

Obedience Training Helps Rehabilitation of a PBGV After Surgery

Article by Max Jensen (Ch Ashenafae's Rough Magic CD)

My name is Max Jensen; I am a PBGV and am now 12 years old. The picture shows me dictating this article to Dad, George, so he can help me write it because I think that my Obedience training has helped me get well, twice. This is because Dad made sure that I could do things that helped me gain strength, rehabilitate my body, and made sure that I did not become a couch potato. Also, writing this may help other PBGV's that get injured or need rehabilitation and encourage them to learn some obedience exercises. First let me explain why I had to do rehabilitation.

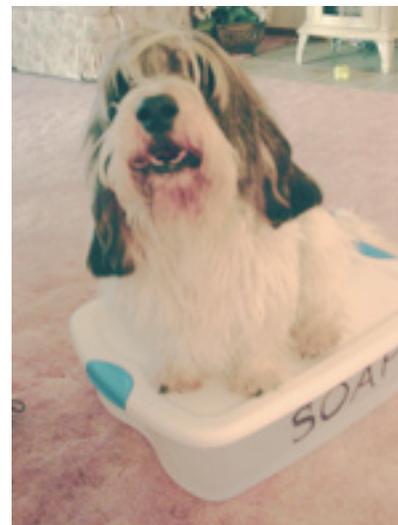
About 6 years ago I became paralyzed. Dad took me to the local Emergency Vet and she sent me up to the Washington State University (WSU) Veterinary Teaching Hospital where they did a lot of poking, probing, examining, and finally took what Dad called a MRI and found that I had popped one or more disks in my neck that leaked fluid compressing my spinal column. Dad and the Vet said the disks between my neck bones looked terrible and that my spinal column was only half as thick as it was supposed to be. They operated on my neck and took out all of the fluid relieving the pressure. I had to stay there for a week. They kept me in a small run while I was there with a soft pad in it. I also got very short potty walks after 3 or 4 days. Usually I was carried outside and carried back in. Although, the doctor, the Vet Student, and others that took very good care of



me were very nice, when Dad and Mom came to get me I was sure wobbly but I could walk, and boy was I happy to see them. When we got home I was kept in an X-pen in the house for about 2 weeks so that I could heal.

The second thing that happened was that a whippet moved in next door. They run really fast and I would try to run the fence with him. Our fence is nearly 100 feet long, and he would go into high gear after about 50 feet and run to the end of the fence and turn back. I could keep up when he was in low gear but when he was in high gear, WOW! I must have turned wrong when he came back by because after I turned my knee hurt. Dad said that I blew my anterior Cruciate Ligament just like a football player, soccer player, or skier might. That is why I was limping at the National in Sacramento. It did not really begin to hurt until I went into the ring for open obedience there. One of the nice Vets doing the clinics examined it and told Dad what the problem was, so when we got home my Vet fixed it. In both cases, the obedience training that I had really helped me get well. That is why I wanted to write this article.

Firstly, doing obedience training with Dad taught me about communicating with Dad and Dad tries to make it fun for me. I learned how to pay attention, read Dad's body language, and understand what he wanted while my body language and signals taught Dad what I wanted. I like for Dad to



talk to me although I really do not understand most human words his tone and expressions make me feel good.

Dad would not put a collar on my neck after my operation at WSU for fear of further injury and still will not except when he has to per AKC rules. Usually, I do not wear a collar during training but sometimes wear a harness. On walks I wear a harness. Because I had been taught to heel, pay attention, do figure 8's, and walk on lead without pulling, taking walks using a harness was the first thing we did. We started by taking short potty walks around the yard then after 2-3 weeks graduated to walking to the neighbor's driveway and Dad would ask, "do you want to go home?" If my answer signal was "Yes", I would turn around and we would go home. If "No", we would proceed until I stopped. When I stopped Dad would ask the same question and we would go home if I turned around. Sometimes Dad would say, "lets go a little further", and usually I liked the idea so we would go to the next driveway. Pretty soon we were going a long way. Dad said we went about a mile to a mile and a half and I felt pretty good. It took us about three to four months to get to this point. Because I had learned what Dad was asking through my obedience training this was pretty easy. Dad said that I seemed to know just how far

that I could go and he understood what I wanted when I had had enough.

