



# BAGPIPES *EXTRA Edition*

December 2020

## SOME THOUGHTS ON ON-LINE AGILITY COURSES

Joanne Williamson

Even before training at home was pretty much the only option, I had dabbled in a few on-line courses. My first try was a handling course that I signed up for as an auditor. Being an auditor generally means you can't submit video for evaluation but can review all the lesson material and ask questions. The platform for the course was the instructor's private website where each participant had their own "page" to log-in to and submit video and receive comments. The first couple of lessons seemed promising as there were several dogs among the participants that had problems similar to ones I was having with my dog and I looked forward to reviewing their video and instructor comments to see what solutions were suggested. It was here that I discovered what seems to be true of many on-line courses: people do not complete the course even though it costs many \$\$\$/lesson! Most participants, including the ones I wanted to follow, completed the first couple of assignments and then quit, never to be seen again. So I did get to review all the lesson material for my auditing fee but really couldn't address my personal training problems. My next try was an on-line course run by a well thought-of New England-based trainer who offers single topic workshops. The one I signed up for was on jump commitment. This trainer used a private Face Book group to provide the weekly lesson material and review submitted video. I signed up as a participant this time but found the FB group format a difficult one to follow the discussion on individual dogs. It was never clear where to post video and comments/replies for individual dogs would get so mixed up it was difficult to keep things straight. The instructor video was not as professionally done as in the first course I audited. I also had technical problems making and editing my own video to submit. And, as it was winter, my ability to work outside and get the lessons done was limited. All in all not a positive experience even with the best of intentions on my part. I also tried a course designed to prepare exhibitors for the AKC Invitationals. Each of the courses from the previous year's Invitationals was analyzed and small sequences based on that year's judging panel were provided for practice. I was very impressed with the professional quality of the video and the suggested sequences were good

practice. There was an opportunity offered to submit video and get instructor comments but I didn't take advantage of that at the time.

So I guess I could say my first impressions of on-line agility courses were mixed and I decided to concentrate on in-person classes and lessons. Then came March, 2020 when the whole world stopped and stay-at-home orders were put in place in my state. One of my instructors immediately switched her classes to on-line. So I was back in a private FB group with all of its limitations. This time though I committed myself to mastering the technical video side so I could keep up with the lessons.

For me, this meant deciding what device to use for videoing and re-learning an editing program, in my case, i-Movie. I tried three different devices: a camcorder equipped with a wide-angle lens, an iPad, and a SoloShot3, a GPS tracking camera that follows the motion of anything wearing its linked tracking box. In the end, I decided the most convenient and versatile device to use was the camcorder mounted on a tripod. The SoloShot works well but doesn't always capture both the handler and the dog in the same screen and takes time to set up so that it works properly. Occasionally, I have used the iPad to video runs from another angle. It works well too but doesn't have the wide angle feature of the camcorder. I know lots of people take and edit video on their phones but I have a very small phone that's easier to carry and I find trying to manipulate video on it difficult. Much prefer my large screen iMac for this part of the process. When a tripod is your video assistant, you end up taking many minutes of footage that are essentially useless for lesson submission. Most on-line courses have a time limit on the amount of video you can submit for review. So it is essential that you reduce the footage to the minimum needed for feedback. It was difficult at first but I have managed to become proficient as an editor and have even learned to use titles and transitions in my videos. Finally, you have to decide whether to upload your video directly to the course website or upload to a video service and use the link for your course work. I have found it more convenient to use a video service; I happen to use Vimeo but YouTube is very popular as well. It allows me to manage my

*The mission of the Bearded Collie Club of America is to protect the long-term welfare of the breed by providing a variety of opportunities for Beardie owners, breeders, and the general public to learn, connect, and compete, while supporting research into breed-specific health issues and rescuing Beardies in need.*

videos more efficiently, send larger clips if I need to, and I can choose whatever privacy setting I think is appropriate.

My instructor ran her classes on-line from March to early June, and I am happy to report I stayed up-to-date on all our lessons, even working all of my Beardies. But then she switched back to outdoor, in-person instruction. I, however, didn't feel comfortable with that and decided to look around for other online options. I currently have four Beardies working at some level in agility. My youngest is Truman who was 13 months old when all of our training options became virtual. Truman had done several "Pup-gility" courses but still needed lots of skills work; Vika, although over three, had never done any agility; Ripple has his Open titles; and, finally, Dazzle, runs at the Master level. So I needed several different types of courses to cover all these bases from obstacle competence to keeping my ability to analyze and handle courses sharp. What to do?

I re-discovered the wide-wide world of virtual instruction. It ranges from single topic group classes to monthly subscription services which provide new material periodically and access to libraries of training material. Here's a list of some of what's out there to sample.

