

Paws to Dance



The Newsletter of the Canine Freestyle Federation, Inc.
May 2009

Canine Freestyle: It's About the Dog Seminar by Kristen Sicotte,

by Adele C. Monroe



March 28 and 29, Kristen Sicotte traveled south for a breath of spring air and presented a two-day seminar hosted by the Carolina Canine Freestyle Guild.

People who were able to attend got a real treat. Kristen took the participants from the fundamentals of building a phrase through creation of a choreographed mini-routine in just two days. On Saturday, well-planned exercises did a great job of illustrating the concepts underlying choreography; these concepts leaped off the page and came to life. Sunday started with an exploration of music, and why a particular piece of music might or might not be appropriate for a routine. Sunday afternoon, participants were divided into groups and put everything they had learned over the weekend to use. Each group went through the process of selecting music for one dog-handler team and choreographing a short routine for that team. The routines were presented to the entire group, and comments were solicited, emphasizing the importance of obtaining feedback—that is, the perspective of the audience—when developing a routine.

I am fairly new to freestyle, with one level 2 title earned in November 2008. Since starting freestyle late in 2007, I have found the concept of “artistry” to be a mystery. I think I recognize artistry when I see it, but figuring out how to choreograph a routine so that it is artistic has eluded me. At the seminar, I finally got some hints about what constitutes artistry. On Saturday, almost as an aside, Kristen said, “When you connect relationships, you get artistry.” The relationships Kristen was speaking about are the relationship between the dog and handler, the relationship between the dog and the music, and the relationship between the dog-handler team and the performance space. Also, artistry happens when the performance evokes some feeling in the audience. It doesn't have to be drama on the order of *Gone with the Wind*, but when watching a successful performance, the audience will feel something, even if it's “just” pleasure in watching the dog-handler team. *Continued on page 6*

From Your President

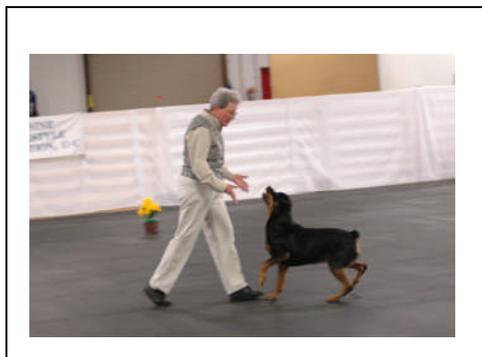
Take a Step Forward

It's an exciting time to be a CFF member. The forum is up and running, though it would be great to have more participation from the membership. There have been some very insightful discussions of everything from training issues to music selection, and even an area for members to brag a bit on their dogs' accomplishments in other venues as well as freestyle. The more people contribute to these discussions the broader the picture we can get of our sport. If you have been afraid to try it out, take a deep breath and jump in now; the water's fine!

We also are on the brink of access to the new e-book, which should give all of us some new ideas and insights into our sport. I can't wait to see it up and running. Whether a seasoned veteran or a relative newcomer, we can all find new information and inspiration for growth. I think it will be particularly valuable for those who are eager to embrace the Canine Freestyle Federation training discipline but who don't have ready access to an active guild.

Let's each take another step forward in freestyle, and share our ideas and concerns with each other through this exciting medium. We may be scattered far and wide, but with a little ingenuity and commitment we can remain a tight-knit and supportive group of great good friends.

Gaea Mitchel



Inner Peace

If you can start the day without caffeine,

If you can always be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,

If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,

If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,

If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you anytime,

If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,

If you can conquer tension without medical help,

If you can relax without liquor,

If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,

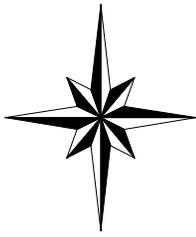
You are probably the family dog.

Up-Coming Events

You won't want to miss it!

Titling Event, Chattanooga, TN
First Florida Freestylers Guild and
Canis Major Guild
July 11-12, 2009

CFF Titling Event
Fredericksburg, VA
November 7-8, 2009



Sirius Guild

"Where Every Dog Is A Star!"
Mary Sullivan

My acceptance of new guild reporter closely coincided with the deadline for the May issue, so what I've written are snippets of news and happenings in the guild. Sirius Guild members, please provide me with what's happening in your freestyle life!

