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The Dog Trainer's News

June 2019

"Rick"

CH CT OTCH MACH HC VCCH UCH UOCH UUDX UROG URX2 EN C-ATCH ARCHMX
Skyland Ricochet

UDX10 OGM VST TDX TDU PUDX VER GN GO RAE2 HXAsd HXBsd MXS MJB MFB T2B SWA
SCM SIE SEE CGCA CGCU TKN FDC, EAC OJC WV-N TN-N NCC, RL1X3 RL2X3 RL3X3 RLVX
RL3-AOE RLV-AOE RL2-AOE RL1-AOE, NW1

Owned by : Gerianne Darnell



"Rick"

Quintuple Champion!

by Gerianne Darnell



Photo by Ron Puckett

Photo by Corey LeGrand

Photo by Michelle Thorsteinson

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Who says that lightening can't strike twice? In 2012 I was thrilled to finish my first AKC Quintuple Champion (CH CT OTCH MACH HC) on my lovely female Border Collie, Riva. Riva finished her CT to complete her Quint the day after Rick finished his OTCH to become a Triple Champion. That was an amazing weekend! I hoped at the time that Rick would also some day finish his Quintuple Championship, but so many things would have to fall in to place again, including a willing dog who would stay in good health for many years to come. And, lucky me, it has happened again!

Rick has been such an incredible dog. He was the son of one of my heart dogs, DC Raymond UDT. Rick looked just like his dad, and his puppy name was "Baby Ray." Rick inherited a strong desire to WORK from his wonderful sire. As much as I adored everything about Raymond, Rick was quieter on sheep, making it easier for me to think!

Rick competed in SO many different venues over the years: AKC and UKC obedience, AKC, UKC, and WCRL rally, AKC, NADAC, and CPE agility, AKC and UKC conformation, AKC, UKC, and NACSW nosework, AKC, AHBA, and USBCHA herding, the list goes on and on.

Rick's career began with herding, agility, and conformation competitions. His first Championship, in conformation, was in 2007 at the age of three; he had several Best of Breed wins and even a Group Placement. He has always been a pretty dog! Rick did not start his long obedience career until 2008, when he earned his CD at the age of four, quickly followed by his CDX.

Rick's second Championship, in herding, was completed in 2009. This made him a Dual Champion. Rick was my easiest herding dog, as he was kind to his sheep and very biddable. Rick went on to get Advanced titles on both the A and B courses on both ducks and sheep. He was a terrific dog around the farm, and he was my main work dog for as many as 150 ewes and lambs.



Photo by Lori Herbel

Rick was such a fun dog to show in obedience. Rick and I disagreed throughout his career as to where heel position was, but what we DID agree on was that obedience was fun, Fun, FUN. I can't remember Rick ever "not being in the mood"; he was always up and ready to go in to the ring, whether it was the first day or the fourth day of a circuit. He just loved to show, and I loved to show him. A particularly exciting day in Rick's obedience career was the 2010 Border Collie National Specialty. Rick had only shown in Open four times before that weekend, and we were also debuting in utility. He almost qualified in utility, just missing an article, and then we had what I thought was a pretty good Open run. The judge announced the awards in reverse order, and I was a little disappointed we didn't sneak in there for fourth place. I can still recall my utter disbelief and excitement when Rick won Open B with a score of 199 and went High in Trial at the National! There were over 20 dogs in the class, most of them famous OTCH dogs, and I am still amazed that we won :-) Rick also won the Janet Larsen Award that week, which is for the most versatile Border Collie at the National. It was another weekend I will never forget!

In 2012 Rick earned his OTCH in fierce midwest competition. This made him a Triple Champion. Because Rick and I enjoyed showing so much, I decided to go for the Obedience Grand Master, and we earned that prestigious title a year-and-a-half later. At that time Rick was a UDX7, and I thought, how cool would it be to get a UDX10? Rick finished his UDX10 just a year later. Since Rick qualified at least 90% of the time, it was easy to rack up the obedience Q's necessary for the various titles.

