

# 2011 AKC National

## A Clean Sweep by Golden Retrievers!

by Dee Dee Anderson

Where can you go watch the top-ranked Obedience dogs in the country compete together at the same time? Wait – even better – where can you go to see the Golden Retrievers that are top-ranked in the country in Obedience compete together? The answer is one and the same for both questions — the AKC National Obedience Invitational (NOI) of course!

What is the NOI? The NOI is a two-day event where the top obedience dogs come together and compete for the ultimate title of National Obedience Champion. For those of us who have earned the right to compete, the NOI is not only a competition; it's a bit of a social event where we get to say "Hi" to those we have not seen for a year. Plus, we get to enjoy a weekend of competition. Every year a winner is crowned the new National Obedience Champion. And with the title comes the right to put the coveted initials "NOC" in front of the dog's name.

Competing in the NOI is "by invitation only." The qualifying period for the NOI is from July 1 of the preceding year to June 30 of the current year. There are three ways to qualify: 1) Ranking in the top 25 dogs All-breed by OTCH points; 2) Ranking in the top 10 percent of your breed by OTCH points; or 3) Qualifying by competing in a three-day regional NOI qualifying event and placing in the top four over all three days. How does the AKC sort through the various qualifying options? The AKC takes the top 25 all-breed dogs first. Next the AKC looks at the top 10 percent of each breed. Then the AKC looks at the regional qualifying events' results. If the dogs qualifying in the top four places at the regional events are already qualified by way of first or second, then the next four dogs would be invited.

Receiving an invitation to the NOI is an honor and a thrilling event, to say the least! I have had the privilege of traveling all over the country with my Golden "Dream," and I always tell people, "If you qualify and are invited to the NOI, you need to go at least once!" I have talked many people into going when they weren't sure, and after participating in this great event, they were all glad they went.

In 2011, a new format was used for the first time. All the teams competed for two days and at the end of the two days, the team with the highest *total* point score won. In previous years, all the teams competed the first day. Then a "seeding" was done and only the top four dogs in each group, plus four wild cards, went on to compete head-to-head on the second day. That meant that only four to eight Golden Retrievers could move onto the second day because of the

four-per-group (plus wild card positions, only 32 teams move to Sunday) limitation. For example, if 15 of the top 25 dogs in the country were Golden Retrievers, only a subset of them could move on to the final competition. True, having a four-per-group rule meant that you had many more breeds in the final day of competition. But in some cases, the dogs that were seeded to compete in the second day were far behind in points than a number of Golden Retrievers that weren't able to compete because of the limitation.

This year there was a level playing field and *everyone* who had been invited had a chance to win. And the Golden Retrievers would, indeed, do their share of "winning." Not only did Golden Retrievers take the top four placements, nine Golden Retrievers would finish in the top ten! What a truly remarkable feat for this wonderful breed!

With the new format in mind, initially the AKC planned to have six rings set up each day with competitors rotating through each one, performing a mixture of Open and Utility exercises in each ring (with three to four exercises each). There would also be one set of group exercises on Saturday. Invitations went out in late July and the response was overwhelming – with 159 entries sent in on the first round. Normally, a second round of invitations are sent out to fill out the playing field, but not this year – there were more than enough dogs to fill the available slots without sending out a second round. Once you send in your entry, you have about a month to make a final decision about going. Many things can happen before the close of entries that can result in people pulling their entries including injuries or illness of either dog or handler. Out of the original 159 invitations, the NOI ended up with 149 confirmed entries.

With the large number of entries, the AKC was concerned that all the competitors might not be able to get through all the exercises in one day, so two more rings were added. That meant each team competed in eight rings each day – doing two to three exercises in each ring, plus one set of group exercises on Saturday. That meant we all went in the ring a total of 17 times in two days — the equivalent of doing Open and Utility four times (minus three sets of groups) in two days for a total of 1,420 points possible.

