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# DCA TRACKING TEST REVIEW

by Lisa Sulkowski, Tracking Test Secretary/Chairman

Well, DCA is over and I have survived. My dogs, husband and I took a much needed vacation and now I'm back, rested, and ready to share all the tidbits on the Tracking Test. But first of all I want to thank every one: for the donations to the trophy/general tracking fund, the tracklayers, the judges, the participants who came to track, the spectators, the chef who made and served up the vittles after the tracking test, (and my husband who put up with me for the last month). I can truly say.....

**IT WAS A GREAT SUCCESS !!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Let me fill you in on all the details.

We plotted tracks after the Road Trial on Friday. Everyone made it out to the "JUNGLE" around noon. My TD track-layers were both Dal people - Kay Williams and Debbie Reynolds. They also laid cross-tracks for the TDX's. My X layers were Ken Orzlik (a Sheltie person), Carla Ogert (a Weimeraner person), and Bryna Comsky (Canaan Dog person). I also helped lay cross tracks. If I were to chair next time I would have more cross-track layers. I did have more than enough volunteers but I didn't think I would need them.

The temperature was well into the high 80's and humidity was at 100%! Wichman Forest Preserve is a well used tracking site in the spring and fall; not too many people use it in the summer. The overgrowth was tremendous. It was well over your head in some spots (most spots). In some areas you couldn't see your markers or flags when you went back to re-walk your track. After about 4 or 5 hours and a lot of bug bites we made it back to camp and were set to start the test at 7:00 AM the next day. I have to admit I thought no one would pass in this test. The conditions were HELL! We had the AKC rep out there too. I think he, along with the judges, thought the same.

But- HEY- WE HAVE DALMATIANS!!!! These dogs came for a PURPOSE and that's JUST WHAT THEY DID!! Track!!! Each dog was conditioned and just plain READY to track. Libby Simendinger and Gayle Geiger both pulled their dogs (both dogs had their TD's) just so the first TDX Alternate (Elaine Dodson) could run her bitch. Only in tracking do you see the good sportsmanship and camaraderie this sport creates. Thank-you Libby and Gayle. AKC rules allow us to turn two TD tracks into one TDX if needed, and that's just what we did.

The morning of... Everyone was there early (no surprise to me). We had a severe rain storm the night before, which helped the weather tremendously. The draw took place with tiny ceramic Dalmatians with the # of the track to run. We had a bulletin board with each dog's name, handler, track-layer and cross-track layer on it. This helped everyone follow what was going on.

Our first TD, Annette Guillaume and CH Roundhill New Tweed, from Colorado were the first passing team of the day. Our happy track layer was Debbie Reynolds.

Our next TD, Janet Langford Gray and O'Shea's Satin Hurricane started out great - but something happened on the last turn and they didn't make it. Our track layer Kay Williams was just as disappointed.

Our TDX's were really something. These were the Tracks from Hell in my opinion. They were hard to get to: each team had to walk 600 to 700 yards just to get to the start. But the tracks themselves were lovely to run. Each managed to have the different cover and obstacles needed for TDX.

#1 TDX track was run by Pat Sayles and Coachlight Trivial Pursuit TD from

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New Mexico. They ran a flawless track and passed!!! Track layer for #1 was our Sheltie man Ken Orzlik; he was one very happy camper.

#2 TDX track was unusual because to get there we had to cross a creek. I plotted cross-tracks and the day before the rain the creek was only inches deep. The day of the test it came up to my waist. The laugh of the day was when coming back from cross-track laying: I fell in BUT didn't get my track plot wet. Gee what a sight I looked when I came back into camp. Gayle Geiger and Moon's Comet Wild-Two CDX TD from Pennsylvania, crossed the creek very successfully and made it to their start with track-layer, Carla Ogert (Weimeraner person). Unfortunately the dog missed the first turn then finished the track flawlessly. (Isn't that always the case?)

#3 TDX track was run by Elaine Dodson and CH Gemini Secret Mission CDX TD from Missouri. Our track layer Bryna Comsky (Canaan Dog person and Dal lady) had to be driven to the start along with dog and handler. Time and heat was against them. It was getting late and the sun had come out and started drying out the grass. BUT HEY- this is a Dalmatian!!! Missy was great just pulling Elaine behind her. She didn't stop until that final article - the glove.

We have a tradition at our local club of really eating well and this test was no exception. Kris Carlson - Dal owner- is in charge of a Deli. She made the best salads and submarines around along with a delightful fruit pizza and fruit and cheese tray. Everyone pigged out after. Another tradition on our area is to award a "STINKY FOOT" trophy to each track-layer whose dog passes. Because of the amount of work and rough conditions each track-layer faced, we awarded these little trophies with a small foot on them to each track layer along with a clip board and tracking paper. The "Stinky feet" and clip boards were both donated to the test.

We awarded lovely green rosettes (the biggest I could find) along with the DCA pewter plate trophies with the DCA logo on them. The dogs just wanted to run and play and that's what we let them do! To make the day special we even had one of our judges certify Libby Simendinger's dog. I'm sure he will get his TD this fall! Good Luck.

Each person that was at the tracking test and out in the fields came up with some strange rash that blistered. All week long at DCA we "spotted" all those who were at the tracking test from the rash on their arms (an additional prize we didn't count on). It is now nicknamed "DCA Spotted Tracking Dog Rash".

I am in hopes everyone had a great time at getting "SPOTTED" at the Tracking Test in Chicago. Hopefully with your support, both financially and with competent entries, further DCA tracking test will be held!! I truly enjoyed running this year's test. Now I have to go back to work and get my little bitch ready for her TDX this fall and my other for VST!! Again - THANK YOU and HAPPY TRACKING!!!!

[Editor's note: of special interest was a letter to Lisa from Roberta L. Campbell, Administrator of Performance Events at AKC herein quoted -

"Occasionally, we write letters to clubs when things do not go well. We think it is also important for clubs to know when their efforts are successful. We are writing to congratulate the members of the Dalmatian Club of America's Tracking Committee; Susan Olsen, Gerri Lightholder, John Benoit, Elaine Dodson and Darlene Chirolas for a job well done at the TD and TDX Test held on August 5, 1995.

"Our Tracking Field Rep, John Barnard reported to us that the Committee was well prepared and conducted more than satisfactory tests under conditions of extreme heat."