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Dock jumping is fun sport for all ages

Cassandra Stichter | Aug 4, 2011, 1:55 p.m.



Buckeye has competed in dock jumping competitions in several states with his owner Bob Evans. PHOTO BY CASSANDRA STICHTER

If you use the word "jump" around yellow Labrador retriever Buckeye you had better be ready to follow through with it.

Buckeye, also known as the Leaping Lab of Simonton Lake, knows the word "jump" means he's going to get to do one of his favorite activities. Buckeye is a "dock dog," one of many who compete in dock jumping around the country and the world. There are DockDog organizations in the U.S., Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and Australia.

The dogs run down a 40-foot long dock or runway and launch themselves into the water after a "dummy" thrown by their owners. The winning dog is the one who jumps the furthest from the end of the runway. It doesn't matter whether or not they catch the dummy.

Buckeye is the reigning national champion in the master division of DockDogs, one of two organizations that Buckeye and his owner, Bob Evans compete in. The master division includes dogs of any size, breed and gender who jump between 20 and 23 feet. Buckeye has competed in both the master and elite division, which is over 23 feet. The highest division is super elite, which is over 25 1/2 feet.

Buckeye's longest jump so far is 24 feet 1 inch.

"He enjoys it so much," Evans said. "He loves doing it."

It's that enjoyment and love for what he does that makes him so successful at it, Evans explained.

It's drive that makes him do as well as he does," he explained. "He would do this for hours."

Evans and Buckeye have been involved in the sport for three years now. Evans built a regulation length pier behind their house for him and Buckeye to practice on—which is important for both dog and owner, Evans explained, because while the dog is doing the actual jumping, if the object the dog is "chasing" is thrown too early

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him out. He eventually became Evans' mentor. Evans in turn has helped out several of his competitors as well.

"Jump and have fun and share with other people," he said. "That's how the sport grows."

Evans and Buckeye have also started working with the local 4-H dog club, doing obedience training and teaching them about dock jumping.

He explained that a big part of the sport is obedience training, especially basic obedience skills. The dogs who compete have to be well-trained enough to stay in their starting position while their owner walks to the end of the runway and wait for the signal to start.

Buckeye is usually very good about following instructions when it comes to jumping.

"He knows that in order for him to jump he has to be in that position," Evans explained. "It's fun and the dogs are having fun."

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