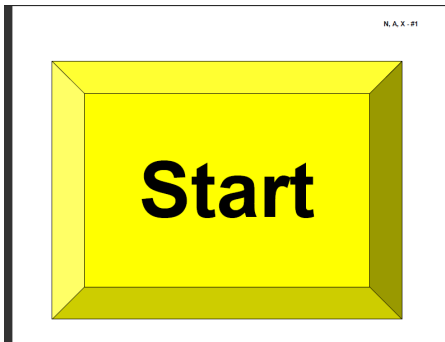


Getting 3 Legs on 4

By Greg Hayward

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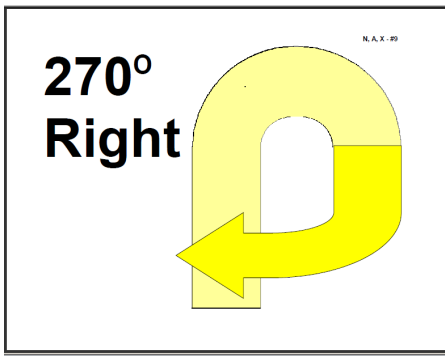


(Rally Start Sign)

Neither Rudy nor I had ever competed in an AKC trial like we did in Rally. The free AKC brochure (on the AKC Web Site) states: "AKC Rally is a new dog sport that is taking the nation by storm, a successful stepping stone from the AKC Canine Good Citizen program to the world of obedience or agility." The Rally Novice Course consists of a Start and a Finish sign along with 10 to 15 course signs that give the "description and directional arrows of the exercises." The signs are numbered so the dog and handler can proceed through the course from exercise to exercise at their own speed. The scoring is based on 100 points with 70 points needed for a qualifying score to earn a Leg toward the AKC title of Rally Novice. It takes 3 Legs to earn a Title.

Unlike Obedience, the handler is allowed to give multiple commands and signals to the dog so they both can run the course at a brisk pace and perform as a team. Rudy and I found this to be just what we needed to refine our mutual skills we learned at LTC in our beginner, sub novice and pre novice training classes.

Given this brief and limited description of Rally, let's summarize one main point we learned from each of our trials.



(Rally 270 Right Sign)

The Rand Trial was our first trial ever on April 27th. LTC member Steve Stembridge joined us for support and he took photo shown below. Per Steve, we did great; and got 3rd Place with a qualifying score of 89 to earn our 1st leg. Here is how we lost 10 points. In the Halt, Down exercise, the leash got tangled around Rudy's front right leg and as a result we did not do the next station correctly which was a 270 right; we went left. The judge later said if I had asked to untangle his leash, she would have let me do it without a penalty. I should have asked. Next what we learned was that it was better to redo an exercise for minus 3 points rather than be judged for an Incorrectly Performed (IP) Station at minus 10!



(Rand Picture in Ring)

Our 2nd trail was at Lyons Township on May 11th. LTC member and Trustee Pat Goudie joined us for support. Our ring was next to an Obedience Trail Ring. What we learned here was Patience. When our judge asked if we were ready, I said yes. I should have said no, because beside us in the next ring was a Mastiff that started on the same line exactly at the same time we started. We train for distractions, but this was a BIG one. Rudy kept looking at the other dog and did not follow my command. As a result of my efforts to get his attention, we were dock points for multiple corrections and tight leads. We got 5th place and earned our 2nd qualifying leg.



(Rally: Halt, Down, Walk Around your Dog)

Our 3rd trial was in Morris IL, half way to where my parents live. Bob and Ruth (my parents), joined Louisa, Rudy and I so they could see Rudy perform their 1st trial and our 3rd trial. What we learned here was that some Rally Judges came from Obedience and do not make more liberal allowances for Rally exercises as intended by AKC. The trial building was narrow and full of participants; so we warmed up outside. When we got into the ring it was really hot and full of distractions. One of the stations in our run was Halt, Down, Walk Around your Dog. Rudy scratched due to his allergies and the judged determined he lifted a leg from the mat during the down. Thus we were scored -10 for an Incorrectly Performed (IP) Station. I needed to watch Rudy more closely since I thought he was down. Regardless, Rudy and I won 1st place and earned our 3rd leg. Rudy and I earned our 3rd leg in 3 trials on June 1st 2008, 1 year to the day when Rudy joined our family at 10 weeks old (age 14 ½ months). We owe a special thanks to all of our instructors at LTC including former DOT Rosemary Minzghor and former DOT Mary Ann Riecke for their training, coaching, and support.

No one I have asked can tell me the logic behind why *it takes 3 Legs to earn a title* when our dogs have 4 legs? What I can say is that it took Rudy on 4 Legs to make it happen.

In my opinion, Rally is essential to training a young dog and new handler, and it is fun!

For more information on AKC Rally, go to their web site at <http://www.akc.org/> and search for "Getting Started in Rally" or http://www.akc.org/events/rally/getting_started.cfm

For AKC Rally Regulations, go to their web site and download the Obedience and Rally Regulations at <http://www.akc.org/pdfs/rulebooks/RO2999.pdf>. It shows you all the signs and has a description of how to perform each exercise. **The principle parts of the exercises are boldfaced and underlined.**

For information on AKC Rally Trails or any AKC Event, go to their web site at <http://www.akc.org/events/search/> and follow the instruction for Event type, states to search, and date range into the future.



(Morris 1st Place Ribbons)