### ***Self-Guided or Single Topic Group Classes***

[awesomepawsagilityacademy.com](http://awesomepawsagilityacademy.com), Linda Mecklenberg  
Self Guided and (sometimes) group classes on jumping/  
handling skills

[agility-u.com](http://agility-u.com), Tracy Sklenar (and others)  
Single topic courses

[oncourseagility.com](http://oncourseagility.com), Karen Holik  
Puppy/Skills classes

[fenzidogssportsacademy.com](http://fenzidogssportsacademy.com)  
multiple instructors  
multiple dog sports  
skills classes

[cleanrun.com](http://cleanrun.com)  
multiple instructors  
self guided and single topic courses

### ***Subscription Services***

[agility-secrets.com](http://agility-secrets.com) (UK)  
monthly fee  
access to training library, coaching services  
new exercises

[baddogagilityacademy.com](http://baddogagilityacademy.com)  
monthly fee  
access to training library, coaching services  
new exercises  
additional single topic courses offered at reduced cost to subscribers

[oneminddogs.com](http://oneminddogs.com)  
monthly fee  
access to training library, coaching services  
new exercises

[classroom.daisypeel.com](http://classroom.daisypeel.com)  
monthly fee  
access to training library, coaching services  
new exercises, additional single topic courses

What to look for in an on-line course? Obviously, it would best to select a course run by an instructor whose methods you are familiar and comfortable with. However, if you want to try out a new instructor, you might choose a single topic course where you have a good grasp of how to train that skill and are looking for new methods or tips to improve. The quality of the instructional video is clearly very important. How professionally done are the video lessons? Are the backgrounds clear and uncluttered? How clear is the audio track? Some instructors are better than others at explaining what is expected. Some have access to a tool like "Coach's Eye" that allow them to draw on the video and demonstrate things like front cross lines. As I've already said, I much prefer courses that are held on websites designed to allow you to manage your course work on a personal "page". As far as I'm concerned these courses done via Face Book groups, although some may be cheaper, are for the birds. Check to see how long you have access to the course lessons and notes. Most seem to allow access for 6 months to a year after the course finishes; some have unlimited access. You never know when you might like to go back and review something. If you're new to agility training, you might sample one of the many puppy agility courses offered. They are generally game-oriented and intended to teach focus and drive as well as some basic skills and are suitable for dogs of all ages.

In my opinion, the monthly subscription services are better for the experienced agility handler. These services are generally cheaper if you pay by the year rather than the month although all the ones I looked at allow month to month subscriptions with no contract. Most offer new practice sequences at least twice a month and often provide actual competition course maps and analysis of how the courses might be run. The sequences are designed to use a limited amount of space and equipment, although you will likely need a space approximately 40 feet by 50 feet to take advantage of this. All offer some level of exposure to "international" style agility. All have libraries of training videos that subscribers have unlimited access to. Coaching services are also available on submitted video. Depending on the service, you can even sign up for "office" hours where you can chat with the instructor in real time. A plus for those with more than one dog, you can get coaching on multiple dogs for the same subscription fee. Generally, in group virtual classes, a fee has to be paid for each dog-handler team in order to get feed back.

So what did I decide to do with my summer agility training? I chose to sign up for a subscription service and have been doing the two practice sequences provided, along with the courses they were derived from, every month with two dogs, documenting all our training sessions. I've submitted video for coaching and have been happy with the advice I've received. I've been exposed to the handling styles of a number of European handlers on international style courses and tried to imagine how I could adapt my distance methods to these kinds of challenges. I took two single topic courses with baby Truman. The first one covered distance handling. This is something I have done for years but I wanted to see if there might be different, newer methods I wasn't familiar with. I chose a course from an instructor who is a well-known NADAC distance handler. Truman and I worked nine weeks on improving his sends and

by the end they were pretty impressive. I can't say I learned anything truly new in terms of training techniques but it was great for us to concentrate on improvement in one area for an extended period. The second single topic course we took was on "awesome" stopped contacts for the dog walk. I've never considered myself a very good contact trainer so with this course I was trying to improve a weakness in my training tool box. Again the concentration for eight weeks on a single skill showed in greatly improved contact performances from Truman. Finally, I'm just about done with the newest edition of the Invitational Prep course I first took 5 years ago. All of the courses from the 2019 Invitationals were analyzed by the instructors. I built and ran each course in my "yard" with Dazzle and Truman before viewing the analyses because I wanted to see how my take on the courses compared to theirs; my yard is not by any stretch of the imagination flat, but I have enough space/equipment to build a 100' x 100' course and the slopes are an added obstacle to dog and human alike! In general, I came up with similar solutions to the handling challenges the courses presented although I tend to use more lateral distance, layering and sends. It was a great confidence builder for me to get this validation of my choices

and a thrill to see Dazzle AND Truman acing them, even if only at home.

Truman and Vika both got their ACT1 and ACT2 titles by video in August and both are ready to step to the line in Novice when we are able to go to trials again. And I feel ready to partner with Dazzle to get those QQs we need for our PACH. All in all, although I would prefer to go back to in person training, I've learned that training in the virtual world has definite advantages as well. I can be exposed to a whole world of agility from my desk in Charlton. If you haven't yet, try it . . . you might find you like it!

## **VERSATILITY NEWS**

*Joanne Williamson*

The AKC has not distributed the New Titles report for October, so there is no new Versatility news.

## **AKC NEW TITLES OCTOBER 2020**

The AKC has not distributed the New Titles report for October.