The first dogs went into the rings at 7:30 a.m. each morning and we ended around 6 p.m. each evening. The logistics of moving between the rings was fairly straightforward, but some rings ran longer than others because of the

# Obedience Invitational

**Sweeping the competition at the 2011 NOI event were overall winner NOC OTCH SPIRIT'S ZIM ZAM ZOOM UDX6 OM4 OBHF (1407.5) owned by Ward Falkner; 1st Runner Up NOC OTCH HIGH TIMES RIS'N ABOVE THE TIDE UDX16 OGM RE OBHF (1406) owned by Kathleen Rasinowich-Platt; 2nd Runner Up NOC OTCH DD'S DREAMS DO COME TRUE VCD1 UDX20 OGM RE TDX JH NA NAJ WCX OBHF VCX CCA (1396.5) owned by Dee Dee & Billy Anderson; 3rd Runner Up OTCH GOLDENLOCH MAKIN' A STATEMENT UDX5 OM9 OBHF (1395.5) owned by Gary J. Platt.**



complexity of the exercises and the size of the dogs competing (small dogs take a little longer to cover the same amount of real estate than a bigger dog does!). With some rings you might have a two-hour break between finishing one and going in another. At other times, you might come out of one ring and the next ring was calling your number. For me personally, that was more fun – going in a ring, running through the exercises, coming out at the finish and going right back into another ring. It was a bit of a challenge to keep track of which ring you were in next, and what gear you needed. I arrived at one ring and realized I'd forgotten to bring a dumbbell which was required. So there was a hasty run back to the crating area to retrieve it. I can't emphasize enough how great (and patient) all the stewards and judges were throughout the two-day event.

One-hundred-and-nineteen dogs ended up showing – with 29 Golden Retrievers in that number. If you do the math, that means fully a quarter (25 percent) of the top dogs at the NOI were Golden Retrievers. The entries also included three NOI winners from previous years: Dream and me (Dee Dee Anderson), the 2007 winner; Petra Ford

with her Lab “Tyler,” a team that had won back-to-back championships in 2008 and 2009, and Kathleen Rasinowich-Platt with her Golden “Buoy” who was the 2010 winner.

For the first time at the NOI, the AKC held a Junior Obedience competition on Saturday. All the regular Obedience rings were stopped around 2 p.m. in order to hold an award ceremony and acknowledge the achievements of a great bunch of junior exhibitors. This brought back many fond memories of my sixteenth birthday when I was given my first Golden. What a great competitive event (and life experience) this was for the Juniors. If you have or know of a Junior who qualifies for this event, I strongly urge you to encourage them to go. I know it can be expensive, so to help, maybe you can do some fund-raising for them. Truly, it is an event that they should not miss. And even better, as long as the NOI is being held in Orlando, Juniors and their families can take in Disney World.

Here are the top nine Golden finishers at the 2011 National Obedience Invitational. Introducing Zoom, Buoy, Dream, Bubba, Bossman, Dealer, Titan, Indy and Riley.

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**2011 AKC National Obedience Champion award went to NOC OTCH SPIRIT'S ZIM ZAM ZOOM UDX6 OM4 OBHF "Zoom" owned by Ward Falkner of North Vancouver, BC Canada, earning 1407.5 points**

## NOI WINNER!

From a Canadian standpoint, there are several factors that make participation in the NOI very desirable. There is no comparable competition held in Canada. The NOI is a prestigious event and just qualifying is a significant achievement in itself. Canadians tend to consider the top American teams as the best in North America; therefore the NOI represents an opportunity to compete with the "best of the best" in the world of competitive obedience. Participating provides a wonderful opportunity to observe and learn from the top teams in the U.S. The social interaction is very rewarding, combined with the development of new friendships and the renewal of old friendships.