I am thrilled to report that Silver Spring's Friday freestyle class member, Kathy Noble, has written an excellent article (WITH PICTURES!) for Capital Dog Training Club's newsletter, Obichaff. We hope it will appear in the May issue. One of Kathy's themes was to show the bond between the dog and handler while showcasing certain required key movements. Both the article and pictures fulfill this aim.

Several Friday class participants attended Kristen Sicotte's spring freestyle seminar in Mebane, NC. All three felt it was one of the best seminars they ever attended. One of them, a relative newcomer to freestyle, really liked that Kristen communicated training and choreography skills in a way that made them readily attainable for students who have little or no freestyle support where they live. Kathy Noble kindly copied some of her notes for me, which include an interesting statement about music suitability. Kristen, who has helped many of us pick music for our routines, noted that few solo pieces work well, because a combination of instruments enhances the fact that a "team" is performing.

Wendy Ely and Sally Kirschenman instruct the Friday freestyle class. As a past instructor for and current member of this class, I value their approach. As happens sometimes in sports, students tend to neglect practice of foundation training as soon as they achieve skills to choreograph and perform. I'm very guilty of this AND IT SHOWS. Wendy and Sally are "going back to basics," by both emphasizing training basic skills

(such as the dog getting into correct heel position) and simplifying and exploring the *art* of phrase construction. Fellow instructors might wish to contact this duo for lesson plan ideas. The motto for our class is *to show and choreograph to the dog's and handler's strengths, while training to their weaknesses.*

Finally, kudos to the teams that demoed at the Timonium, MD show, Sunday, April 19. The variety of breeds represented — border collie, Welsh terrier, greyhound, whippet, toy poodle, and old English sheepdog -- uphold our belief that freestyle is a sport for all breeds and mixes. That we had solo dog teams, a trio, braces, and an appearance by the mighty Superdog reveals our sport's versatility. These handlers and their dogs worked hard to showcase our sport. Thank you.

Editor's Note: Teams participating were: Betty Swenson and her Border Collie, Yahtzee; Shari Bryant and Wippet, Sky; Janet McBrien and Welsh Terrier, Nicolas; Rennee Philep and her brace of Border Collies, Ziggy and Chili; Brandy Clymire and Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Benny; and the team of Marian Hardy and Toy Poodle, Ping; Wendy Ely and Greyhound, Roulette; and Sally Kirschenman and Old English Sheepdog, Annie.

Carolina Canine Freestyle Guild



By Shari Bryant

I want to extend our sincere thanks to Kristin Sicotte for her wonderful seminar, Canine Freestyle – It's about the Dog, on March 28-29. Everyone had a great time and we all learned a lot about music and choreography. I learned several new things that will be very helpful as I develop new routines. Thank you again, Kristin!

Many of our Guild members continue to meet a couple times a month to work on selecting music and choreograph routines. We have a few members that plan to exhibit in the upcoming titling events in Chattanooga, TN and Fredericksburg, VA.

Guild News More Staccato Notes



Canis Major Guild

by Julia Gregory
jmg@tnaqua.org

Canis Major Guild is up to exactly what you'd expect only ten weeks before a titling event ... getting ready! It makes us sad to leave our former venue because we love all the space, the fenced walking areas, the matted floor and the easy access. But we also want Play Dog eXcellent to stay financially viable so that it will be there for classes and other show venues. We also want our friends who own it and work there to stay financially solvent. So we applauded the addition of a boarding kennel, but an unhappy fact is that the boarding dogs sometimes bark and that makes it too noisy for a freestyle titling event. (I loved owner, Bev's remark that "Sometimes it's really quiet and sometimes we have beagles back there who would make a cat-lover of you.")

We're lucky to have found the East Ridge Community Center as an alternative. The rubberized basketball court floor is a good working surface. We'll have a warm-up area on the court to help dogs become accustomed to the lines. There are lots of rooms for crating and eating and changing. There's lots of good grass and some shade outside, though it's not fenced. The air conditioning rocks!

There are lots of motels nearby and we're pleased with the choices. There are also TONS of places to eat up and down the main drag through East Ridge. We hope everyone will be comfortable.

We are a little puffed up over the goodie bags

The Gold Coast Freestyle Guild

by Judy Gamet



Summertime on the West Coast

You might think that summer is time for vacations, relaxation, a break in the normal routine... Oh no, if we are going to be ready for our annual show the end of this year, we kick training into high gear over the summer!

