

# Congratulations to an Exceptional Team

## Mel and Indy



Mel Henley and TCH Nordenstamm UDO CDX

It was clear from the start that there was something special about the partnership between the young Belgian Malinois and his handler from the moment they stepped onto the training ground.

Kesley Court, a senior obedience judge, on seeing Indy for the first time commented "There is obviously a special rapport between this wonderful high drive dog who has been fortunate enough to be paired with such an insightful partner - a terrific combination. I do remember thinking when I first saw Indy working with Mel that he was just the kind of handful needed in a dog to succeed at the highest level. I know he'll continue to succeed at UD and beyond - he was made for Obedience trialling."

Mel says "It was very apparent early on that Indy was special. The speed with which he learnt new things and the speed of his reactions was something I had never experienced before when training dogs. He had incredible motivation and drive right from day one but not in a manic way that couldn't be switched off. He was always clear in the head and never destructive as some high drive dogs can be. These highly desirable traits are attributed to his breeding and in particular to his breeder, Jens Kollenberg from Nordenstamm kennels."

### The beginning

Mel began training Indy for obedience when he was only 8 weeks old. By 5 months of age when they first joined the Cairns City Kennel Club, Indy was already demonstrating his exceptional capabilities. What is more amazing is that Indy is the first dog Mel has trained for competitive obedience. She did however have a wealth of knowledge and experience in handling dogs in her day job as a detector dog handler with the Department of Agriculture, formally known as the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS). Although the skills are somewhat different to those required for obedience competition Mel was able to apply her experience of 12 years as a detector dog handler and transfer that knowledge to her work with Indy.

Mel says "I believe it is important to start puppies early as they are like little sponges and soak up knowledge and training very easily. By the time Indy was just 12 weeks old we had established a close synergy and Indy was confidently working off lead and heeling with focus, could sit, down, stand, stay and recall. By the time he was 16 weeks old he was able to track an unknown person for about 250 metres".

Mel entered Indy in his first competition on 31st March 2013, this was a tracking trial held in Townsville. He was just 18 months of age. By July he had achieved his T7 Tracking Champion in just 8 attempts! He is an absolute natural and loves every minute of it. The speed with which he tracks has earned him the nickname "The Indy Express!"

### The quest for the Golden Dumbbell

Indy's first obedience competition was in April 2013 when Mel entered him in Novice. By the following month Indy had gained his CD and was ready for open. He gained his first qualification in Open on 16th June 2013 with a score of 190 and had attained his CDX title by 10th August.

Indy was then ready for UD as Mel had already been training for the exercises. His first UD competition was in September 2013. This meant that Indy had gone from Novice to UD in less than 5 months and he wasn't even two years old yet!

Although Mel was training for UD and had started entering at the UD level, she had heard about the elusive Silver and Golden dumbbells and decided to try for one. Indy had already received two scores of 190 plus so was well on the way to a silver dumbbell. On 7th September Indy was awarded his third 190 plus score and he had reached the Silver Dumbbell. Mel decided to keep going and try for 'Gold', all the time still entering UD competitions as well. For the remaining three weeks in September Indy achieved another 3 scores of 190 plus and had achieved the six he needed for the Golden Dumbbell, all in just over 3 months and under 4 different judges with his highest score being 198.

Indy is the first dog in Cairns to be awarded the Golden Dumbbell and the youngest dog in North Queensland to receive one.

### Finding Indy

When asked why she chose a Malinois to start her foray into the world of competitive obedience and tracking Mel says "A few years ago I attended a seminar in Brisbane, as part of my work. It was conducted by celebrity animal trainer Steve Austin, himself a previous National Trainer with AQIS. He had several videos demonstrating searches and protection work the Czech Police were doing with Malinois. I researched the breed and breeders and contacted Jens and Alison Kollenberg's Nordenstamm kennel. Jens has 50 years of expertise in breeding working dogs and has himself been the recipient of many awards in the working dog arena."

Indy's father is a two times Australian Grand National Champion in IPO (FCI International Trial for Working Dogs), a German State Champion, a Tracking Champion and also a Champion and multiple High in Trial recipient in three countries, including his recent win of Best Obedience at the NZKC Nationals. His grandfather is a 3 times World Champion in IPO.

Given Indy's high performance skills he is proving himself as a great ambassador for the breed and a chip off the old block!

### The results

Mel and Indy progressed from Novice to UD as well as gaining a Tracking Championship in just one trialling season which (for Far North Queensland) only runs for 6.5 months between April and October. Since his first qualifying score in CDX, Indy obtained his six qualifying scores for the Golden Dumbbell in only 16 trial days.

### The future

As for the future, Indy has already shown great promise in the UD ring and we can be sure to see more of Mel and Indy's successes. At only 2 years of age it is surely only a matter of time before he attains his Grand Obedience Championship.