In my view, the format used this year is a significant improvement over that used in previous years. The format provided an opportunity for all competitors to participate on the second day. It represents a true measure of the top teams able to maintain accuracy and consistency throughout two long and very stressful days for competition. While the previous format on the second day, i.e., one-on-one, did have a certain appeal for some onlookers, the seeding process tended to unduly influence outcomes. For example, #1 seed versus #25 seed might be considered an unfair match-up.

I am a very competitive person by nature and enjoy the competitive aspect of the sport of obedience. While successfully competing is rewarding, the most enjoyable and rewarding aspect of the sport comes from the interaction between my dog and myself during training sessions. It is during these sessions that the fun of training is shared and the bonding occurs that allows us as a team to act as one. The social interaction with fellow competitors is also very rewarding.

"Zoom's" Canadian titles are: GMOTCH (Grand Master Obedience Trial Champion) – ten dual qualifiers (Open and Utility Classes) under ten different judges with scores of 195 or better in both classes. At two years of age, Zoom was the youngest dog in Canada to achieve this title. Zoom has ranked in the Top Ten All Breeds Obedience Dogs in Canada for the past five years. He was ranked #1 in 2008, and has achieved over 250 High In Trials. Zoom has established a Canadian record for the number of perfect 200's achieved in a single year by earning 15. He has also established a CKC record for the most perfect 200's achieved in a dog's competitive career earning 53 plus one in AKC competition. Zoom is the only Canadian dog

## 1st Runner Up

The National Obedience Invitational (NOI) is the Super Bowl of dog obedience. It is an honor to be invited to this prestigious event and show among many of the top obedience teams in the county. The NOI is also an annual reunion. I look forward in seeing and visiting with as many people as I can. This year was especially nice as my husband Gary and his dog "Bubba" placed 3rd Runner Up and "Buoy" and I placed 1st Runner Up.

I liked the new High Combined format of this year's competition. It was an endurance competition for the dogs, handlers and the judges. Surprisingly, the dogs held up well and most seemed to perform better on the second day. It seemed worthwhile for all exhibitors to compete for two days versus one; particularly those who traveled a great distance.

The end of the competition is not as exciting as past events. The AKC might consider stopping the competition after 12 rounds (eight rounds on Saturday and four rounds on Sunday) and then take the top eight teams

**1st Runner Up went to NOC OTCH HIGH TIMES RIS'N ABOVE THE TIDE UDX16 OGM RE OBHF "Buoy" owned by Kathleen Rasinowich-Platt of Papillion, NE, earning 1406 points**





and create a round robin format to get down to the final four.

Why I do obedience? I have always been fascinated with what our dogs do for us. Having an obedience-trained dog makes it possible to have multiple dogs in one

household. It is nice to be able to go in public and know that your dogs will mind their manners. I enjoy doing demonstrations to the various youth and rescue groups to show them what it is like to have a great companion. What I most enjoy about a well-trained dog is that there is a bond and a trust factor that grows between a human and dog. That bond helps immensely in the show ring. Obedience training also helps reduce stress and is great exercise for my dog and me.

Buoy is a sweet and special boy. He is very easy to live with and loves to work. I have enjoyed every minute with Buoy, whether it is in the show ring or just hanging with him at home. He loves to cuddle and lies as close to you as

possible. This seems to be in a Golden Retriever's DNA. He gives gentle kisses or small nibbles on your hand. Buoy is six years old and been shown in obedience since 2008. He has 3800+ OTCH points and earned 118 High in Trials, 130 High Combined scores, and was one of the first 10 dogs to earn an Obedience Grand Master title. He was the first runner up at the 2009 and 2011 AKC National Obedience Invitational and was crowned the National Obedience Champion in 2010, in Long Beach, CA. He was the #2 Obedience Dog (All Breed) in the country in 2009, 2010 and 2011, and was the #1 Golden Retriever shown in obedience (by OTCH points) in 2009, 2010 and 2011. Buoy was the recipient of the Toby-Trigger Trophy in 2009 and 2011. Just when I thought there were no other records or personal bests, he came up with another milestone. In July 2011, Buoy earned three 200's, earning his 11th 200 in his obedience career. To my amazement, two of these 200's comprised a perfect High Combined score of 400 under judges Richard and Patricia Strong.