This Memorial Day, we are planning two "Show and Gos" here in Northern California. This is an excellent opportunity for us to practice our routines (or segments of our routines) with new distractions. Each team buys eight minutes of ring time. The fees go into our account, which will be used to pay for the judge's flights for our show. Our goal is to earn \$300 that weekend! No fundraiser is as beneficial as good old "practice"!

Our main goal for the second half of this year is to organize a Southern California Guild. We are presently collecting names of members and encouraging new members so that we will be ready to submit an application to CFF by mid summer. It's my dream to have 2 titling events per year here on the West Coast.

If you are interested in joining this future Southern California guild, please send your contact information to: Cathy Schmidt. Her e-mail address is: CMSSTPETE@aol.com Be sure to put Future CFF Guild in the subject line!

Have a wonderful summer,
Judy Gamet (Training Director)

First Florida Freestylers Guild

by Elaine Smith



Greetings from Florida! Our guild's last meeting was held in Jacksonville at its most recent home at the K-9 Obedience Club facility. We had an amazing eight participants at our meeting which was awesome. Our guild meetings always start with a lesson of some kind to either help stretch the dog handler teams in their training or their understanding of the CFF concepts.

For our March meeting, the lesson was right heel position as a position. Since many of our members come from an obedience background, we quickly realized that we had spent a great deal of time and energy teaching and conditioning our dogs to understand left heel position both stationary and moving as well as all the subtle pieces that make good left heeling happen, but many of us had neglected to truly teach the right side heeling in the same very logical, step driven way. Since dogs are so very adaptable, most of our well trained obedience dogs figured out how to make it look good and to even make it look like we had taught the position in its entirety. The real truth started to reveal itself when the demands of level four pressed the issue. The great news is that many of our members are working at level four, the bad news is that without a strong understanding of the right side heel position, we would be unable to meet the demands of the level. After much discussion and an exercise that was meant to reveal whether the dog understood just where stationary right heel side is, we all determined that we need to work on several issues regarding right side heel position. First of all, the dogs need to be taught where the stationary position is relative to the handler, then the dog needs to be taught to get into that position from a variety of different positions such as the left side, and front positions and finally the dog needs to be taught that when the handler comes to a halt or slows down that the dog is expected to maintain

the right side heel position. We discussed the physical benefits of working both sides equally and all jotted down notes and promised each other that our training sessions at home would include some extra right side work. Ann Holder shared a neat way to teach and reinforce pivots by putting the dog in a stand and straddling the dog. The dog is gently forced to move through the pressure of your legs on either side of their bodies. This is a motivating and fun way to keep pivots light and fun for your freestyle dog. The rest of our guild meeting was spent discussing our upcoming trial in July that we are sharing with Tennessee and presenting our routines or pieces of our routines for help from the group. The group finished with well wishes for training and a plan to meet again.



Misha Guild, Utah

By Susan Colledge

The Misha Guild sends best wishes for good luck and a happy celebration of freestyle at the titling event in Chattanooga in July.



In addition to the mystery of artistry, a burning question I have had is “What is the difference between choreographing *with* the music (the goal for CFF freestyle) and choreographing *to* the music?” I asked the question during the discussion on music, and it turned into one of those “be careful what you wish for” situations. :-) Joan Tennille was at the seminar, and she had been sharing her wisdom with participants throughout the weekend. Joan told me to get a piece of music that I liked okay but that I was not very attached to. When I returned, she told me that while the music was playing, I was to move to the music, as the music moved me, and she would give me some directions. The directions were on the order of “lead with your right elbow” and “lead with your left hip.”

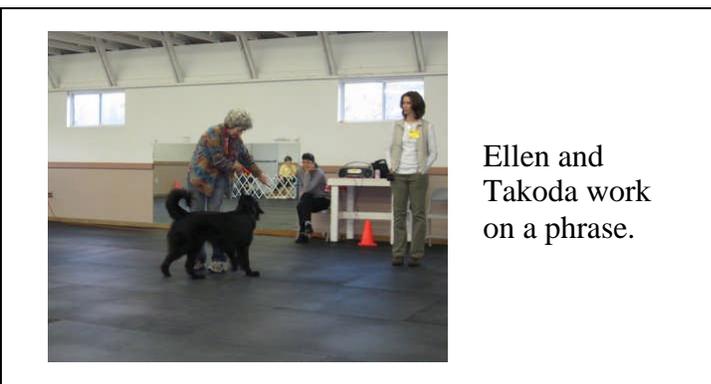
I am still not sure that I can answer my question in words, but it is clear to me that a key, critical element of choreography is *feeling* the music. When I choreographed my level 2 routine, I followed an analytical, left-brained approach that included purchasing the sheet music so that I

