

Record Books for Dog Sports

June 5, 2003

by Marie Logue

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Tip Sheet #1 — Get Results From Your Training Program

Until I started using a training journal, my training sessions with Winston seemed to lack focus, organization, purpose. I found myself practicing what was easy and familiar rather than learning something new and difficult. In my back yard where I had the equipment set up, we'd work on basically the same thing every day. Usually it was an exercise from a recent course or homework from a class I had attended. It was difficult to stay focused, on track and motivated. Moreover, I had no concrete way to determine if we were progressing in our training...and it seemed we weren't. We were competing but we weren't qualifying. I had an idea of what to practice, but what did I really want to accomplish? I had no particular goals or training plan. It seemed I was spending a lot of time training but not getting anywhere.

Winston and I managed to get through Novice O.K., but in Open we couldn't seem to qualify. I needed to find out why and I needed to start qualifying or quit! I began devouring books written by Olympic champions and sports psychologists on how to succeed at sports. In my reading I noted repeated references to keeping a training journal or diary that included a goal and a training plan. I began keeping a training journal and made my journal my new best friend. That was three years ago and not once since have I thought about quitting!

After using my training journal for more than two years and tweaking it as I felt the need, "AIM HIGH" evolved into what I wanted it to be: a personal positive reinforcement training tool and a system for planning, recording and evaluating my progress toward my goals. By using a training journal like AIM HIGH...

- Your goals will become clear and the steps toward your goals will become the foundation of your training plan.
- You'll write your goals down every day (the more you think about, write about, talk about something you want to happen, the greater the probability is of that thing happening).
- You'll be able to monitor your progress and evaluate your training efforts.
- You'll keep on track and stay focused on your goals.

- Your training will become more efficient and progressive.
- You'll focus on the positive aspects of your sport and your performances by writing down what you did well. When you do, you increase the chances of repeating the success.
- Your trainer/coach can review your journal and help you discover your strengths or problem areas.
- Once something is written down it becomes real, it takes on real meaning, and it becomes a commitment.

In addition to the above, a training journal can serve as the basis for next season's training program. It can serve as the foundation for planning your next puppy's training.

Since I'm training for several sports (agility, freestyle and obedience) I have a variety of types of training to do each day. Please see the journal page sample on the next page. The day used here was the Thursday before an obedience trial.

Luck comes to those who carefully prepare for it!

Your "Aim High" journal really begins with setting a goal. Once I wrote down my first real goal, "Winston's MACH by summer 2001", it became very clear: I had to have a plan! I had to make every second of my training count. I needed to get faster weaves and faster tunnels. I had to teach myself how to run fast. I had to increase our consistency rate. I had to enter lots of trials! I had to improve our use of those trials...and so on. I now had the basis for my training plan.

Your long-term goal may be to enter your first trial early next year. What you need to do to be ready becomes the basis for your training plan—teach Star to weave, get solid contacts, fast teeter, take her to different places to train.

Set a goal. List the steps you must take to meet that goal. Luck will be yours!

[\(Scroll down for sample journal page.\)](#)

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Tip Sheet #2 — Preparing for a Big Event

When I have a big event coming up, I complete the “What I Plan to Train” section of my **AIM HIGH** journal several days or a week or so in advance, leading up to the “big event”. For some readers, their “big event” may be the beginning of their trial season. For others it may be a national competition.

For the purposes of this example, I'll describe getting my partner Winston and myself ready for the USDAA regional competition in Perry, GA June 13-15. My goals for the 3 days are (1) qualify in the Grand Prix Regional, and (2) get Winston's 6th USDAA Master Titling leg. To accomplish these goals, we must run very fast in order to make time. So my main focus these last 11 days will be on speed and review. My journal pages will include:

On **day 1** (June 2) I listed the following as what I planned to train:

- Sprints in park
- Target Weaves
- Work box
- Play “race-me” games in park
- Jump Chute - 4 reps
- Drill Weaves - 4 reps

I will not be teaching anything new now. My training will consist of review and exercises to increase speed and tight turns. I have set up a “box” of jumps (with an extra jump to form a pinwheel) in my yard which I use to practice focus, threddles, 270's, wraps and tight turns, front and rear crosses and pinwheels.