Many things contributed to our success, and I am fortunate to have a great support system from my husband Gary, my parents, family and many people from all over the country. With every dog that I love, train and show, it has allowed me to meet the most amazing people. Showing in obedience has allowed me to travel throughout many parts of United States and twice to Crufts in Birmingham, England. I never thought I would be hooked on obedience by taking a local obedience class 24 years ago.

## 2nd Runner Up

For "Dream" and me the NOI is more of a challenge than any other obedience trial. We don't go to win; we go to see how far we can advance each year. We go to watch others compete with their dogs. We go to have fun! This year's competition was different than years past. It was hard to keep track of how well you were doing because everyone competed both days.

For the past five years the NOI was in Long Beach, CA. It was an eight-hour drive for us. This year the NOI was in Florida. Our plane arrived in Florida at 1 a.m. Friday morning. We stayed in a motel that was next door to the convention center. Friday afternoon we checked in at the show site and set up Dream's crate.

We showed in our first ring at 8:30 a.m. Saturday morning and showed in our last ring at 5 p.m. that night. Dream was a little tired on Saturday. I think the time change was a little hard on her (three-hour difference, plus getting in late, getting up early), but she hung in there and qualified in every ring on Saturday.

Sunday morning I found out we were sitting in 3rd place, but did not know any of the scores. Dream performed much better on Sunday, losing half as many points as she had lost on Saturday. She had one moment where she jumped the broad jump, then checked out a bug that had just flown and landed right in front of her while she was fronting (must have been a Florida bug that she had never seen before). That cost her one point, and that was her only big mistake. That is the challenge with obedience...every show is different and you never know what distractions there will be. The distractions from eight rings

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*2nd Runner Up went to  
NOC OTCH DD'S DREAMS DO  
COME TRUE VCD1 UDX20  
OGM RE TDX JH NA NAJ WCX  
OBHF VCX CCA "Dream"  
owned by Dee Dee & Billy  
Anderson of Lodi, CA, earning  
1396.5 points*



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running simultaneously were the downfall of a lot of dogs. Dream actually enjoys having people watch her, and she likes the challenge of the distractions (with the exception of unidentified insects landing in her path). If she could talk she would say, "No problem I can handle it." I always joke with Dream and ask her, "Who's in charge?" The answer is always Dreamy Pie Pie!

Dream has qualified for the NOI six years in a row. Dream won the NOI in 2007. She finished in the top eight the next three years, and finished in 3rd place in 2011. She placed in the Sporting Group four times. I'm sad to say 2011 was most likely Dream's last year at the NOI, as she is now nine years old.

Dream and I have dabbled in other venues, doing tracking, agility, field, plus some therapy work. But due to my bad back the only venue we could do together without too much pain for me was obedience. It is hard to explain the bond when doing obedience, there is nothing like it in any other venue. The dog and handler are one. I enjoy the perfection part of obedience very much, and the fact I can

train anywhere. A trained dog is a happy dog!

Dream has accomplished much in the obedience world. She has earned 169 High In Trials and 169 High Combined awards. She has earned over 2,300 OTCH points, and 24 perfect 200 scores, more than any other Golden in AKC for 40 years. She earned seven perfect scores in 2011 alone. She has placed in the top 25 All-breed for OTCH points for six years. She was honored by the AKC for being one of the first 10 dogs to earn the Obedience Grand Master title. Dream has won the OTCH Topbrass Ric O Shay Barty WCX Trophy in 2007, 2010 and 2011, and the Toby-Trigger Trophy in 2010. She also earned more High in Trials than any other breed in 2010, earning 56 out of 88 trials. She has also had two litters of puppies.

