



Paw Blacks in Australia 2014

by Kirstin Graves

Nick Chester judging Key & Switch in Master Strategic Pairs 500

A group of intrepid souls (and you do need to be intrepid to deal with the bureaucracy around importing/exporting dogs) decided to head to Brisbane in June 2014 to compete at the ANKC Australian Nationals. Lots of people expressed interest in attending, but the final 'Paw Blacks' taking dogs included Louise Marsh with Vino & Fly (both 500 and masters), Natasha Coutler with Jonty (300 masters), Lucinda Robertson with Kayla (600 masters agility, excellent jumping), Lyn Sayers with Jayme (300 masters) and Lofn (300 novice), Dyson Beasley with Switch (500 masters) and Rumur (400 masters) and Kirstin Graves with Key (600 masters). Nick Chester also attended as one of the judges at the Nationals.

After a hell of a lot of planning and preparation (thank goodness for Lucinda's patience with MPI and the previous experience of Louise, Natasha and Lyn) the group headed over on three separate flights on the week of 16th July. All dogs handled the flights fairly well and cruised through their customs checks thanks to all our pre planning. We met up at Glenreagh in NSW to attend a three day show the weekend before Nationals. The idea of the show was to practice on the different Aussie equipment, and fine tune our understanding of the rules. (Lou, Natasha and Lucinda had been to Jimboomba Club to attend a training night, and Kirstin to Gold Coast Dog Obedience Training Club.)

At the Glenreagh show we very quickly came to grips with the 'wee-saw', spread jump, table, open classes and games. The dogs showed off their excellent skills and training and started accumulating multiple clear rounds and winning pretty quickly, even in the events we don't do in New Zealand. Lyn managed all of this while also judging at the show. I am just going to take a slight detour to explain the classes, so the rest of this makes a little more sense:

The ANKC have three levels of competition:

1. Novice (starters/novice or C Jumpers)
2. Excellent (novice/intermediate or B Jumpers)
3. Masters (intermediate/senior or A Jumpers)

They have the following classes which are split by level:

- Agility (AD, ADX or ADM)
- Jumpers (JD, JDX, or JDM)
- Games – Snooker (SD, SDX or SDM), Gamblers (GD, GDX, or GDM) and Strategic Pairs (SPD, SPDY or SPDY)

There are the following height levels:

- 200 (think micro)
- 300 (think mini)
- 400 (this is part of our mini and medium classes)
- 500 (this is part of our medium and maxi classes)
- 600 (think maxi)
- The only exception to all of this are the open classes – all heights and all levels compete together, with a 'distance challenge' which is an area of the course with an exclusion zone where the handler cannot enter.

So as an example if something is listed as JDM500 – that is Jumping Dog Master 500 height, ADX600 is Agility Dog Excellent 600 height and ADO is Agility Dog Open. Got it? (It took me a while...)

I won't list all our results from Glenreagh, but we did pretty awesomely, and the photo shows our winnings and ribbons from just the first day. This was an incredibly relaxed show, no pressure at all, and the judges and competitors were so generous with

their support and suggestions for us. You might also notice how fantastic we and the dogs look in our uniforms? Huge thanks to Agility Stuff, Woofa Wares and Admor Promotions for sponsorship to get us kitted out. We had loads of comments from the Aussies on how great we looked!

After two days' rest, or frantically getting organised for Nationals depending on which group you were in, we all met up in Durack, Brisbane ready for the Nationals to start on 25th June. First up was the team's event. There were five dogs/handlers in each team, with an additional reserve dog and handler. Each of the five dogs runs a jumpers course and then an agility course with the worst result being dropped, so four dog's agility runs and four dog's jumpers runs count to the final total. The Aussie teams were NSW, ACT, Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria (details here <http://agilitynationals2014.com.au/events/teams/>). The Paw Blacks were represented by Louise Marsh & Vino, Lyn Sayers & Jayme, Natasha Coulter & Jonty, Dyson Beasley & Rumur and Kirstin Graves & Key. The teams event was run on its own, no other events happening, with lots of people watching. So just a little nerve wracking... The Paw Blacks did freakin awesome, and ended up runner up to the amazing Western Australian team by five faults. Damn that rail!

