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TEACHING AN OLD DOG

Dogs and golf courses go together like greens and cup cutters. When I started to build White Deer Run Golf Course in 1997 I was thinking of purchasing a dog.

As it is my nature to research everything before making the leap, I called around and asked about border collies since they were being used a lot at the time. I have always had big dogs—mostly Labrador retrievers—and did not really like border collies. Knowing that we were going to have problems with geese I said, “Okay, let’s try this border collie thing.” The dog I decided on and trained and worked with passed on about a year ago. Without a doubt it was the best dog I ever had. A great working dog and an even better family dog and companion.

So here I am driving around, seeing superintendents and their dogs on a daily basis while peddling my wares. I missed having a dog, but how would one fit in now? Ah, what the heck, the search was on again. I wanted another border collie, but one with different markings. I found a breeder and found an all-white dog with a black patch over one eye. This one was different alright. I kinda forgot about the training and the “puppy time”. It was a little harder this time without a course to run my new youngster on, but thanks to my many superintendent friends we always have a place to exercise and run anytime we want to. This dog was different. Every dog we see or are around has its job, whether on a course, to hunt, to protect, just to name a few. But what about us? What was Ginger’s job going to be? I started thinking again and researching. I tried agility training with my other dog—HUGE failure—he never liked it. I thought let’s give this a try, I have to have something for this little one to do or it will drive me and my wife crazy. Well after 7 months we just passed our first qualifier for agility.

If you are not familiar with agility, it is where the dog and handler have to move through a number of obstacles, usually around 20 total without penalties. The dog with the fastest time is the winner. Champion dogs will do a course in just over 30 seconds—that’s right, 30 seconds. The obstacles consist of jumps, tunnels, an A frame, a “dog walk” and others. The old dog being taught new tricks here is me. This has been quite an

experience as all my friends will tell you, as they listen to me talk about this ad infinitum. A lot of running and exercise for this old dog (falling down too), the young dog is seen many times ahead of the old one, barking at him and asking, “Where do I go next old man?” This sport is for any dog and its handler no matter what breed or age. Don’t ever think that the agility trials you see on TV are as easy as they look. Again anything that looks easy takes a lot of time and work. The experience has been a total win-win. I get to spend quality time with my dog, she gets the exercise and sense of purpose she needs, and she isn’t bouncing off the walls driving me and my family nuts. If you are willing to work with your dog, the rewards are tenfold. If you are interested just contact me and I will put you in touch with some agility clubs in the area. The one we belong to is www.agilityjunkies.com in the Northwest area. Wish us luck, we will need it. I am sure all my friends can’t wait to hear more about me and my dog, and our current adventures! @

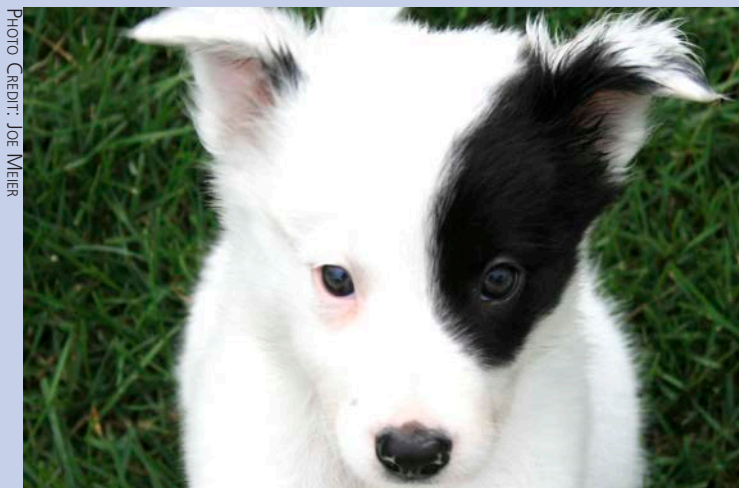


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