

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!

Are You Slowing Down Your Dog?

Students sometimes ask me about improving their dog's motivation to play agility. One of the first things I ask is, "When does your dog run the fastest and happiest?" Replies usually range from chasing squirrels or balls to playing with other dogs. So, what does speed have to do with motivation? As a handler, my goal is to encourage my dogs to run fast and stress-free in the agility ring, just like when they are playing.

Handling an agility course with your dog is like using a GPS to drive to an unknown destination. If you trust your GPS and it always gives you useful information, such as clear directions or enough time to prepare for a turn, then you're more likely to follow its instructions with confidence. However, if your GPS is often wrong or late with instructions, you'll probably begin to doubt it and start slowing down or questioning every instruction. What would happen if your GPS didn't even speak your language?

On an agility course, your dog is driving the car and you are the GPS. Think about this analogy and how you run your dog – do you give your dog information early enough to prepare for turns or take an obstacle? If not, your dog may start slowing down to allow you more time to give better directions. Many dogs that I see running slower than average have handlers who are consistently late with directions.



What is early enough? Typically, a dog needs to know whether he is turning or running straight at least one stride before taking an obstacle. So, why are some handlers late with their information? Maybe they don't know when their dog commits to an obstacle, or they worry that

their dog won't commit, or they think that giving a command before the dog lands at each obstacle might cause a refusal.

I had similar issues with Hart where we had a bit of a rough patch at trials. It took me a long time to figure out that, in trying different ways to help, I was actually making the problem worse. At trials, he was slower than in practice and would often refuse obstacles, especially when I tried to move away before he took off for a jump. Finally, I realized he was doing this because I kept calling him away from "off courses" – more often than I'd like to admit.

Using our earlier analogy, from his perspective, his GPS directed him to an obstacle, then frantically told him it wasn't the right one. Who could blame him for slowing down so his handler could decide which obstacle she really wanted? By calling him off "wrong" obstacles, I made him doubt which was the right one.

Hart, like many dogs, wants to be right and wants to please his handler, so he slowed down to make sure I could give him better information at trials. Now when we run, he's always "on course." There is no such thing as an "off course" obstacle. It's my responsibility to give him clear instructions instead of second-guessing my handling. If he heads toward an obstacle, it's because my handling sent him there.

CleverGirl, my Border Collie, is less experienced and isn't an overly confident dog, so it's my job to make trialing as fun as possible. She has two speeds: crazy Border Collie fast or shut down and unable to work. At some of her early trials, I mistook her speed for confidence and called her back to me to take the correct jump or tunnel. Those corrections quickly affected her and, for a few months, she didn't want to trial at all. Now when we run courses, she's always right. Recently, I asked her to come back and redo the weaves after she missed the entry. This was the first time in over six months that I corrected her on course, and she was super happy to come back and try again. I will continue to avoid asking her to "fix" things, but I'm very happy that she still wants to play the game with me.

There are other dogs who need more motivation to play, maybe they get distracted easily or run slow. Think about how you would handle that dog, especially a young dog who is just beginning to experience trialing. What do you want as their early memories of the ring – you fussing over what's right and "fixing" things or you praising them and letting them know they are perfect? After all, your goal as the handler is to leave the ring with the happiest dog at the trial.

Class Schedule

The next 4-week session begins the week of May 29. A handout with class dates for this session is 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)
- **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 & 7:45-8:45 pm (\$60/session or \$20/drop-in)
- **OneMind Dogs Inspired Foundation:** Wednesdays 5:00-6:15 pm (\$68/session, no drop-ins)
- **OneMind Dogs Inspired Handling:** Thursdays 8:00-9:30 am (\$68/session or \$22/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, 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 and Hart earned their C-ATCH at the Pawsitive Action CPE trial.
- Monica Gobeli & Rocky successfully completed their first U.S. Canine Biathlon in Alabama. Rocky also earned 2 Qs in Crazy 8's (Barn Hunt).
- Jan Schultz and Faith earned their second Q in AKC Novice FAST.
- Diane Gailit and Skylar earned their Open JWW title in AKC. They also had two perfect days at the Orlando CPE trial, earning 8 Qs and qualifying for the 2019 CPE Nationals.



- Jan Casey and BT placed first in their division and earned an invitation to the Ultimate Air Dogs National Competition for the third year in a row.
- Heidi Pitts and Latt completed their second U.S. Canine Biathlon, earning 1st place civilian female, 1st place overall female, and 5th place overall out of 798 competitors.
- Ellen Kurland and Magic earned their NADAC Open Versatility Award.
- Carolyn Rothfusz and Jax earned the qualifying scores they needed to qualify for 2018 NADAC Championships.
- Lisa Schmeling and Neo earned their second Q in AKC Beginner Novice Obedience, with a 2nd place.



Training Tip

Understanding the various levels of connection your dog needs throughout an agility course will help you plan your handling choices. For example, consider a scale of 1 to 10 that describes connection, with 1 being the dog can see the side of your face and 10 being you are looking directly at the dog's eyes. You might need a Level 1 connection to run a straight line parallel to the dog and Level 10 connection to do a front cross at a 180-degree turn with an off-course tunnel right in front of the turn.