We then launched into five massive days of competition.

- Day 1 – teams event and 1x agility and 1x jumpers
- Day 2 – 3x agility open and 3x jumpers open
- Day 3 – 2x agility and 1x jumpers
- Day 4 – 1x jumpers and games
- Day 5 – finals.

There is so much to mention that I just can't fit into the small space I have been given to write this, so I will let the results speak for themselves. Here they are on the right.

A debrief on the trip would not be complete without mentioning the supporters who went over. Those of us competing were humbled by how amazing this group of people were. They used their holiday time and spent their own money to come and support us in Brisbane. And my gosh did they support us! This team did things like set up 'camp kiwi' each day, warm up dogs, massage dogs, create NZ/Paw Blacks signs, video runs, photograph runs, facebook updates, screaming and yelling whenever we were running, as well as providing general behind scenes encouragement. They also, and more importantly, made the event an awful lot of fun. A huge and heartfelt thanks from the Paw Blacks team to our supporters; Paula Edwards, Sarah MacPhail, Fiona Hodgson, Bronwyn Rumble, Alana Robertson, Graeme Parr, Christine Gabb, Justine Dale, Emily Taylor, Michelle Jopson, Paul & Mia Beswick and Colin & Sheryl Graves.



Glenreagh Show - Day 1 winnings

RESULTS

Louise & Vino

1st SPDM400 with Dyson & Rumur – 2014 National Champions • 2nd SDM500 • 3rd ADO final • ADO, JDO, JDM500 finalist • 5th JDM500 heat 1 • 3rd JDM 500 heat 2 • 3rd JDM500 heat 3 • 10th ADM heat 2 • 10th ADO heat 1 • 9th ADO heat 5 • 2nd JDO heat 2 • 9th JDO heat 4 • 7th JDO6 heat 6

Vino showed how he is a veteran competitor and simply ate up the courses. Sometimes knowing where he was going better than Lou

Louise & Fly

3rd SPDM600 with Lucinda & Kayla
Fly didn't get any other clear rounds at the Nationals, but she had some incredible runs! Several were "just one rail" runs. They were fast, furious and incited gasps from onlookers. She also helped Lou understand the course and run Vino better.

Lyn & Jayme

1st SPDM300 with Natasha & Jonty – 2014 National Champions • ADM300, JDM300 finalist • 1st ADM300 heat • 2nd JDM300 heat.

Jayme performed very well in all courses where all dogs ran the same course, but struggled with the cramped and tortuous courses set for small (slow) dogs. Every failed run of Jayme's was an 'off course' due to the inadequate handler (or training LOL), but the course design was also a big contributor.

Lyn & Lofn

1st SPD300 with Trudi Thorpe & Maverick (Papillion from Sydney) – 2014 National Champions

Lofn didn't achieve any other clear rounds at the nationals, but she certainly grew in confidence and did some lovely work! Such a darling wee dog.

Natasha & Jonty

1st SPDM300 with Lyn & Jayme – 2014 National Champions • 1st SDM300 – 2014 National Champion • 1st GDM300 – 2014 National Champion • 2nd ADM300 final • 3rd JDM300 final • ADM300, JDM300, JDO finalist • 1st ADM300 heat • 3rd ADM300 heat • 2nd JDM300 heat • 2nd JDM300 heat • 5th JDO

Jonty was an absolute star! He took everything in his stride and did everything Natasha asked of him.

Lucinda & Kayla

3rd SPDM600 with Louise & Fly • 2nd JDX600 final • 3rd ADM600 final • JDX600, ADM600 finalist • 2nd JDX600 heat • 2nd JDX600 heat • 3rd ADM600 heat

Kayla did an amazing job at the nationals! She was speedy and consistent getting these great results. She surprised Lucinda who had no expectations going into the event.

Dyson & Rumur

1st ADM400 – 2014 National Champion • 1st JDM400 – 2014 National Champion • 1st SDM500 – 2014 National Champion • 1st GDM500 – 2014 National Champion • 1st SPDM400 with Louise & Vino – 2014 National Champions • Overall top dog 400 height • JDM400, ADM400, ADO finalist • 1st ADM400 heat • 2nd ADO heat • 4th ADO heat • 1st ADM400 heat • 2nd JDM400 heat • 1st JDM400 heat

Incredible running from Ru! She loved the 400 height and showed it. The Aussies were saying "this is the dog to beat".

