

THE VOICE

It's not just a magazine, it's a Membership



In this month's issue...

www.agilityclub.co.uk



**Winners of the
Pedigree ABC Agility Finals
Full report on page 42**

plus much much more...

August 2002 Edition



**The Agility Club Welcomes it's
Newest Member - Ashleigh Derrett**
pictured here with Mom Julie and Dad Greg

THE
**AGILITY
CLUB**



Pedigree

Obedience teaching followed by two days of Agility judging at the 54th International Dog Show for the Italian Kennel Club. As a matter of interest, the full name of the Italian Kennel Club is "Gruppo Cinofilo Partenopeo" and like

The Italian Job part 1

by Dave Ray

Judging or teaching abroad can sound a rather glamorous pastime but the reality can be somewhat different as anyone who has spent a fair amount of time abroad like Mary Ray would tell you. For many appointments, Mary has been picked up in the dark from an airport, taken to an hotel, spent two days either judging or teaching and then been dropped back at the airport on the Monday morning. Then, of course, when you tell people that you have been to a foreign country they think it is rather wonderful but the fact is that a field of eager students or competitors can be the same no matter where in the world you are. However, we have been rather lucky as Mary has been invited to some super places with some really nice dog people and nowadays we tend to ask if we can have one day extra there for a little sightseeing which most people are only too pleased to accommodate.

When Mary was invited to judge and teach in Naples, Southern Italy recently, I immediately offered to carry her suitcases. Well, the truth is that I had not been there before and they did say they were going to put Mary into a rather nice hotel! She was invited to take two days of FCI

many European shows, there were to be several courses to be judged each day.

One For The Road!

Mary was invited to Italy by Nicola Rowley. Nicola has been in Italy for about twenty years and speaks fluent Italian and she was to be our host and interpreter for the whole of the visit along with her husband Bruno Coluccio. We arrived on the Wednesday evening at Naples Airport and Nicola was there to meet us. Obviously on our first visit to Italy we had a few lessons to learn. The first one was that everyone drives small cars. I was really surprised when we came out of the airport with Nicola and had to shoehorn ourselves into her little Datsun Mica with our two suitcases.

I soon learned why everyone drives small cars though - the Italian drivers are absolute lunatics and in Southern Italy once you come off the motorways, even the main roads are only just wide enough for two vehicles and every other small car had a small dent in it so heaven knows what it is like to have a big car! In fact, a few days into our visit we met a retired vet and his wife from Tunbridge Wells who were on holiday and they had parked their touring caravan in the grounds of the hotel. They had been there since the previous day and when we met them they were still traumatised by their journey into Southern

Italy. As I recall, the words "never again!" were used and they considered themselves lucky to have made it to the hotel in one piece and without any dents in the vehicle.

The judges for the dog show had been accommodated at a hotel in the centre of Naples but Nicola had chosen to put us in a hotel in the countryside outside Naples and what a good decision that was. All the rooms were either bungalows or similar to semi-detached houses within the grounds and ours had a balcony overlooking the swimming pools, one being a normal pool and the other being a thermally heated Jacuzzi pool from a volcano which was big enough to swim in and of course we took advantage of it every day. On our first evening, we had a meal with Nicola and the students Mary would be teaching over the following two days, some of whom came from Nicola's own club, the Agility Club Campania. And of course the hotel specialised in pizza but this was the proper Italian variety which is a little bit better to say the least than the British variety.

Obedience Italian Style

On the Thursday and Friday, Mary was going to be teaching FCI Obedience. As Mary is a great believer now in clicker training, she did concentrate on that as well as traditional training methods. The fifteen participants were a great bunch of people with a good variety of breeds.