On **day 2** (June 3) I listed...

- Sprints in park
- Run with Winston in the park
- At Ileana's: drill weaves, run fast, work close to Winston, focus, and run clean.
- Jump Chute - 6 reps
- Drill Weaves - 6 reps

Since I'll be going to Ileana's class in the evening, I'll do a little less work in the morning. Also, I have a goal for the class: *drill weaves, run fast, work close to Winston, focus, and run clean*. Since I know the structure of this class, I can plan what I want to work on.

On **day 3** (June 4), for a morning class at Bonnie's and an evening class at Wendy's, I listed...

- Run fast, run clean, focus, tight turns

Again, I know we will be running a course at Bonnie's so I can plan my goal accordingly. (See next page for sample journal page.)

Day 4 (June 5): I decided to give Winston the day off since our training sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday were quite intense. My plan for the day was much like day 1.

Day 5 (June 6), no class...we're on our own:

- Sprints in park
- Run with Winston in park
- Target Weaves
- Work box
- Practice fast pinwheels
- Figure 8's over singles, doubles, and broad jump
- Jump Chute - 8 reps
- Drill Weaves - 8 reps

Days 6, 7, and 8 include basically the same exercises with increases in number of sprints in the park and number of reps for jump chute and weaves drills.

On **day 9**, I'll raise the jumps to 16", Winston's USDAA jump height. My journal page looks like this:

- Raise jumps to 16"
- Sprints in park
- Run with Winston in park
- Figure 8's over single, double, triple
- Work box
- Practice fast pinwheels
- Play “race-me” game through the weaves
- Jump Chute -14 reps
- Drill Weaves -14 reps

You'll notice that on day 8 we did figure 8's over 12" jumps. On day 9 the bars were raised to 16". By planning some days ahead, you can plan in your progressions easily.

Day 10 (June 11) is a day when I have two classes. My journal page says:

- Run fast, run clean, focus, tight turns

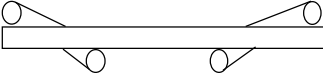
Whenever I'm in “practice mode” as when getting close to a big event, I find as many times and places I can find to run courses and my goal is to run clean every time.

I won't complete a journal page for **Day 11**. That is a day of complete rest for Winston and while he is resting I'll be packing, getting the car ready and our gear prepared for the trip to Perry. We will leave around noon and he will sleep the afternoon away, arriving in Perry at just about time for his dinner...what a life!

(Scroll down to see a sample journal page.)

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please send me an e-mail!
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Sample journal page

DATE: 6/4/03 DAY: Wednesday LOCATION(S) Bonnie's and Wendy's	
CONDITIONS: Warm and muggy, am/pm	
EVENT: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRAINING COMPETITION TYPE OF TRAINING: Agility	
WHAT I PLAN TO TRAIN (INCLUDING ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE RESOLVED):	
<i>Practice fast starts</i>	EXERCISE SKETCH 
<i>Run fast</i>	
<i>Run clean</i>	
<i>Focus</i>	
<i>Drill weaves if possible</i>	
<i>Work close to Winston</i>	
	<i>Dogwalk/tunnel discriminations</i>
EXERCISE	# REPS:
EXERCISE	# REPS:
EXACTLY WHAT WE DID AND WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED:	
<i>Great class! Had two dogwalk/tunnel discriminations. Ran the course fast and clean, focusing on the course and running with Winston every inch. Worked on handling discriminations and got to the point where I could use verbal directions. Worked on fast starts.</i>	
<i>At Wendy's class worked short courses. Practiced front crosses. Wendy had me praise Winston more during running the courses. It seemed to get a little more speed out of him.</i>	
SUCCESS ANALYSIS - WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING DONE WELL	
<i>Ran the courses fast and clean in both classes, focusing on the course and running with Winston every inch. Winston was pretty fast considering the heat and humidity.</i>	
<i>Front crosses are becoming more comfortable.</i>	
THIS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WEEK'S	MONTH'S GOAL:
<i>Speed! Fast weaves, independent pinwheels, 270's</i>	
LONG TERM GOAL:	
<i>GP qualifying leg; master titling leg</i>	
COMMENTS:	
<i>Start working on pinwheels tomorrow.</i>	

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Tip Sheet #3 — You Are the Author!