Dyson & Switch

1st SPDM500 with Kirstin & Key – 2014 National Champions • F3rd GDM500 • JDM500 finalist • 3rd JDM500 heat
Switch was a crowd favourite, he was running amazingly and I overheard several of the Aussies saying "those contacts are to die for".

Kirstin & Key

1st SPDM500 with Dyson & Switch – 2014 National Champions • 3rd in JDM600 final (five faults) ADO • JDM600 finalist • 2nd JDM600 heat • 3rd ADO heat • 8th JDO heat (five faults)

Key had quite a few "if only" one rail runs. She tried her heart out, but the tight courses were not easy for a fast big striding dog. Several of the Aussies took quite a liking to Key and mentioned to me how great they thought she was.

Things we really liked about the trip and agility in Australia? *The friendly and helpful Aussies – they really were quite awesome. *Strategic pairs – so much fun and craziness in one 30 second run. *The Air NZ cabin crew who were really helpful about checking the dogs were loaded and comfortable. *Our supporters! *Some of the spectacular Aussie handlers with their dogs and the runs we witnessed. Good natured Aussie/Kiwi rivalry. *The prizes – we won so much we had to gift all the food and some prizes to Guide Dogs Queensland as we couldn't bring it all home. *Lovely stewards telling you when to enter the ring, walking with you to where you set your dog up, taking your lead and taking it to the finish line. *The event was very well organised! Sometimes the communication was a little lacking, but the day with six open events was very cleverly organised. (Thank goodness because it could have been complete chaos.) *The way the team event was run and supported. *The loaned gazebos and chairs organised by the Nationals committee. *Meeting new crazy dog people.

Things that were just different. *Acknowledging the judge and getting permission to run – it was all very polite, but also slowed things down. *The 'wee-saw' – can't see the point of it myself, and it appears they might be changing it back to 'normal' size. *The open classes – I personally really enjoyed the distance challenge, but the courses were not really set to be fair for all heights. *The judges have complete conversations with you while you are running. If you get lost, they tell you where to go next and they will comment on your run when you are finished, if they feel so inclined. It was a little off-putting at first, but you got used to it very quickly. *Most competitors go for 'qualies' (clear rounds) rather than wins.

Things we weren't so keen on. *No start or finish holding areas – you had to leave the competition ring on lead (which was fine), but as there were no toys or food allowed in the ring, you couldn't reward your dog until after their lead was on and you had left the ring. (The next competitor also couldn't start until after this.) *Once the running order is set (based on your qualifications) it remains the same for the whole show. So the same people always run first which was a huge disadvantage. *Some of the courses were really poorly designed and did not show the dog's skills at all. This was particularly noticeable in the 200, 300 and 600 heights. There wasn't a lot of a chance for the dogs to gather speed, really tightly spaced obstacles and some really crazy angles, including 90 degrees onto a long jump. Our NZ regulations really do work better for limiting



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that sort of safety issue. *Getting sick with the never ending cold! *Bull ants – how dare they bite our Jonty?! *Not being able to sleep past 3.30am.

Some of the non-agility things that were attempted by the group included (in short version you can ask for full details from the participants); visiting Byron Bay, swimming in shark infested waters, having too much of a good time in the local Glenreagh pub, going to Movie World and meeting Catwoman (who says dogs and cats don't get on?), "don't come knockin' if this campervan is rockin'", cold showers, an Ikea navigation disaster, eating six batches of baking, lots and lots of shopping, Kahlua/marshmallow shots fail, visiting Keri Neilson's retirement village and everyone going out for dinner on the last night of the nationals to celebrate our success.

Would we all do it again? Well the answer is YES! The experience and memories that we have from this are quite incredible and we are already looking at Adelaide 2016. The organiser has said he will try to address the running order and course design issues, so we are all quite keen.

Paw Blacks and their supporters 2014

