

# THE UKANUBA EXPERIENCE - FROM A BULLY POINT OF VIEW

Going to a National Championship with a Staffordshire Bull Terrier, is kinda like going to a sword fight with a pocket knife. But I know that going in. I have shown performance Staffies for almost 15 years now. I just love the fight!! The fight with myself, to prepare my dog to his or her full potential.

Being one of the top agility dogs of your breed is a thrill in itself and then getting that invitation in the mail with your ranking on it and your dogs name with all its titles listed, makes you want to compete even if the competition is over 2,000 miles away!

Two years ago was the first time I received such an invite, ranked number 5, was just as cool to me as being ranked number one. Going in my expectations were to travel with a friend, also invited for the first time, and just have fun. That I did, we had two clean rounds, my dog had no problems flying, met up with friends & had a ball.

Last year, we were ranked #4. Now, I thought I was a little bit smarter, my dog better trained & now my hopes were higher to perform better than the

year before. Unfortunately, a few weeks before the competition, my little Betty, decided that you can do the weave poles anyway you want & that problem followed me all the way to California. We did not have one clean run. All that way, and not one ribbon to show for it. A disappointment to say the least but, but we still had fun & she really ran well except for the poles.

This year, I'm number two, earned our MACH just a few months prior and I decided at the last minute to try my luck again. My always helpful roommate couldn't make it, so I trekked out to Long Beach on my own. I did meet up with other friends once there.

For some reason, I really didn't feel much pressure. I'm not sure why? Maybe because I've had the highs & lows of National competition, survived them both & learned a lot along the way.

All five ranked Staffies were competing this year & it was fun seeing & chatting with everyone. After the first round, only two Staffies were clean, Betty & Eddie. I thought to myself, I've been here before & a lot can go wrong in a hurry.



The second round, again we ran clean. So far so good. End of day one...

The second day, round three, I thought to myself, "just do what I have learned & run relaxed. Again, third run clean!!! Wow, can this be real? Could we somehow get a perfect score at a national event?

At this point, I'm the only Staffie that is clean & leading by 1 fault. It's not that I wanted to beat the other Staffies, I just wanted to show that our breed is up to the task of a perfect score.

I'm not sure why I still wasn't nervous. The final course was very technical at the beginning. It was a hybrid course, only two contact obstacles & a lot of jumps.

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The start was very slow for Betty because it was so twisty. We got through that part clean, then a discrimination section where the dog had to know the tunnel vs. The a-frame. We got through that ok. Next, three jumps to the teeter, two of which were spread jumps, which Staffies can have problems with, three jumps in a pinwheel to the weaves, change sides at the end of the poles & three jumps out with a 180 turn between the last two. We were wide at the 180 but were able to correct it. We got the last two jumps & there it was ...A perfect score of 400!!

I was thrilled. All the hard work, all the training, it all paid off!!! I felt I prepared myself & my dog to do the best we could.

A little later, I found out I missed the finals by one place. I was a little disappointed, but still very proud of our accomplishment. We were 11th out of 91 dogs in our height class. I couldn't have been prouder of Betty. She handled the stress of flying, hotel stays & the crowds of people & noise at the ringside . What a weekend in California to remember... Hopefully, i'll be able to compete in orlando next year??

Pam Dural & Betty

Oakdell Staffords

Burr Ridge, Il.