could see, and then hear, the phrasing in the music. (I am a print-oriented learner; if I can see something on paper, I can understand it.) However, it is clear that my approach to choreography will be different in the future. As before, I will start with the dog and select music that suits the dog’s rhythm, personality, and innate style. But instead of analyzing the music, breaking it down into its component parts, I will focus on feeling the music, and I will do a lot of doodling with the dog while the music is playing, so that we will feel our way through the music as a team.

All in all, it was a terrific weekend. The participants were buzzing with enthusiasm, the venue was great, the food was excellent, and a good time was had by all. Although dogs and people were understandably tired by Sunday afternoon, participants were asking for more, soon.



Kristen Sicotte discussing the selection of music for freestyle routines.



Ellen and Takoda work on a phrase.

Walking and Training

by Judy Gamet

“When am I going to find the time to train my dogs?” Oh, I’m sure no one else ever has this thought, it must just be me! I was up early this morning and had to get my dogs out before it got too warm, and I reminded myself about how I used to train and walk all at the same time!

So this morning, my dogs are “going out for breakfast”. I have their breakfast cut up in bite size pieces, water if needed, and my clicker. As we are walking, I’ll ask for “Heel” or “Right”, maybe a pace change, a transition to the other side, even some backing thrown in as a cool down. Whenever my dogs are in the exact correct position, they get fed. By the time we have put in a mile, each one has done some great position practice.

I bring this up because in order to show your design clearly, both team players need to have good, strong positioning! Too many times I see handlers who are so wrapped up in teaching their dogs complicated behaviors, that they’ve never mastered moving from point A to point B. Dance is a series of pictures that are connected through movement. It’s my feeling that working movement as a team should take up the largest percentage of our training time. Why not fit it in during your walks? Make the effort and then go treat yourself as well!

Roulette in Wildwood

Dictated to Wendy Ely
The "Challenged" Sherpa

My name is Roulette and I am a Greyhound. I am perfect. I chose Joan's brand of freestyle for my second career because it requires mental acuity and athletic ability. Early February found me (along with companions Annie and Ping and the sherpas) on the way to New Jersey for something called a dog show.



Judy Gamet and Luc

We went the day before so we "could become accustomed to the site" which I thought was pretty stupid ... until we got there. I was horrified. The strangest 4 footed creatures on the face of the earth were prancing around with their noses and rears in the air. Shocking. Absolutely against my principles to be seen in such a place.

My mom took me off for some retail therapy in the lobby, and I got to pick out some expensive collars. I don't mind glitz although I certainly don't need it. When we went back into the pit, Mom suggested I be a greyhound ambassador and chat people up. Good idea. I learned to troll for adulation. She said I was doing a great job, so I don't see why she won't kneel at my feet. She needs more training.

The next day we went for a nice walk on the beach which was great. It was windy with fabulous smells everywhere, air and ground. We went back to the motel and napped while the group visited. That was quite cozy.

Continued on page 8

The Canine Freestyle Federation Announces the Launch Of the CFF Performance Learning Center Website

Contents: Lesson Plans (Weeks 1-5 with more coming), articles, video clips.

Cost-2009: \$35.00 to subscribe to this site during the remaining portion of the 2009 calendar year

Cost-2010 and Future: The cost for 2010 and beyond is being reviewed by the board and will be announced at a later date.

Launch Date: The site will be available to access: May 30, 2009.

Application Process: Fill out application form and agreement (1 document), then send in agreement with money to the address listed. Upon receipt of the application and money, a password will be sent to the applicant. Applications are being accepted now. The applications are located in the Members Only Links Section of the CFF Website. (Or use the form on the facing page!)

Location of the CFF Performance Learning Center Link will be on the *members only* portion of the CFF site, with an announcement on the CFF Home page.

CFF Forum: There will be a section on the Forum for Learning Center discussions, questions, etc.

Questions: Contact Jeanine Brown (jajbrown@nc.rr.com)



Roulette continued from page 7

It's reassuring when those people behave, and we told them they were good. Finally it was time to go back to the dog show.

