

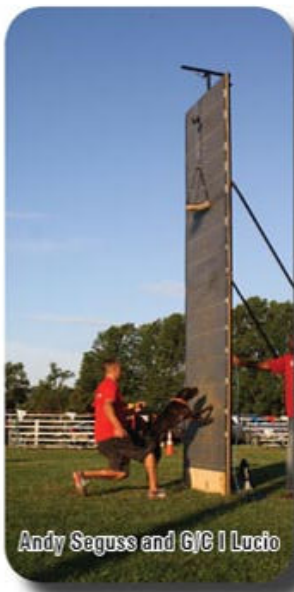
APBT Breed Type and the ADBA's Top Dog Athletic Event

I came across the following quote that seemed to make some sense to me. "Pedigree indicates what the animal should be. Conformation indicates what the animal appears to be. But performance indicates what the animal actually is." Throughout our breeds history the American Pit Bull Terrier has always been an active, athletic dog. Whether it was used for its historical purpose as a combat dog, used as a stock dog on the farm, hog hunting, or weight pulling competitions, the APBT excelled in its athleticism. Putting a dog 'to work' had its benefits on a dog's mental attitude, as well as his physical well being.

The ADBA's new Top Dog Athletic Event will provide additional athletic competitions (Wall Climb, Drag Sprint and Treadmill Race) and the opportunity to earn an additional titles of excellence, based on athleticism, that will be reflected on a dog's record with the American Dog Breeders Association.

The Salt Lake Terrier Association held the first Top Dog Event in a sanctioned event over the 2014 Labor Day weekend, with 8 entries. The first "Major" Top Dog Event was held at the ADBA Nationals in New Jersey, in September 2014, with 14 entries. (A "Major" is when there are over ten dogs entered and is required in order for a dog to earn a Top Dog title.)

I have had the opportunity to observe the evolution of the Top Dog Event with our local club here in Utah over the past two years. The SLTA and its members was the first club to hold these competitions and to assist with fine tuning the rules.



Andy Seguss and G/G I Lucio



Our first event was the "Fit and Fun Day" which began with a one mile run for both dog and owner, then proceeded to the treadmill race, drag spring, wall climb and ended with the obstacle course. Dog owners could enter any three of the five athletic competitions, or could

enter all five and count the dog's top three scores in the overall rankings for the day. The "Fit and Fun" day was a good start and the fine tuning of the competitions was underway. Many of the rules for the three athletic competitions as well as the equipment used were influenced by the sport in Europe, Mexico and South America.



Over the years, it is a sad fact that many different breeds have had their dogs altered by the show ring. Within many working breeds two types have developed;

a show type and performance type. The original purpose of the American Pit Bull Terrier as a combat dog has been outlawed for many years, but fortunately for the breed the American Dog Breeders Association Heritage® Conformation Standard of the was written based on the conformation of APBTs of the past that were used in the dog pit successfully. When judged by knowledgeable judges, ADBA Conformation Champion show dogs of today will reflect athletic dogs of the past.

My personal interest in the Top Dog Athletic Events was observing the individual dogs entered into the three competitions and evaluating their physical conformation and how it related to the ADBA Heritage® Conformation Standard for the breed. One of the aspects of conformation that the breed standard calls for, that I observed, in many of the dogs achieving the top heights in the wall climb, was having an overall height to weight ratio advantage, or having the tallest dog at a given weight.

Ataller, lighter dog, with the flexibility and agility of the correct backend, seemed to be able to accelerate and use an adequate takeoff strategy to climb the wall after the tug.

The first requirement of the dogs that will excel in the Top Dog Event is a strong prey drive and focus. They must WANT the tug. The dog must also be relatively smart and be able to



Ron Wolfe and RPK's St. Pierre

A close look at the rules, the choosing of the heights jumped, use of the start distance, etc. are factors to consider in formulating a strategy for each dog.

I look forward to and will be very interested in watching the evolution of the ADBA's Top Dog Athletic Event within the next few years. I predict nothing but positive benefits for the athletic American Pit Bull Terrier.

By Amy Greenwood Burford

problem solve. Watching inexperienced dogs figure out how to use the momentum of the takeoff engaging their whole athletic body to scale the wall to grab the tug is amazing. The dogs only gets three attempts at each height so 'figuring it out' happens quickly. The competition also requires a strong working relationship between the dog and handler. The strategic planning and physical demands of the handler in catching the dog with each climb to prevent injury, can be a challenge. The use of a light-weight working harness on the dog help the handler get a "handle" in assisting the catch.



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