

Seneca dog and owner earn shot at national championship

Ray Chandler/Special to the Independent-Mail
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courtesy photo

Bob Bradley and Chase will compete in the U.S. Disc Dog National Championship in October.

SENECA — Around the Seneca area, when there's talk of potential national sports champions, first thoughts might be that the players will be big and husky and will have strong legs, two to a customer.

But for one Seneca team on its way to national championships, none of that is really an apt description.

One of the players, the star player in fact, has four legs. And fur. And he isn't husky, he's a border collie.

At the U.S. Disc Dog Freedom Weekend Nationals conducted in Simpsonville over Memorial Day weekend at Freedom Weekend Aloft this year, Bob Bradley and Chase earned a spot in the U.S. Disc Dog National Championship that will take place in Cartersville, Ga., Oct. 8-10.

The Seneca team scored 44.5 points out of a possible 50 in two rounds to qualify in the Super Pro Toss and Fetch competition.

In that contest, a 90-second timed trial, the dog catches flying plastic discs thrown by his or her human with points awarded for distance within which the disc is caught. Extra points are awarded depending on whether the catch is made in mid-air or with all the dog's paws on the ground.

For instance, a ground catch at more than 10 yards from the throwing line scores one point. A mid-air catch is 1.5 points. At more than 20 yards, it's two and 2.5 points, respectively. On up to 40 yards and four and 4.5 points. An extra point is awarded if the catch is made while all four of the dog's paws are off the ground.

It was two years ago, also at Freedom Weekend Aloft, that Bob Bradley and his wife, Donna, an employee of the city of Seneca, were introduced to disc dog competition.

They soon became regulars with their main competition dog, Beau, also a border collie. The couple even has become active in organizing competitions, being key players in bringing a disc dog competition to Seneca last November.

Beau has since advanced into the freestyle competition, leaving the more structured chasing to, well, Chase.

Like all the Bradley's eight dogs, Chase is a rescue dog. They had him for almost a year.

"He's starting to really show off in competition," Bradley said.

Cartersville and possible glory are months and many hours of practice away, but man-dog team know what the prize is. The world disc dog championships will happen in Cartersville the day after the national championships.

"There will be teams from Canada, Japan, Belgium, all over the world, in the world championships," Bradley said. "But the top 15 finishers in the national championships will go to the world championship.

"I hope we get a shot at that."

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