

Welcome to our Keegan's Magic student newsletter! Each month, we will share training tips, training philosophies, student achievements, general announcements, and other great information. We hope you enjoy!

When Your Performance Dog Doesn't Perform

Many of us have been here before, but it can still be a tough situation. You and your dog have committed to many hours of training, paid lots of money for classes or lessons, and you enter an agility trial. You have high expectations. You're nervous but are looking forward to having fun with your dog and showing off your skills.



There are many different outcomes possible at every agility trial. Some things are beyond our control as our dog's handler, owner, and trainer. And sometimes, our dogs are not able to compete at the level that we expect, due to either physical or emotional reasons. I'm going to focus on the least desirable for this month's article.

Despite our best training, some dogs suffer from too much stress at competitions and can't handle the environment. Sometimes, a career-ending injury means a dog can no longer compete without suffering significant pain. In either situation, the dog's interest should be put before our own. In these extreme scenarios, it's pretty easy to see that the dog should not compete, although that doesn't make it easy to retire a dog from agility.

It's the not so extreme scenarios where things can get a little fuzzy. If you find yourself struggling to compete with your dog, take a mental step back and reevaluate what's important. Can your dog physically and mentally compete at a level you are happy with? If your answer is "no," then you need to alter your expectations and goals for that dog or consider finding another way to have fun with that dog.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with “just” practicing and never competing with your dog. Competitions should be as enjoyable as training for both dog and handler. I feel like some of us forget the reasons why we do agility with our dogs. For me, I love the seamless communication between dog and human. I love being able to ask my dogs to run as fast as they want in the direction I’ve cued over these crazy obstacles. I’m constantly in awe of my dogs’ athleticism. I love to push the boundaries of speed and obstacles and learn the differences in timing my cues for each individual dog.

If you ever feel disappointed at practice or competition, I hope you are disappointed in yourself and not your dog. I hope that disappointment motivates you to change something to improve your next performance. Lastly, I hope your dog thought she (or he) just won the biggest prize in the world, despite your attitude.

I have finished many runs with many dogs, sometimes not knowing that was the last time I would be running that dog. Now, after every run, I remind myself that we don’t know the future and if this is my dog’s last run, then we need a major celebration at the finish. Many people have seen the way I praise my dogs after a run and they ask, “Wow, did you Q?” My response is usually something like, “No, but we did the weaves on that hard entrance, got a great contact performance, kept up all the bars, didn’t go off course, etc.” You get the point. Success in any sport is not necessarily measured by wins. Sometimes, success hides. And in agility, I think it’s the handler’s job to find that success and celebrate it every time.

Important Policy Change – Class Payment/Session Structure

To better track attendance and determine which classes have room for new students, effective February 5, classes will be broken down into 4-week sessions instead of all drop-in classes. Session participants will pay for each 4-week session instead of per class attended. Absences will not be applied to future sessions. However, we will still accept drop-ins (at a slightly higher rate) for students whose schedule makes it difficult to commit to a 4-week session. Please check with Maren if you need more information.

****NEW* Handlers Only Class***

We are excited to announce a new Handlers Only class coming to Keegan's Magic! In this new class, handlers will attend **without dogs** and learn how to:

- better read course maps
- find the best line for their dog
- determine the proper handling techniques, and
- improve their own footwork

This course will be offered at our field on Thursday evenings from 5:00-6:00 pm. The cost of this class is \$60 for the 4-week session or \$20 for drop-ins.

For those handlers who can't attend this class in person, an online version will be offered for your convenience. To participate in the online class, you must be on Facebook and submit videos to Facebook or YouTube each week. Videos and coursework will be posted to a private Facebook group page. Please contact Maren for more information or to join this class.

Class Schedule

The first 4-week session begins the week of February 5. A handout with class dates for this session will be available at the training field. Class dates may be adjusted due to unforeseen circumstances, such as inclement weather.

- **Advanced Agility:** Tuesdays 8:00-9:30 am and Wednesdays 8:00-9:30 pm (\$68/session or \$22/drop-in)
- **OneMind Dogs Inspired Handling:** Thursdays 8:00-9:30 am (\$68/session or \$22/drop-in)
- **Intermediate Agility:** Tuesdays 6:15-7:15 pm & 7:45-8:45 pm, Wednesdays 6:30-7:30 pm, Thursdays 6:30-7:30 pm & 7:30-8:30 pm (\$60/session or \$20/drop-in)
- ***NEW* Handlers Only:** Thursdays 5:00-6:00 pm (\$60/session or \$20/drop-in)

Private lessons available on Monday and Wednesday mornings. Ring rentals are also available for students. Please contact Maren directly for scheduling and availability.

Accomplishments & Brags

This is YOUR section of the newsletter – where our students can share their accomplishments with their dogs, including titles, placements, training breakthroughs, etc. Please send us an email at keegansmagic@gmail.com so that we can celebrate your achievements with all our students!

Congratulations to the following students:

- Maren Baldwin is now an officially certified OneMind Dogs Instructor for Handling Techniques 1
- Jan Casey and BT got 2 legs toward their first Fast CAT title (BCAT), clocking in at over 24 mph
- Lisa Schmeling and Neo earned their C-ATCH (CPE Agility Trial Champion)
- Yuko Otazako and Forrest earned their very first leg in Novice JWW
- Jan Casey and Zoey earned their Pet Partners certification
- Jan Schultz and Valor ran a whole sequence at class with no mad sniffing



Training Tip

Remember C-C-C! **CONNECT** (look at your dog), **COMMIT** (move towards the next take off spot) and **CUE** (which OneMind Dogs technique should you use?) between every single obstacle around the whole course!