The funny part about Dream is she tries to be perfect – it is just her way of working. She is not always perfect, but she loves to try. In 2010, while I was campaigning Dream, someone said, "I bet you cannot wait until the year is over." "Over?" I said, "I wish it would never end!"

As the saying goes "Dreams Do Come True!"

## 3rd Runner Up



**3rd Runner Up went to OTCH GOLD-ENLOCH MAKIN' A STATEMENT UDX5 OM9 OBHF "Bubba" owned by Mr. Gary J. Platt of Papillion, NE, earning 1395.5 points**

The NOI is the single most prestigious obedience event, so it is worth a very long drive. Going to the NOI also provides an opportunity to see and compete with handlers/teams you would not otherwise see.

The current High Combined format seems to be the best overall measure of obedience performance. As the late and great Bob Self, Sr. had often said, "The high combined dog is the best trained dog in the trial." The current format allows for everyone to compete both days. There is a higher element of chance with head-to-head competition. The latter is based more on the luck of the draw of who your competitor will be, what exercises you will be doing and only one judge's opinion. The current high combined approach with a total deduction from showing in eight rings to eight different judges is best for randomizing idiosyncrasies in judging across all exercises. In a sense, you are competing with yourself more so than with other exhibitors. There is but one disadvantage: The current format is not as exciting for observers as is individual head-to-head competition. All things considered, I would not suggest changing the format for next year. Nevertheless, if a Sunday head-to-head competition were to occur, there are a number of ways to proceed. One would be to seed the top eight dogs adjacently for placements. This might entail dogs ranked 7th and 8th, 5th and 6th, 3rd and 4th and 1st and 2nd for competing for fourth through first place respectively. Another similar possibility would be to simply have the eight teams compete and those teams that keep the most points would be ranked first through fourth.

With either alternative option, I would much prefer two judges in the ring for the final eight participants. Rather than showing twice in each of the eight rings on Sunday as we did on Saturday, exhibitors would only show once in each of four rings with two judges scoring per ring. Doing this would allow time for limited head-to-head competition and two judges per ring.

I do obedience because training is fun, and I enjoy the challenges and behavior analytic problem solving side to better our performances. Living with a competitive obedience dog is so much more enjoyable. There is a sense of accomplishment and pride when meeting goals. It is especially gratifying to see improvement in areas we have worked on.

When you show a good deal, you develop friendships with fellow competitors. It's great to see a group of friends on the road. Lastly, exhibiting in obedience is simply a rush, and a socially acceptable way to "show off."

At one year of age, "Bubba" was High in Trial his first time out in Novice B at our 2009 National Specialty. At age two, Bubba earned his CDX, UD and Golden Retriever Obedience Hall of Fame status. The weekend after earning his UD, he earned his OTCH. Bubba, now age three, has also earned two 200 scores and was third runner up at the National Obedience Invitational. I look forward to showing Bubba for a number of years to come.

## 5th Place Finisher

“Bossman” is an eight-year-old male Golden Retriever with incredible drive and enthusiasm. His 48 pounds must include 47 pounds of heart.

Most of our time for the last four years has been working toward a MACH and a MH. We earned a MACH, SH, WCX and UKC HRCH along the way with his extraordinary spirit always in view.

When I had an unexpected health issue in May, training was put on hold and Boss spent most of my recovery time with his head on my chest monitoring the healing process. In early December, with cardio rehab complete, we started unrestricted obedience training again preparing for his fifth NOI experience. Our goal was to have fun, but try to avoid failing any exercise in the 16-ring test.

After Saturday’s work, we were 0.5 points out of fourth place (unofficially per Helen Smith). I was tired but still managed to work on the weak exercises in the “parking lot training area.” Sunday was long and tiring, but Bossman finished with no major faults and no failures – although fronts were occasionally off center. He finished 5th but 1st in my heart – what a trooper!



