

By Karen Brion

# PACH Walker ... Preferred Agility Champion



**O**n Jan. 26, 2012, my PBGV Walker and I headed out for a three-day agility trial in State College, Pa., with hopes that Walker might qualify for his Preferred Agility Champion title. Of course, this happened to be the same day that 12,000-plus people also were going to State College for Joe Paterno's public memorial service. Then there was the problem of trying to locate the show site. Does anyone else own a GPS that gets them oh-so-close to where you want to go and then leaves you on your own to navigate that last mile? We eventually made it to the arena and set up in preparation for the next day's competition.

We arrived at Friday's trial needing 11 speed points. The judge sets the course of between 18 and 20 obstacles and then uses a wheel to find the length of the course. This determines how fast each jumping height group should run the course in order to qualify. Of course, in Excellent B you cannot make any mistakes and you must make course time. For each whole second under course time, you get a speed point. It might sound easy, but many things can go wrong on a run to prevent qualifying. We were running on dirt for only the second time in our agility career, plus it was a rainy day with great scenting conditions in the ag arena. Would that hound nose go into tracking mode? After all, Walker might think that there was a pony under all of that great-smelling footing!

The first class was Standard, consisting of jumps, teeter, A-frame, tunnel, chute, tire, dog walk, table and weave poles, and Walker got 10 speed points. Then we did Jumpers (jumps, weave poles, sometimes tunnels) and even though

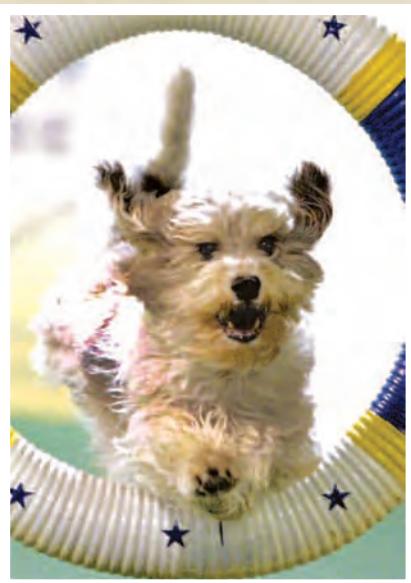
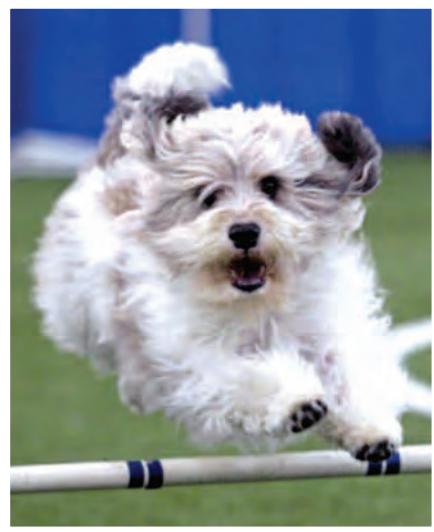
he was clean and made time, he got no speed points. "One point, one point," I kept repeating to myself as we left the arena to spend a long night awaiting Saturday's trial.

Well, Saturday morning finally arrived and Walker did indeed come through with that last point to earn his Preferred Agility Champion title. He is now PACH Chien Blanc Walk Like a Man VCD2 RAE GN PAX MXP10 MJP6 THD TDIAOV! It is tradition that at the end of the run where your dog earns his championship, you grab the last bar that he jumped and you and your dog do a celebratory run around the ring, taking obstacles at will and then stopping to thank the judge. The tradition continues the next day when the owner of the new champion brings cake for everyone, sort of like treating the clubhouse if you make a hole-in-one on the golf course! It was an exciting weekend for us. The agility community is very supportive, and having three PBGV friends there to help celebrate made even more special.

We will trial at a more leisurely pace now, interspersed with different venues and other dog sports, and continue his therapy dog visits. By the time that you read this, Walker will have had his birthday cake. Walker is a palindrome dog, born on 2.06.02, and he finished his PACH on the almost-palindrome date of 1.28.12. May you all have a palindrome in your future!

Our gratitude to Dot Garrett for deciding Walker should come live in Geneseo, N.Y. She has always been part of our support team. New Jersey Mom is our biggest cheerleader! ■

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Above and opposite page: Walker during his agility runs.

Right: Judge Terry Brown, Syracuse, N.Y., Walker and Karen pose with Walker's PACH ribbon and last bar.

Win photo by Jacqui O'Neill

## On Training Walker

We run in Preferred, which means jumping 4 in. lower than a dog of his height normally would. Because Walker is 15-1/2 in. at the withers, we jump 12 in. instead of the regular 16, and get five seconds added to the regular course time. Because I'm a novice handler, Walker is my Novice A dog. When we started taking agility lessons, it never occurred to me that we might someday compete. At that time, the highest title in the Preferred division was PAX, which Walker earned in Cleveland in 2010. To achieve that, he had to accumulate 20 double Qs, meaning he 'Q'ualified 20 times in both Standard and Jumpers on the same day. Sounds easier than it is! Then AKC added the new title of PACH, which means that in addition to the 20 QCs, a dog also has to have 750 speed points.

What I did in the past was to watch some of the slower dogs in the other height divisions to see what speed we'd have to run at, and then we were only concerned with accuracy. Because of this, Walker never knew that agility is supposed to be a game of speed! So when the new PACH title showed up, all of a sudden Walker needed to go fast. That took some convincing after years of going at a slower pace, but it turned out okay — it just took us longer to get those 750 speed points. It was worth the wait!

Heart Dog: Do any of us really think that we pick out the dogs that come into our lives? My first PBGV had severe health issues and passed away on 2-05-02. Walker was born on 2-06-02.

— Karen Brion

