

AKC Agility Dogs Shine in Ohio

Over 980 of the nation's fastest AKC agility dogs competed for a Champion title.

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The fastest and the furriest canine agility competitors were in Sunbury, Ohio, from Friday, March 29 through Sunday, April 1, for the American Kennel Club's 2007 National Agility Championship. Over 980 dogs competed for the honor of being awarded the Champion title by having the fastest time with the fewest errors.

Agility, one of the fastest growing dog sports in America, is a competitive activity in which dog-and-handler teams race against the clock to complete an obstacle course in the fastest time. Dogs jump hurdles, race up ramps and weave through poles, all under the direction of their handler. At the AKC Nationals, dogs compete within their height division of 8", 12", 16", 20", 24" or 26".

After a three-day-long competition, with trials from sunup to sundown, six dog-and-handler teams won the final round (with one champion per height class).

The final winners included: 8-inches – MACH4 (Master Agility Champion for AKC) Bomar's Beanie Baby, a Papillon, and handler Kimberly Sisak; 12-inches – MACH8 Blue Moon Shine on Willow, Australian Shepherd, and handler Michelle Beardsley; 16-inches – MACH Luka De La Brise, Pyrenean Shepherd, and handler Ashley Deacon; 20-inches – MACH Sagehill Happily Ever After, Border Collie, and handler Paulena Renee Hop; 24-inches – MACH3 Wildfires Precious Metal, Border Collie, and handler Gerry Brown; 26-inches – MACH2 Jumpstart Maladjusted Jester, Border Collie, and handler Daisy Peel.

Competition aside, the mood in the arena was friendly and supportive. Win or lose, everyone was out to have a good time, as demonstrated in the stands Sunday afternoon during the Challenger round for dogs 8 inches or less. "We love you, Tigger!" screamed fans of a Papillon flying over agility obstacles as if propelled by wings. But making it to the finals round wasn't in Tigger's cards: as he stumbled over an obstacle before making it to the finish, a loud groan came from the stands. One of the crowd's favorites wouldn't be moving on. The audience wasn't deterred, however: "We still love you, Tigger!" they cheered.

Border Collies and Shetland Sheepdogs were by far the best-represented breed, but there were also some unexpected contenders, including a Portuguese Water Dog, a Lowchen and an American Staffordshire Terrier, which received a standing ovation after his final agility run, as that was the first time an American Staffordshire Terrier had made it to the finals in the history of the AKC National Agility Championships.

For more information, visit www.akc.org. To catch some of the exciting agility action from the final day of the event, watch CBS Evening News on Friday, April 6, 2007. Check local listings for actual air time.