-day total averaging 194 would have gotten first of the four spots this past year. While a 194 is a great score, it's certainly not out of reach of many teams who don't get to campaign all year.

So this is your chance! Get to class, get to run throughs and get ready to go to the National Obedience Invitational! This is your chance.

SPDTC





Director of Training Update

by Kristi Portugue

Over the past few months, the SPDTC training staff has been working to revamp course offerings with several goals in mind, including improving the alignment between puppy agility and beginning agility, providing an entry point for adult dogs with no agility background, easing the transition between intermediate and advanced agility, increasing new student exposure to upper level obedience classes, and improving utilization of the SPDTC facility on Thursday nights.

Following is a list of changes made to accomplish these goals.

- The introductory puppy class was moved to Tuesday nights. It's called **Puppy Einstein** and includes socialization, basic obedience, and skills that can be applied to agility. Blocks are 8 weeks long and a new block starts every four weeks. **Puppy Einstein** is held Tuesday nights at 6:30 and 7:30.
- We expanded the SPDTC staff to include **Bev Olson** as the **Director of Puppy Agility**. Bev has a great deal of experience, talent and enthusiasm, and the club appreciates the contributions she's already made in this new position. One of Bev's first responsibilities was to help develop a new agility class called **Puppy Foundations of Agility** offered on Thursday nights at 6:45. The class is for puppies 4-8 months old and is offered in 10 week blocks. We're also re-introducing **Foundations of Agility** for dogs 8 months and older. The class is held Thursday nights at 7:45 and is offered in 10 week blocks. We developed new curriculum suited to the student population and aligned it with our **Beginning Agility** class so students can transition seamlessly.
- Beginning in January, SPDTC will offer an additional class called **Advanced I Agility** on Thursdays at 5:45. This class will help transition students from **Intermediate Agility** to our competition level agility program by offering focused work on specific skills. **Karl Getsinger** will be leading the new **Advanced I** class.

• I'd like to announce a few agility staff changes. **Greg Kirmeier** is taking over the lead instructor role for **Intermediate Agility** on Monday night. **Krista Hunt** has been in this role for many years and wanted to reduce her teaching commitments in order to spend more time training her own dogs. SPDTC would like to thank Krista for her service to the club and her many years of expert instruction. Krista will remain on staff as lead instructor for **Beginning Agility**. In addition we recently welcomed **Ann Decker**, **Ginny Hayes** and **Niki Manning** as agility instructors, and re-welcomed **Merle Schnepf** who returned from medical leave.

Upcoming events include regular mini-seminars by **Deb Erb** for our advanced agility students. Deb Erb is associated with the **Anne Brau Canine Training Center** and has been a very popular teacher with our students and teaching staff. **SPDTC**

Jack got his UD in 3 out of 5 tries in utility A. He is now working toward his UDX and OTCH. He received one leg for his UDX last weekend. -- Angie Motta



Brag & Wags

Got a Brag & Wag?

Your Name: _____

Your Dog's Name: _____

Your Accomplishment: _____

Or just e-mail your B&W to:

bragswags@spdtc.com