We also did not stop doing our CDX training, but Dad would not let me jump for a long time. We did all of our training off lead and Dad would use a Mechanics Pick up Tool to hold treats and lead me around with my nose following the treat. Sometimes I got the treat right away but usually I had to do a lot of turns and walk a lot before I got the treat. He would just drop the treat in my mouth when I did things right. He also taught me to front while we were doing this. Other things he did teach me were to walk backwards, circle, dance, turn between his legs, go through weave poles, stand on my back legs, and a couple of other things. When Dad started letting me jump again, it was over a 4-inch high jump and a single 8-inch long jump. After about 4-6 weeks of this he increased the high jump at about 2 inch intervals about 3-4 weeks apart until I could jump 14 inches high. The long jump took a little longer since we added one board at a time until I could jump 28 inches. When we got through with the rehab I could do all of the things that I could do before I became paralyzed like jump up on the bed, sofa, chair, etc. and my gait and movement was as good as before I became paralyzed. All of my obedience exercises and training helped my rehab.

After we got back from Sacramento, and after I had my knee repaired, we did many of the same things. Because the vet had shaved my leg, I looked like a funny looking poodle. The Vet said that Dad should gently massage my leg and gently move it back and forth gently exercising it to keep it loose. He still does it when I act like my leg is stiff or I look like I may be limp-

ing. It feels good and helps a lot. We also began going out potty and for very short walks around the yard wearing my harness and on leash and then graduated to walks like I described above. Dad had taught me how to go up and down ramps like A-frames, and the dog walk in agility. He built ramps so that I could go down and up stairs to the back porch and back deck rather than try to climb stairs. I really made it easier for me to go out potty. I still use them.

Fortunately, we had spent a lot of time doing sits and downs before the accident so my leg was strong. Doing them after surgery, and I did lots of them, they helped me exercise my leg, and helped me get it strong again. It is kind of like weight training, squats, or lunges you humans do. Going backwards also helped because it made me work both my back legs real hard and made them be coordinated. Going backwards is fun and I get to bark a lot. Going around weave poles, making circles, and doing "figure eights" made my sideways muscles work right and helped get them strong. Also, by going between Dad's legs got my rear working right. We still do these things and I bark and have a lot of fun. Dad also asked me if I could stand on my back legs and I am now beginning to be able to. To do this we play the "find it" game or "get phone." Dad puts a treat on a windowsill, edge or shelf of a bookcase, etc. and tells me to find it. Dad also has me get the "phone" for him. To get the treat or the phone, I have to stand on my back legs

and both help exercise my leg. My Vet said these exercises are good things to do and really helped me get well. If I had not done obedience and agility I would not know how to do the exercises or walk up and down ramps and would not have been able to recover so quickly. I still have a ways to go but I am getting there. Mom saw an article on what you humans have to do if you blow your anterior Cruciate. She pointed out that it takes up to ten months to complete the rehab. Dad thinks it may take as long for dogs so don't give up if the same thing happens to you.

As for jumping, we again started with short jumps after about three months of the other exercises. I can now clear a 14-inch high jump and a 28-inch long jump. Dad does not ask me to jump this high much and we usually do 8-10 inch high jumps and a 2 panel long jumps when we train. I still cannot jump up on the bed, sofa, or chair but hope that I will be able to eventually. I still take Dad for a walk every day because he needs it, so do I, and really enjoy my training since it has helped me get well. He says we go mile to mile-and-a half on our walk. There is a place on our walk where I get to hunt rabbits, dinosaurs, sometimes a squirrel, and other game. There are lots of things to sniff. Walks are a lot of fun and I usually get a treat when I get home if I ask properly.

Just thought that I would write this to help other PBGV's that need rehab. Remember, just do not give up or become a couch potato, learn to do obedience and agility, and be sure Mom and Dad work with you to get you better if you need rehabilitation.

Max Jensen •