*Finishing in 5th place OTCH MACH TANBARK’S WHO’S THE BOSS UDX19 OGM RA SH WCX OBHF “Bossman” owned by David Gannon, earning 1389.5*

## 6th Place Finisher



*Finishing in 6th place OTCH GOLDSEEKERS GAMBLIN MAN UDX4 OM8 OBHF “Dealer” owned by Betsy Scapichio, earning 1389.0*

I had fun at the NOI this year. So proud of “Dealer” – finishing 6th overall! He put in one nice, clean run after another and got better as the runs went on. That’s pretty amazing when we competed together 16 times in two days, plus a set of stays. It was a balancing act to keep him both energized and fresh for each class, but still warm him up enough to be accurate.

Being a seasoned, six-year-old dog and our many times in the ring together over the years definitely helped me to know what was best for him. We must have gotten it right because by the second day, it was tough to get him to go back into his crate – he wanted to do it again! I enjoyed seeing his confidence grow with each trip into the ring.

This year there was a new format for the NOI, and I thought it was great. The best thing about it was that after doing only two or three exercises we got to come out of the ring and reward and play. The venue was very nice and contributed to a truly national caliber show.

Congratulations to all of the winners – it was definitely a “Golden” weekend of obedience. Dealer and I look forward to returning to Florida again next year!

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## 7th Place Finisher (tie)

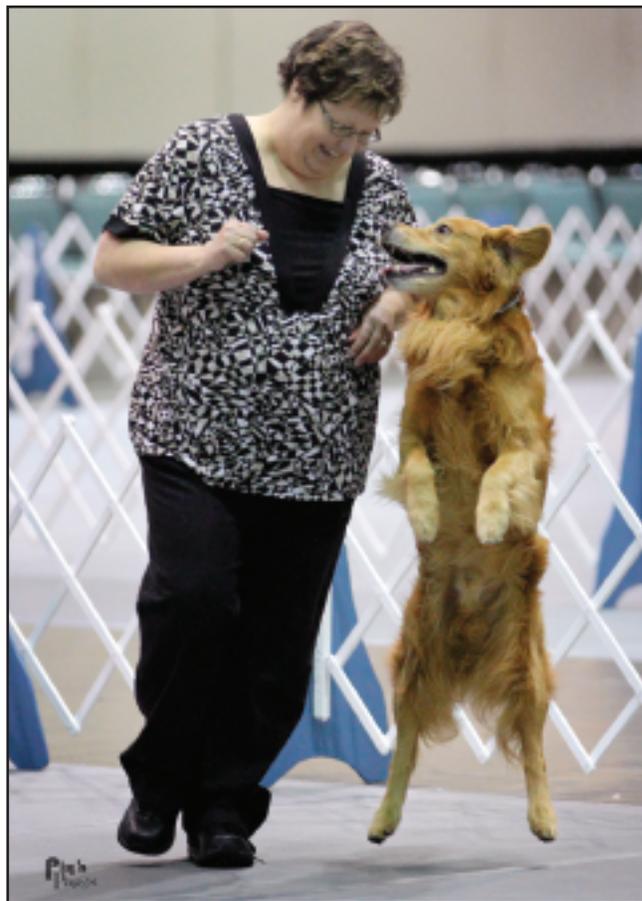
*Finishing in 7th place OTCH DAL-RHE'S SUNFIRE TITANIUM UDX12 OGM RAE NJP OBHF "Titan" owned by Michelle Meyer, earning 1387.0*

"Titan" is my first dog back into the sport of competitive obedience after a long absence. Previously I had trained one dog to an AKC CDX. Never did I think we could come this far together! Titan never ceases to amaze me with his precision and consistency. He is a very joyful boy who loves to show and, if you have ever seen Titan in the ring, you'll agree his confidence, attitude and exuberance to work certainly shines through. I am very proud of Titan and our accomplishments together. It has been exciting to be this dog's partner in the ring.