In 2015 I competed at the Midwest Regional in St Louis in Open B and Utility B with Rick along with my Papillon, Robert, who was going for his OTCH at the time. It was fun during that year or two that I had two dogs in Open B and Utility B, as I had never done that before. I was pretty sure that Robert would get invited to the 2016 National Obedience Championship in Tulsa, but I was overwhelmed when Rick was also invited, on the basis of his finish at the Regional. It was daunting to show two dogs at the NOC, but with help from my friend Erin who pointed me in the right direction with the right equipment for the right dog, both dogs placed in the Top 50. Rick was 11 1/2 years old at the time, and what a tremendous thrill that was! Nobody would have guessed while watching Rick that weekend that he was that old.

After Rick completed his UDX10, neither he nor I were ready to stop showing in obedience. Rick began to show in the new preferred obedience classes, becoming the first dog in the country to earn the PUDX. I was so proud of him. We also competed in UKC obedience, and Rick was the number one UKC Utility dog in the country in 2014. He also earned his UKC obedience championship that year, and he placed Second in Utility at the UKC Premiere competition in Michigan.

Rick, along with his sire Ray, always ADORED rally. I put an RAE on Rick, which at the time was all that was available in AKC, and also a UKC Grand Rally Championship and a WCRL Master Agility Championship. Had the AKC Rally Championship come along a few years earlier, Rick and I would have very much enjoyed pursuing that Championship as well.

I am not sure what Rick would have answered if you asked him what his favorite venue was; I think the answer might have been, whichever one he was doing at the time! I struggled mightily to learn how to handle this ultra-fast agility dog, and it took us many years to become a team. Rick would occasionally have the fastest time of any dog, any jump height, in excellent and it was rare for him not to place. It was very exciting to sometimes beat the World Team dogs! Rick never missed an A-frame or dogwalk contact in his entire career, and he also had a rock-solid start line stay. What we struggled with was dropped bars. That was one reason we enjoyed earning a CPE Agility Championship, as you could have a bar down and still qualify! In the summer of 2012, when Rick was almost 8 years old, I wondered if we should give up our quest for a MACH. At the time we had ten Double Q's, and of course about a million MACH points ;-) I decided we would try another six months, and then give it up and move on to something else. Rick must have heard me, as he picked up the ten remaining Double Q's he needed in the next 20 trials, finishing the MACH in May of 2013. Rick was now a Quadruple Champion! Now I wondered, could he eventually become a Quintuple Champion? All that remained between us and my goal was the Champion Tracker title.

Although I screwed around with Rick as a puppy in tracking, like I do with all of my puppies, we did not get serious about tracking until the summer of 2013. Rick earned his TD in a howling snow storm in March of 2014; the tracks were completely covered with snow, and some of the dogs said, I am so not doing that :-) A month later Rick earned the new Tracking Dog Urban title, one of the first dogs in the country to do so. Because I enjoy VST training more than TDX, as I can do it anywhere during my travels, Rick and I concentrated on VST work for the next couple of years. Rick earned his VST in October of 2016, at the age of 12. We then turned our attention to the TDX, where we had a few near misses and a whole lot of bad luck.

As Rick grew older, I thought there was a good possibility the TDX/CT/Quintuple Champion was not going to happen for him. TDX requires a great deal of physicality from the dog, and many TDX sites can be pretty daunting for an older dog. However, Rick still needed to work, so I explored the new sport of Nosework. I thought this was something we would just do casually, maybe earn a few titles, and it would give Rick and I something to mess around with in his old age. HA!

Photo by Doug Neal



Rick doesn't do anything casually. Rick went all the way in UKC, earning his overall Elite Nosework title, and he also earned Master and Excellent titles in AKC Scent Work. He also finished his NACSW NW1 title. Rick is still going strong in Nosework, and he very much enjoys training and competing in this popular new sport.

Throughout 2018, when I would lay a track for my two younger dogs, Rick would always get to run one of their tracks after they finished. I was no longer thinking that the TDX was a viable title for Rick after he passed his fourteenth birthday, although we both still enjoyed tracking training. On a lark, I entered a German Shepherd Dog club TD/TDX test in Kansas City in January of 2019. I found out later that my entry arrived on the afternoon of the draw! Since it was a GSD test and that breed gets preference, I figured my chances of getting in were slim, and I was right. The secretary received 12 entries for just four TDX spots, and we ended up drawn as the first alternate. There were also four TD spots, and my young Border

Collie was drawn for the TD. When I was looking over the draw results, I noticed there were only three dogs who had entered the TD. Hmmmm. There is a rule in tracking that two TD spots could be traded for a TDX spot if it was stated in the premium list. I contacted the secretary to see if I could pull Rayna so Rick could get in to the TDX, and the answer was yes! So, TWO things had happened so far that made it seem as if our luck had changed.

The week before the test it was below zero; there was a lot of snow on the ground, and it was just miserable and nasty. Rick has always had very sensitive feet, so I tried practicing in the snow with him wearing booties. He wasn't real thrilled with that idea, but he did get through some short tracks here at home. But I worried about him wearing the booties for an 800-1000 yard track, as they clearly made him uncomfortable. I was still in "wait and see" mode throughout the week as to whether we would even try.

Erin and I elected to make the three hour drive to Kansas City on the Sunday morning of the test, rather than go down the night before, as that would be less stressful for Rick. It was cold, Cold, COLD when we left that morning. When we stopped at a rest area on the way down, Rick couldn't even walk because his feet were so cold; he would hold up one foot and then the other. I remarked to Erin "If we don't draw the last track, when it will have warmed up a bit, we don't have a chance." Usually trackers want to draw one of the FIRST tracks, not the last one!

We got to the draw site early, and again we took Rick out to exercise. Although it didn't seem that the cold was bothering his feet as much, I still thought the booties were probably going to be in play. Then it was time for the draw. Since I was the last dog to get in to the test, we were the last dog to draw for track order, meaning that the decision would be made for us which track we were going to get. And, once again, the tracking gods were smiling, as we drew lovely track number four!

There was snow on the ground, and we watched the three dogs before us pass with ease! So now the pressure was really on. It had warmed up to the point I elected to go without the booties, which was a good decision. Rick went up to the start flag, and I had a hard time getting his harness on him before he was GONE. He flew around the first turn, dove in to a thicket of trees, came out, and there was an article! I barely had time to snatch it before off he went again, then two more turns. The track then briefly went in to some thick woods, where there was a small frozen pond in front of us, and then out and across a road. Rick then made another turn, with me puffing along behind him, to another article, past both sets of crosstracks, one more turn, and there was that amazing glove in front of us! I was absolutely dumbstruck. Rick had run a 975 yard track in eleven minutes! The judges said, "Oldest dog, longest track, fastest time!"

So, at the age of 14 years, three months, Rick became a Champion Tracker, a Versatile Companion Champion, and a Quintuple Champion! And now, at the age of 14 years, seven months, he continues to train and earn Nosework titles in two different organizations, goes on a walk at least once a day, and is in excellent health and fully engaged in life. I am one lucky dog mom.

Rick's time on earth has not been all about training, showing, and titles, although it was evident that he enjoyed every minute of it. I have had more than one "once in a lifetime" dog in my life, as Zack, Riva, and Robert also come to mind when I look back on my forty plus years in dogs. But I think NO dog has been more devoted to me than Rick. I was there when Rick was born, and I immediately said, "THERE he is!" Rick's litter was about half an hour away, and I went to visit every other day until he came home at 8 weeks. At about five weeks of age, Rick started crying when I would leave, and I knew then that we were meant for each other. Fourteen years later, he still cries when I leave him; when I walk over to the obedience building he always expresses his displeasure if he is not accompanying me! Rick has always had a great sense of humor, been a wonderful house pet, and he has probably been more of a protector of me than he should have been; he didn't put up with any nonsense if he thought I was in the least bit of danger. I know that eventually Father Time will take him from me, and I keep trying to prepare myself, but my mind just can't go there. People say when an old dog dies, well, you were so lucky to have had him for so long, but I think the longer you have a dog, the harder it is to let them go. But knowing Rick, he will make it as easy on me as he can, as he has done with every other thing in our life together. He is truly one of the great ones. Thank you "Front & Finish" for allowing me to recognize my wonderful Rick.



Photo by Michelle Thornsteinson