The trio was the first group in and Mom had made a huge mistake (another one) and failed to tell me that I was doing freestyle and not visiting. I very promptly went over to the crowd, and there was my crazy person whispering behind me "Pssst, Roulette, we're doing the routine, come on, let's go. Well, I never make mistakes.

Mom took the blame pronto and said we'd be fine. I wasn't sure she was right, but I took the lead while she was humbled. It was just too much fun. I added optional moves to make up for my idiot and made

sure we kept to our appointed space. That way I could show off my highland flings and creative choreography. All in all the weekend proved me right - freestyle is a good gig.

Here's my take on the Canine Freestyle Federation. The freestyle people rate pretty high if you consider the species. They give their superiors good beds, tons of treats, and they fetch and tote. The work is just a kick and it gives you lots of chances to improve your partner. Now on the down side. Our trio of women are dumb as dirt when it comes to learning a routine. We had it down the second time, but they are Awful. Joan's supposed to tweak it, but really, if our sherpas would just follow our directions we'd be brilliant.

Next Time: "On Tour " by Annie the Old English Sheepdog

CFF Performance Learning Center Subscription Application and End-User License Agreement

CFF Performance Learning Center Subscription Price is \$35.00 for the calendar year of 2009.

The subscription price for 2010 and beyond is being reviewed by the CFF Board.

To subscribe, please

- (1) fill out this form including signature
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The Value of Demos

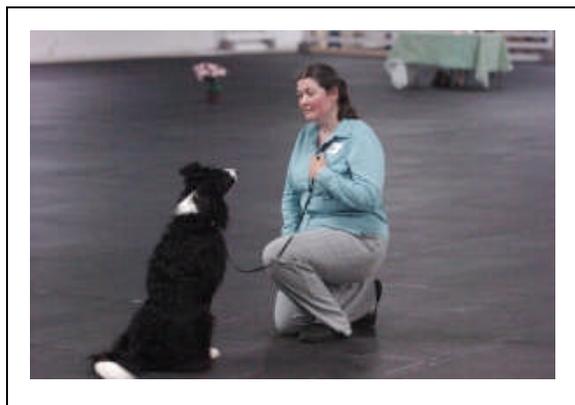
by Renee Filep

I *love* doing freestyle demos. Let me explain why. In January, I was given the opportunity to join other CFF-ers and travel to Wildwood, New Jersey. It was only a 5 1/2 hour drive from Virginia around the parking lots known as Washington, DC; Baltimore, Maryland; Delaware and parts un-mentionable in the depths of New Jersey. After a nightmare of hotel confusions and Joan and Carl Tennille's vehicle breaking down, the dogs gave us an outstanding performance to a smattering of an audience just as the Super Bowl was starting. We then got to participate in a delightful dinner with everyone before the return trip home. Then again, on April 19th, we traveled to Timonium, Maryland for another demo. It was just a short drive from home- only three hours each way.

So why was it worth? My dogs are not "breed" dogs and although they do compete at agility trials (which can be a little nutty) they've never experienced a big indoor breed show complete with all its distractions. Not only that, but my attitude is more relaxed and attentive to the dogs since a demo is not a competition. After all, the audience doesn't know if we've screwed up. The audience also gives excellent feedback about what works and what's flat. It's amazingly rewarding to hear "oohs" and "ahs" after a particularly worrisome phrase. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, you can use food in the performance space and really reward your dog's focus and behavior.

Then there's the "coup de gras"- promoting our discipline and helping others learn about the beauty and magic we call freestyle. What a great opportunity to draw more converts and make new friends.

So look for those demo opportunities. Create them! Revel in them! It's worth it.



Correction

Show Results for November 8, 2008
(published February 2009)

In the November 8 results, Journey and Adele Monroe are listed in 3rd place, which is correct, but no "New title" note is beside Journey's name. I regret the omission because it was undoubtedly a pretty special day for them. It was Adele's first time ever in a freestyle ring, and Journey's first time in any competition ring. For those who were paying close attention (myself not included) the results are especially odd because the Sunday results list Journey (correctly) as CFF-II. If you are a person who pairs printed results with routines on video (to track which routines on the video qualified), please make this correction to avoid confusion.

I really appreciate it when readers go to the trouble to contact me with corrections such as this. This is YOUR newsletter. Please help me get it right!



Adele Monroe and whippet GraceGife Life is a Journey, CFF-II, CR, JC. Photo by Jim Poor (www.jimpoor.com). Used with permission.

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

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