

National Obedience Championship

A Report from the National Obedience Championship and the National Rally Championship in Tulsa, Oklahoma March 18-20, 2016

On March 16th Gerianne, Erin, Kim, Bert, and Linda left for the NOC and NRC. We took two vans full of six dogs :-). I was competing in the NRC with Rick in Rally Advanced Excellent and in the NOC with both Rick and Robert. Erin was competing in Rally Advanced with Kasey, Linda in RAE with Icy and Rally Novice with Misty, and Bert with Darby in RAE. Kim was our support staff!

I expected an invite to the NOC with Robert, but eleven-and-a-half year old Rick's invite was a total surprise. In the three weeks before the NOC I practiced with a friend going in and out of the ring practicing all of the exercises with both dogs, and we hung banners on the gates to simulate the look of the go out spot. Robert hasn't done that many go outs in totally strange places, so I didn't know what to expect. I was just SO thrilled to be going with both dogs, I didn't give results much thought, although I wanted to place with Robert in the toy group.

We left on Wednesday, which was SO smart, so we could sleep in a little bit on Thursday and get acclimated to the show site. Check in for rally is "interesting" as people start staking out their crating spots with purses, water bottles, etc. ;-). You think that the allowed 3 by 5 foot crating spot is MUCH larger than it actually is :-). We also did most of our shopping at the vendors that day, although we managed to do a little shopping every day! Checking through the catalog Thursday night, I discovered that Rick was the second oldest dog at the NOC by four months, and also the dog who had the most titles. Robert had the second most titles ;-).

Rick worked well at the NRC but was far from the placements with 133 RAE dogs. It was great fun. Friday was an EARLY day, as there were four walkthroughs for RAE back-to-back starting at 7:30. I was surprised at how "normal" the courses were, as they were really, really hard and complicated three years ago. I did have one ring that the interpretation of "call front, finish forward" was far from mine, nor any of my other Border Collie friends ;-). (hey judge, I'm moving forward as fast as I can when I send my dog to heel, YOU try and beat him, ha-ha), but other than that I thought the judging was right on. Rick even got one 100 score. After more shopping, I brought Robert in to do a little bit of heeling, signals, etc., and he was a little flummoxed by the crowd and the noise (It was MUCH noisier during rally than obedience, but there were probably half again as many people in the building on Friday than Saturday.)

Rick and Robert were in the same group at the NOC, which worked out GREAT, there were I think six dogs in between them. So, Rick was with all of the little dogs :-). The first ring was directed jumping and the retrieve on flat, and I was REALLY nervous about Robert doing go outs as the very first thing in a strange place (and the warmup ring was about as big as my motel room ;-), not that I could have ever gotten in there anyway to do a go out). Robert NAILED his go outs, I was so pleased. And then Rick passed the first ring too! WOW! I had only been to one other NOC in my entire career (although invited to many with the paps, I just never went). I went to the first one in 1995 with Zack, and had the only toy dog. And I think he flunked something early on, so I was just pleased to PASS this time.

Erin was my main helper, ably assisted by Kim, Linda, and Bert, and I could NOT have shown two dogs without their help. Erin was in charge of armbands, equipment, cookies, water for me, chapstick, all I had to worry about was a quick warmup and showing the dogs. I think I could show one dog just fine by myself, but NOT two without help. As we progressed through the rings two things kept amazing me, the first being that Rick wasn't overly silly (well, maybe in the one ring where he didn't want to let go of the glove), and the second being that both dogs were passing every ring. Some of the judges actually LIKED Rick ;-), and he beat Robert in three of the eight rings.

When we got to the fifth ring I showed Robert, and before Rick went they broke for lunch to do stays. That is a daunting thing with ALL 160 dogs doing stays at the same time in the different rings and the commands coming from the loud speaker, not the judge in the ring. I was so thrilled that Robert did the sit stay that I started to pick up my armband and leash and leave :-). The judge said, would you like to stay for the down? :-). And then she told me I was a goober :-). I LOVED her, she was so much fun in the ring (Carolyn Wray). Then it was Rick's turn, and again he did the stays. WOW, now it was lunch time and both dogs were still in it!

We started up again after lunch and progressed nicely through the remaining three rings, except we had at least an hour and a half break between ring seven and eight. It was the moving stand and articles. The only thing I can figure is that the judge was doing the articles on the diagonal and the chair the articles was on was a good ten feet away, so lots of time was taken up with setting up, walking over to the chair, scenting the article, etc. But later we decided it was a GOOD thing as both of my dogs were able to rejuvenate and rest and it was a great ring for both of them, Rick had 1/2 off and Robert 1 off. Rick was the LAST dog in any ring on Saturday, and Bert took a picture of all of us celebrating after Rick's 8th ring, as both

dogs were clean through all eight rings. Beyond my wildest dreams!

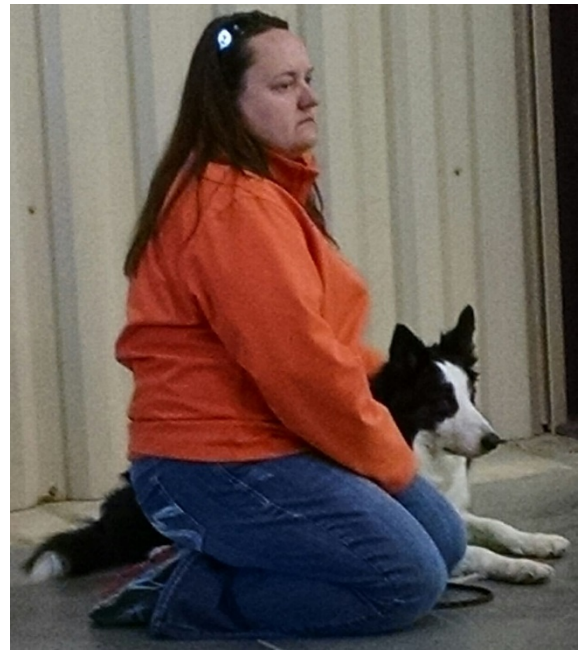
Then we had to wait for the announcement of the Top 50. I wanted both dogs to make it!! I was pretty sure Robert was solidly within the Top 50 (he ended up 31st), but as they kept ticking down I was afraid Rick wasn't going to make it and then, they announced his number in 48th place! WOW WOW WOW! Robert also won the Toy Group, and that was super cool as well.

On Sunday Robert missed a GLOVE (really, Robert?), and Rick missed two come signals. One theory somebody came up with is that my shirt was the same color as the banner and his old eyes were having a hard time picking it out. I don't know what my theory is ;-). But, I had a BLAST showing both dogs, especially Rick. We stayed for the announcement of Top 20, did some more shopping, and packed up and got on the road, tired and happy.

Again, I thought the judging was great at the NOC, I have been to tournaments in the past where you could lose ten points and have NO clue why ;-). I felt like they judged just like at a real dog show, which is how it should be I think. It was an amazing, exciting, wonderful five days of being with friends and reveling in my dogs and our relationship. I am so thrilled to have been invited and to have done well. **Gerianne**



Toy Dog Winners



Erin and Rick



Celebration