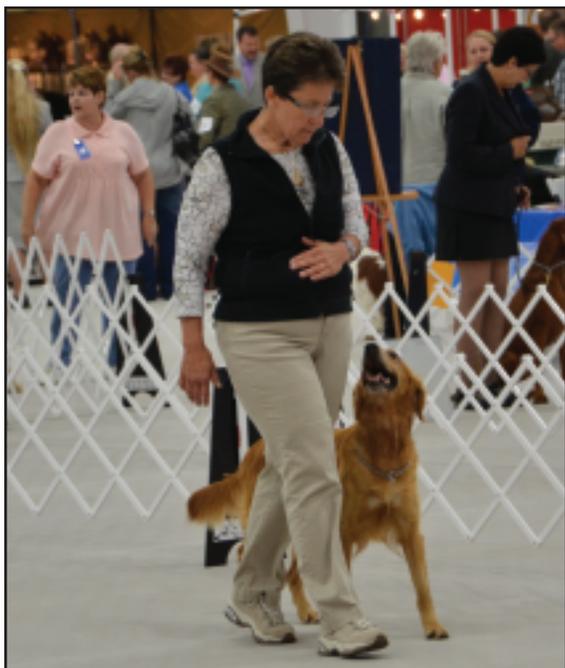
I was honored to be invited to the AKC NOI for the past three years and was thrilled to participate in the past two. In 2010, Titan was seeded 9th after the first day of competition. Titan has been ranked in the Top 25 All Breed Obedience dogs for 2009, 2010 and 2011, and he has accumulated over 1600 OTCH points, 50 High in Trials and 50 High Combined awards.

Competing at the NOI has been a wonderful experience. I met a host of new friends and was able to reconnect with many more that we met last year. It was an honor to meet some of the truly great handlers in our sport. I thank AKC for affording me this privilege and for showcasing obedience dogs.

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## 7th Place Finisher (tie)



*Finishing in 7th place OTCH Topbrass Is Flying High UDX12 OGM VER JH OBHF "Indy" owned by Karen Ann Fuss, earning 1387.0*

As a puppy, people would comment on how cute "Indy" was. At the age of five she still has that cute factor she had from a small puppy. Training starts early at my house as I spend most of my time at home in my training building playing with my dogs. It is a great release for me after long days in the office. Indy is an over achiever and loves challenges. By the time she was just over a year she was trained through Utility, and I had started proofing her as I did not want to start showing her till she was two.

At the age of two she started out her Novice career with a 200 the first time in the ring. Within 12 months of earning her CD she went on to earn her OTCH. Indy has been invited to the AKC Invitational each year she has been shown. This is the first year we were able to go and it was exciting to me that we could tie for 7th place. Indy has earned over 1400 lifetime OTCH points. She has been a dream dog, and has been enjoyable to train and show.

## 10th Place Finisher

*Finishing in 10th place OTCH SUNFIRE'S CODE RED UDX14 VER OBHF "Riley" owned by Fran Culler, earning 1380.5*

I was thrilled with "Riley" finishing in the top 10 at the 2011 NOI! He was one of a small group of dogs that were clean (qualified) in all 17 rings! Riley has been invited to the NOI every year since he earned his OTCH and has exhibited in three NOIs so far.

Riley is quick, animated, and smooth. He is extremely *honest*; no one could try any harder. All he wants to do is be right. I'd say his motto is: *Just show me what you want me to do and I'll do it the best I can.* As a result, sometimes he gets worried if he's not sure of himself. At this point, all I work on is confidence and attitude (and quite successfully I might add!). Riley keeps getting better and better! Of course, Riley feeds right into it if I get uptight, so I try hard to be calm and cool. Unfortunately, I'm not always successful.

Riley is really sweet and is the nicest guy in the world. He absolutely *loves* toys, particularly stuffed ones, and often carries six – eight around at a time! ❖



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