

analysis probably isn't frequently discussed, it is possible to identify the bloodlines from which some of the dogs come. Lessons learned from those structure seminars can be applied.

At an obedience or rally trial, the Pembroke will show his innate desire to please. The bold but kindly expression and the desired three-to-five head proportions can be seen on the stays. Do not try to evaluate movement, because many times the Pembroke will turn his head to watch the handler's face or knee, and his gait will not be natural as a result.

The Pembroke's length of neck allows him to easily follow his nose as he tracks through fields, woods, and parking lots, searching for "lost" items. The breed's work ethic and focus makes him stick to the task at hand. The breed standard asks for freedom of movement, and to have otherwise will impede the dog's efforts.

At agility trials, the runs last less than a minute, but reach and drive can be seen as the Pembroke travels from one obstacle to another. The dogs will not be trotting as in the conformation ring, but they will show their quickness and agility. Structural issues can show up in the jumping form, but keep in mind that handler errors can affect the dog's performance.

There is no better place to see the breed standard in action than at a herding event. Pembrokes need enough substance to handle the livestock, without being overdone in any area. Freedom of movement, trainability, "wants to," and breed type are all on display.

Check the AKC website for the "almost benched" event closest to you!

—Lynda McKee,

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Pembroke Welsh Corgi Club of America website: pwcca.org

Pulik

I asked Ms. Cathy Pronzini (corddogs@yahoo.com) to join me as a coauthor this month, since she has trained and competed in agility with several Pulik, starting in 1995. She also

has served as the Puli Club of America's agility chair since 1998.

Puli: The Flying Mop

Nothing quite captures the eye like a corded Puli racing through an agility course and flying over jumps. It seems only appropriate that since 2014 is the 20th anniversary of AKC agility, we recognize the Puli's participation in this sport.

As of June 2014, 108 Pulik (53 males, 55 females) have earned AKC agility titles. The Puli with the most titles (52!) is Balint, handled by Melinda Peters.

The first Puli to earn the NA title was Tango (Ch. Brasstax No Strings Attached, UD, NA), owned by Pat and Harry Guticz and handled by Pat Guticz.

A fun fact is that the first dog of any breed to earn the OA title (also during August 1994) was a Puli named Lulu (Brasstax Backfire, UD, CGC, AX, OAJ, AAD, NAC, NJC, NGC), owned and handled by Pat Guticz.

The first year that a Puli earned the Master Agility Champion (MACH) title was in 2006—this was Scootie (MACH3/PACH Bowmaker Szereto Kutya, CD, RN, MXS2, MJS3, MXPB, MJP6, MJPS, PAX, NF), owned and handled by Jane Slade-Exum.

As of June 2014, another nine Pulik have earned MACH titles:

- Rombi (MACH2 PACH MT Hood's Rombolo Rocket, CD, RE, PT, MXC, MJB2, MXP5, MXPS, MJP6, MJPS, PAX2), owned by Catharine Pronzini, James M. Moen, and Bill Hiett, and handled by Cathy Pronzini.

- Oliver (Ch./MACH3 Loakespark Just Smart, RN, MXS2, MJG2, OAP, OJP, OF, T2B), owned by Alexandra Davis and Carolyn Nusbickel and handled by Alex Davis.

- Buvi (MACH2 Shaghaven Buvosh, CDX, RE, MXC, MJG2, NF), owned and handled by Martha C. Sheppard.

- Balint (Ch./MACH2/PACH Immerzu Kamchatka, UDX, RAE, MXS2, MJS2, MXP6, MXPS, MJP7, MJPS, PAX2, MXF), owned by Melinda J. and Tom C. Peters, and han-

dled by Melinda Peters.

- Fruby (Ch./MACH Pula-V's Fruska Pajkos, RA, MXS, MJS), owned by handled by Jane Slade-Exum.

- Harry Potter (MACH Prydain Young Wizard, CD, RN, MXG, MJG, OF), owned and handled by Esther C. Abshier.

- Nici (Ch./MACH2 Madri Gras Nici of Fuzzy Farm, MXG, MJC, NF), owned by Joseph Lapine, Alice Lawrence, Judy Caprio, and Gil Martin and handled by Joe Lapine.

- Bliss (Ch./MACH Piroskai Nutn Bt Bliss 4 Mardi Gras, PT, MXS, MJS, XF), owned by Joe Lapine and Gil Martin and handled by Joe Lapine.

- Piri (Ch./MACH Moonshadow Martuska Piroaska, RA, MXS, MJC, NF, IT), owned and handled by Jane Slade-Exum.

Recognizing that not every dog is comfortable jumping at full height, in September 2002 the AKC began offering an alternative to jumping full height—Preferred—where dogs jump four inches lower than the height they would normally be required to compete at and are allowed an extra five seconds per run to complete the course.

The AKC gives equal recognition to the accomplishments of dogs competing in Preferred by awarding a Preferred Agility Champion (PACH). The first Puli to achieve the PACH was "Tillie" (PACH2 Loakespark Waltzing Matilda, AX, AXJ, MXP9, MXPG, MJP9, MJPG, PAX3), owned by Brooke Ellsworth and Alexandra Davis and handled by Brooke Ellsworth.