## **2020 BCCA LOGOWEAR**

The BCCA 2020 National Specialty invites members to visit our Logowear Shop! From October 31 - December 31, 2020 embroidered winter-wear items will be available for purchase. Visit the shop at [www.bccalogowear.com](http://www.bccalogowear.com)

We encourage all BCCA members to take advantage of this short window to purchase items for holiday gift giving or to add to your wardrobe. You will not be disappointed!

Items will be shipped when the embroidery/screen print company has completed your order.

If you place a second order before the first order ships, shipping will be combined/overpayment will be refunded.

Contact Janet Fiske with questions at [LogoWear@BCCA2020.com](mailto:LogoWear@BCCA2020.com).



## HERDING NEWS • DECEMBER 2020

Elsa Sell, Herding Chair • beaconbb@bellsouth.net

### INSTINCT TESTING

This fall has been an great time for Beardie instinct testing thanks to the Rocky Mountain BCC in October and the National Capital BCC in November. I hope owners were inspired by seeing their dog's interest in stock and may seek out a training opportunity. While the primary focus is always on the dog and interaction with the stock, the results of each dog's performance is recorded in the BCCA herding database and passing dogs receive a BCCA certificate. The sponsor provides the needed owner/dog info to the herding committee.

Important Information for Owners: The Colorado event HIC certificates have been sent (if yours wasn't received, let me know). The National Capital BCC event certificates will be sent before Christmas.

Important Reminder for Instinct Test Sponsors: The required paperwork you collect on every dog (passing or not passing) has a use.

Copy of dog's AKC registration (or PAL).

- Assures correct spelling of dog and owner names for database and BCCA HIC certificate.
- Assures the sire and dam get credit for progeny HIC which counts toward herding ROMIs.

Email address of owner. This is how the HIC certificates are now being distributed.

Sponsor information and sample registration form have been revised to include owner email address; these are posted in the HIC forms section of the herding portion of the BCCA website.

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN BCC HIC IN OCTOBER

Sebring Mama Tried . . . . . Kathryn Zeschin  
Wigglesworth Daybar Groovy Kind of Love . . . . . Meg Naylor  
McCrystal Moonlark of Orion . . . . . Molly McNamara  
Orion's Starfire . . . . . Molly McNamara  
Orion's Blue Moon . . . . . Troy Willson  
Linus . . . . . Karen Deitke  
Sebring Light My Fire . . . . . Karen Deitke  
Shanaspre's Gift of Life . . . . . Laura Tappero  
Ragtime What The World Needs Now . . . . . Colleen Fitzgerald, Bill Hayes

### NATIONAL CAPITAL BCC EVENT IN NOVEMBER

Woodnik Brody	Jennifer Strand
Blackfriar Castlebay Pandemonium	Marsha Francis
Auldscotia Smuggler's Delight	Diane Leimbach
Blackfriar Right Hand Man at Castleberry	Kathy Dimond
Winterlyn Blazing Jasper	Judy Thrift
Winterlyn Polar Storm	Judy Thrift
Dreamchaser's Blue Avenger	Robin Lord
Dreamchaser Strathearn Acclaim	Lucy Campbell
Tweedale's Rumor Has It	Linda Porter
Pentangle's The Mighty Quinn	Gail McLean, Iain Farrance
Orion's Space Odyssey	Elisabeth Kim
Moonstone Every Now and Then	Casey Minner, Sandy McDonald

Moonstone I've Heard It Both Ways

Casey Minner,  
Sandy McDonald

Runningmtn Hairloom Baby Doll Ewe

Richard &

Judith Loranger

Blackfriar's Return To Camelot

Kathleen E Wilson

Buckram Barefoot Contessa

Kathleen E Wilson

### MUSINGS FROM THE FARMER'S DOG BY JOHN HOLMAN (1960)

#### Selecting the right young pups

Working ability - Not measurable in the very young, so one must rely on other information

Breeding - One parent really well-bred and good-working; the other a good if less classy worker.

The Head - Though is gives no clue as to whether or not the dog has any instinct to work, it is a good guide to both intelligence and temperament.

A "normal" head without exaggeration is fairly broad, slightly wider at the back than at the front, with a well-defined stop, and sometimes a pronounced occiput.

Of greater importance is the dog's expression which is governed almost entirely by the eyes. I look for a bold honest eye that looks straight at me. I prefer a friendly eye but if not, at least honest - to let me know it dislikes me. I detest the furtive, shifty eye that won't look at me. The light eye makes it impossible to judge character or thoughts. Likewise, the black eye is just as expressionless as the light one.

I like to be able to tell what sex it is from the head alone. I never object to a 'doggy' bitch but I have yet to meet a 'bitchy' dog that was worth the food he ate.

Movement. Select a dog that moves well rather than one which theoretically is built on the right lines to move well. Moves easily and lightly.

Toeing out is usually associated with weak pasterns. Toes that turn in nearly always goes with a strong pastern. But be sure it is toes turned in and not the elbows being out that forces toes in.

Tail carriage will vary with what the dog is doing; Holman didn't notice any association between a gay tail and inability to work.

Healthy as best that can be assessed.