Unlike FCI Agility which is fairly similar to British Agility, there are some quite marked differences between FCI Obedience and British Obedience which can be summarised as follows:

In Italian Obedience there are four levels - Beginners and Classes 1, 2 and 3. Unlike our own marking system, there is a maximum points to be gained for each level so the perfect score in Beginners would be 150, Class 1 would be 200, Class 2 would be 250 and Class 3 would be 290 and apart from the exercises each class has a general valuation mark within it and the heelwork

pattern is pre-determined within the rules. In the recall exercise, where we would expect our dogs to be recalled and sit in front, in Italy they have to be recalled straight into the heel position, the recall being from a mandatory 15 metres and the dog is always left in a sit.

In Beginners, the handlers also have to send the dogs over a hurdle then recall the dog straight back to heel. Also for Beginners it also gets slightly more difficult than in the UK as they have distance control and again a very set procedure is enacted. The dog is placed in a sit and the handler moves 5 metres away and the Steward then places himself 5 metres behind the dog. There are just two positions - a down and back into the sit before the handler returns to the dog. Lastly, there is the stay exercise. The handler puts the dog in the down position and walks about 20 metres away with the Steward and stays away for one minute before returning to the dog.

As I said earlier, there is also a general evaluation mark of ten points for each level and the Judge gives a mark up to a maximum of ten based on:

- Type of relationship depending on the understanding between the dog and handler during exercises
- The way in which the dog does the exercises, eg with fun, energy or boredom and so on
- Temperament of the various breeds
- Presentation and behaviour of the handler

Our agility handlers complain about the difference between FCI Agility and British Agility but in actual fact the differences are minor. However, the differences between British Obedience and FCI Obedience are quite substantial which is a great shame because the FCI do hold the Obedience World Championships and it would be extremely good if, like agility, we could send a British team to compete. But in

saying all this, I am sure that if we wanted to then we could train up a team to compete in the championships provided the FCI and the Kennel Club allowed us to.

Universal Dog Training

Well, you could say that Mary had her work cut out. She was training Obedience for two days but one thing which is the same worldwide is dog training. The type of exercise and the end result might be different, but the methods employed are the same as they are already fairly familiar with clicker training and Mary appeared to have achieved a good degree of success with sharpening up their training methods and also solving a few problems that the handlers had. They were a great bunch of people and extremely friendly and, as with a lot of continental clubs, had use of their own club house with hot meals and drinks available during the day. Mary's favourite dog of the day? It was a rather stunning Malinois handled by a really smashing guy who was extremely keen - in fact, he was almost as keen as his dog!

On the first evening, we had dinner with all the handlers at the training ground. On the Friday evening, when the obedience training had finished we were invited to the Pre-Show Dinner at the hotel where the rest of the judges were staying in the centre of Naples. There we were greeted by the President of the Italian Kennel Club, Maria Ceccarelli. It was a very grand affair and the first people we bumped into were Diana Spavin and her partner, Barry. Diana was judging Dachshounds and Cavaliers on the Saturday and 70 Beagles on the Sunday. Mind you, we were probably lucky to make it into the hotel. If we thought traffic was bad during the day we were mistaken. Bruno and Nicola arrived to take us into the centre of Naples in their older Mini car and when we saw 50-seater coaches trying to drive down roads little wider than back alleys we understood why - even to get into a parking spot in one piece was quite an achievement!

Next issue, Dave tells us all about Mary's judging experience.



WIN TICKETS TO SEE THE CHUM SEMI-FINALS AT STONELEIGH

The Voice has 6 pairs of tickets worth £9.50 each to **The Town & Country Festival**, 24th to 26th August, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire to give away.

Amongst the other traditional delights of county fairs, you will be able to see Chum semi-finals each day. Be there to witness first hand those elite few who will get to compete at Olympia this Christmas.

Is there a catch? Of course there is! Tickets will go to the first 6 out of the hat who can tell me the winner and the runner-up of the standard AND mini classes at Olympia last Christmas. And for absolutely no prize at all, can anyone identify the judge in this picture?

Entries to the Editor please, by post or email.

Alternatively, buy tickets in advance from the ticket hotline, call **024 768 58300** and pay by Visa or Mastercard - or buy your tickets on the web site:

