

AUSTRALIAN WINS German CHAMPIONSHIP

All Breed State Championship Trial for IPO in Mettingen, Germany

On 25/26 September 2010, the State of Westfalen in Germany held its annual Championship trial, hosted by DVG (German all breed working dog organisation with more than 40,000 members nationwide) in Mettingen. Every year 19 German States each host a State championship trial, where the first and second place getters automatically qualify for the DVG National Championship in the year following.

With more than 6000 members spread over 148 IPO (Schutzhund) clubs, Westfalen is the largest DVG State in Germany. Since October last year, around 1400 dogs (the majority being Malinois – considered the world's leading working breed today) have competed at qualifications trials throughout the State in order to qualify for the Championship.

Currently competing in Germany with their Australian self-bred and trained Malinois, both Jens and Alison Kollenberg were delighted earlier in the year, just to have qualified to take part at the Championship. But on that weekend in September it was "shock and awe" all round when the two Australian teams came out of left field to end up on the podium, with Jens and Nordenstamm Hassan winning 1st place - the only Excellent graded score at the event (98 points for Tracking, 96 points for Obedience and 94 points for Protection, for a total of 288 points), and with Alison and Nordenstamm Hannah winning the High in Trial Tracking trophy, earning a perfect score for the only 100 point track of the Championship. Alison and Hannah also won 12th place overall, with a total score of 276 points. NB: Each of the three disciplines is scored out of 100 points.

Congratulations also to the second and third place getters, Christian Melchers & Ayros v. Blue Aitsch (285 points) and Thomas Wesselmann & Madonna from Mike's Place (284 points). Last year's winner, Peter Muller with his Malinois dog, Bart Nielenders, won 6th place this year with 282 points, and took out the High in Trial trophies for Best Obedience (99 points) and Best Protection (99 points.)

The Mayor of Mettingen, Franz-Joseph Bresch, greeted the participants at the opening ceremony and was present again to hand out prizes at the award's ceremony. The City Mayor praised IPO as the, "absolute performance sport for dog and man" and the event itself, together with the participants, as representing, "the highest level of working dog sport."

For the last 57 years, since the age of 15, the 72 year old Jens Kollenberg has trained competition as well as service dogs, including the 2004 Australian National Champion. He has lived in Australia since 1980, after marrying his Australian born wife, Alison, who is also a competitive dog trainer and was the 2008 Australian National Champion.

Since arriving in Germany the couple so far have competed at 10 trials - flying straight from Spring on sunny Gold Coast into a colorful Autumn in Thuringen, East-Germany, where at their very first trial Hassan won High in Trial Obedience and High Protection and Hannah won the 3rd place overall.

Before moving from the Thuringen to the densely populated Westfalen, Alison and Jens participated at two more large SV (GSD) trials, hosted by local German Shepherd Dog clubs in that state. At the first SV trial, Alison and Hannah took out the first place and her brother the second place, and then their results were reversed at the second trial - a 3 day event with 20 entries, and Hassan taking 1st and Hannah 2nd - their being only two Malinois present! The judge of the latter trial, Andreas Bender (who'd judged the German Shepherd Dog National Championship last year), was obviously impressed by the Australian's effort, by taking Jens aside after the trial to ask about his "training philosophy."

Once arrived in Westfalen, and settled only 40 km west of the Dutch border, the Australians continued uninterrupted in their success in one of Germany's strongest "working-dog" States. This included a number more wins, 2nd and 3rd places, topped off at the end of September by their success at the big DVG State Championship.

Germany is, literally, the Mecca of Dogsport, with over 250,000 members competing in the multitude of working dog breed clubs and organisations found throughout the land. Worth mentioning is that during their short time in Germany, both Alison and Jens have scored near and above the "dream score" of 290 points, with 2 x 291 points.

Jens and Alison planned to participate at two more German trials before flying home to the Gold Coast for Christmas. Accompanying them will be their two competition dogs, Hassan and Hannah, as well as a newly purchased German Malinois bitch, Lilo von der Kraehenschiede. Both Hannah and Lilo will be bred before leaving for Australia.



Field of competitors, lining up for presentation

The IPO/Schutzhund sport is widespread in Germany, as it is elsewhere in Europe, and now has also been fully embraced by The (English) Kennel Club and the American and Canadian Kennel Clubs, being regarded as no more “dangerous” than cricket is in Australia.

In Australia, the sport is not so well recognised or widespread as it is elsewhere in the world, although through local media exposure it has been gaining a foothold in the psyche of mainstream dog trainers looking for a more challenging hobby and fun with their dogs.

The ANKC has nothing to fear from joining the rest of the world in recognizing Schutzhund/IPO. It is not attack, police or service dog training, as it has been quite wrongly misrepresented to be by uninformed persons. It is a test designed for animals bred and owned by ordinary members of the general public who do not have access to specialist government dog breeding and training facilities. The regulations and assessment tools that already exist for service and police dogs in Australia have very different objectives and methodologies to those of Schutzhund /IPO. Schutzhund is the only internationally endorsed and accredited assessment tool for evaluating and filtering the domestic breeding of specific working dog breeds; and comes available in a universally accepted package without a need to justify what the rest of the world has already proven.

In Germany it is such highly regarded test, that German insurance companies, local councils and other government agencies will either discount or waive their annual licensing fees for dog owners with IPO titled animals.

The standards, infrastructure and administration processes of Australian Schutzhund have been repeatedly validated by FCI's highest authorities; adequately demonstrated by the large numbers of Australian-trained dogs successfully titled under FCI Schutzhund/IPO/VPG judges, both at home and abroad. In 2007 the German Shepherd Dog Club of Germany (SV.e.V. /VDH /FCI) specifically sent a representative to Australia to evaluate the standard processes and administration of Australian Schutzhund Organizations, and to identify any problems. This representative, Mr Raino Fluegge, wrote a highly positive report on the sport in Australia, finding no criticism of our Australian

systems and placing Australia, on a world wide basis, amongst the most advanced nations practicing the sport – a point aptly demonstrated by the recent successes of Alison and Jens Kollenberg and their Australian-bred dogs in Germany.

As custodians of the Australian pedigreed dog world the ANKC should consider these facts, and what their own responsibilities to public safety are. The ANKC held a 5 year review on the sport, without, unsurprisingly, identifying any problems. Yet what proven testing programs can the ANKC truthfully point to and say they have available to the breeders and owners of the large numbers of potentially dangerous pedigreed working dogs proliferating in the public domain? Today their answer would have to be none.

The ANKC needs to look at the IPO sport in Australia more objectively and realize that the sport's objectives – i.e.: the preservation of the working breeds' soundness, education, breeding transparency and public safety, are compatible with the objectives of the ANKC, which is standing for more responsible dog ownership.

One step in the right direction would be that the ANKC not only recognise the FCI Schutzhund/IPO titles of dogs imported into the country, but also recognise the hard earned Schutzhund /IPO titles earned by Australians in their own country.

Jens, 1st place
on podium with
Nordenstamm Hassan

Allison with
Nordenstamm Hannah

Hassan,
escort to judge