As of June 2014, an additional four Pulik earned PACH titles: Scootie, handled by Jane Slade-Exum; Balint, handled by Melinda Peters; Rombi, handled by Cathy Pronzini; and Kai (Ch./PACH Piroskai Kowabunga, MX, MXJ, MXP4, MXPB, MJP8, MJPG, PAX, CGC), owned by Dagmar Fertl and Irma Fertl and handled by Dagmar Fertl.

Of the 108 agility-titled Pulik, more than half (59) also are conformation champions. Many Puli owners are firm

believers in having a “balanced” dog with a title in the front and back, and the high-energy level and intelligence of Pulik naturally leads many owners to turn to performance activities of all types to harness that enthusiasm.

The Puli is a natural candidate to be a successful agility dog since this is a lively, acrobatic breed who is quick, agile, and able to change directions quickly. Be forewarned, this is a very intelligent breed who also often has a wicked sense of humor, and if they know there is a crowd to cheer them on, they really can turn up the antics (see “Corded Comics” in AKC GAZETTE, December 2010).

The AKC holds a yearly Invitational Agility Trial in conjunction with the AKC / Eukanuba National conformation dog show in December. The High Scoring Puli at the Invitational is awarded a medallion that the Puli Club of America (PCA) funds. The list of High Scoring Puli at Invitational can be found on the PCA website. Since 1996, there has been agility associated with national specialties held by PCA (with the exception of 2002, 2004, 2006–2010). The list of High Scoring Puli in Trial can be also found at the PCA website (puliclub.org/pcaspecialtyagility.htm).

What makes a good agility prospect? A dog who (1) is fit and active, and keen to get involved in energetic exercise; (2) has a high degree of intelligence; (3) is biddable (has willingness to please and a good degree of trainability); (4) has drive (desire to work and has focus); and (5) has the physical build and conformation to be able to handle sports.

A dog with good structure will be able to perform better and hold up for an extended career, since many performance dogs compete into their middle or even senior years. Structure is particularly important for agility dogs, since the physical demands of this sport are significant.

The importance of having health-checks done on your dog (and its parents) cannot be emphasized enough. It

is recommended that your vet X-ray the hips and elbows, check the patellas, and examine the eyes. Health findings may not necessarily preclude your dog from participating in agility but will help you better understand any limitations that your dog might have.

People often ask about coat length for Pulik competing in agility. Most competitive Pulik do not have full-length cords, due to the weight of the cords and the fact that the cords can knock down bars of jumps as the Puli is jumping over them. Instead, you will most often see a Puli with shortened cords or one who is cut down, looking like a lamb.

The ability to succeed competitively in this sport depends as much on the dedication of the owner as well as the will and desire of the dog. Teamwork—a fun and disciplined connection—is what makes a great performance dog.

—Dagmar Fertl, dfertl@gmail.com

Puli Club of America website: puliclub.org

Pyrenean Shepherds “She Can’t Be That Old!”

No one who sees her run agility believes that Puck is 11 years old. Watching her run, jump, and climb this morning—still with all the excitement and enthusiasm of her 4- and 5-year-old Pyrenean Shepherd housemates—set me reflecting on age as it affects our dogs and ourselves.

As I admire her continuing stamina and athletic ability, the natural next thoughts involve how to keep her, and the rest of our canine companions, healthy and strong as long as possible. It’s something all of us fanciers spend a lot of time contemplating; our dogs’ lives are too short even at their longest.

Since our dogs, including the Great Pyrenees, have learned to enjoy and to expect to participate in dog sports even as they age, helping them continue to enjoy working is a priority. That means they must be fit.

It might be easier to ignore or forget the importance of diet, nutritional supplements, and exercise if those things hadn’t been rather forcibly underscored

by my own recent experience: Last spring a surgeon opened up my left hip and took out some malfunctioning parts and replaced them with artificial ones. Walking had become so difficult that for several weeks before the operation, I used crutches to get around. Relief from that pain was almost instantaneous, even as I worked through the pain of recovering from the surgery itself.

That’s when the importance of taking nutritional supplements, eating the right foods, and exercising was fully brought home to me. If I failed to take the supplements on schedule, my body urgently reminded me of the oversight within a few days, with cramping, inflammation, and reduced range of motion. If I slacked off on my daily exercises for more than two or three days, again came the physical reminders, in the form of discomfort, reduced mobility, and lost ground in regaining strength and stability.

The very real consequences of failing to attend to my own health needs reminded me of how important it is to consistently meet the needs of the canine athletes who depend on me. Fortunately for the dogs, while I may occasionally ignore my own best interests when I tire of gulping pills or doing yet one more set of boring calisthenics, I rarely balk at making the effort to take proper care of them ... although sometimes it’s hard to get outdoors on those really, really soggy Oregon days. The rewards of making sure the dogs get enough exercise, high-quality nutrition, and mental stimulation every day more than make up for the time and trouble it takes to provide them.

As my husband, who walks the dogs every evening, remarked after I healed enough to once more be able to train the energetic Pyr Sheps a bit every day, “Boy, they sure are a lot calmer!” And happier, stronger, and more fit ... and with any luck, we’ll get to keep them around a long time.

—Kathleen Monje,
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Pyrenean Shepherd Club of America
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