"My diary taught me almost all I know of running. ...Lined up on two full shelves of my office are fat notebooks labeled '1986', '1985', ...and so on. I'm prouder of them than of anything else I've published, because they are the evidence of where I've been. They are memorials to myself."

By Joe Henderson in his introduction to "Runner's World Training Diary".

The purpose of a training journal is to add organization to your training program, not add unnecessary work. Journal entries can be as brief or as elaborate as suits your style. You're the author.

DIARY INFORMATION—Day, date, location, conditions, etc. Trends are revealed when viewed in terms of the day's training session. Does your dog train better in cool weather? Work harder in class, the backyard, or the park? Is he burned out by Friday?

WHAT I PLAN TO TRAIN—Prior to a training session, whether it be class, competition or your backyard, list what you will train that day (you can even go on and enter a week's worth of training plans and more if you wish). My plan is based on what I need to work on to reach my goal. "Teach Winston 2 on 2 off, practice serpentines, practice my front crosses" are examples of a day's training list. Jumping drills to teach your dog to keep its feet up throughout an entire course, or teaching yourself foot work for front crosses may help you meet your goal of earning a particular title. If you're working on increasing speed, your day's plan may include working a speed circle, drilling weaves, and practicing fast starts.

EXACTLY WHAT WE DID AND WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED—Three men are at a swimming pool. One sat in the sun and never got into the water. The second sat poolside and dangled his feet in the water. The third swam laps in the pool. Later, all three will say they had been swimming that day.

It's easy for us to say we're training when in fact we are visiting with other competitors, setting up equipment, reflecting on last weekend's courses, etc. A journal entry eliminates rationalization and records the facts! It keeps us on track. It causes us to focus on the task at hand. So, following your training session, take a few minutes to list what you actually did, including solutions to challenges. How did you spend the time? What training aids did

you use that worked? A session's accomplishments might include that your dog learned to target, or is starting to do a fast table. Also write down anything you learned today.

SUCCESS ANALYSIS—Writing down your successes increases the probability that they will be repeated and forces you to focus on the positive aspects of your training and your sport. Did your dog do offside weaves all the way for the first time? Are you beginning to feel comfortable with front crosses? Did you get the automatic down on the table you've worked so hard for? Did your dog do a two-on-two-off and wait smiling for you to release him? This section is very important! Write down everything done well. Did you earn your first title? Did your dog leave all the bars up in class?

THIS WEEK'S/MONTH'S GOALS—These goals are your training plans for the week or month. They are the stepping stones to your ultimate (long term) goal. My goal for the week may be to review all of Winston's obedience exercises because I have an obedience trial coming up over the weekend.

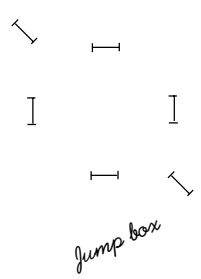
LONG TERM GOAL—Briefly state your long-term goal each day! Establishing a long term goal is very personal. Your long-term goal may be to run an entire course and get every contact or to become prepared to enter your first competition in six months. It may be to qualify for the AKC National competition this year, or it may be a spot on the World Team. Only you can determine your goal and it must fit you and be YOUR goal, not someone else's goal for you.

COMMENTS—Write down things you'll want to refer back to, anything you learned today, reminders, anything about the day that stood out.

You are the author. The basic format is here...now it's up to you to make your journal come alive!

(Scroll down to see a sample journal page.)

Sample journal page

DATE:	6/2/03	DAY: Wednesday	LOCATION(S) Bonnie's and Wendy's
CONDITIONS:	Warm and muggy, am/pm		
EVENT: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRAINING	COMPETITION	TYPE OF TRAINING: Agility	
WHAT I PLAN TO TRAIN (INCLUDING ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE RESOLVED):			
Sprints in park		EXERCISE SKETCH	
Play "race me" games			
Work box			
Target weaves			
EXERCISE	Jump chute	# REPS:	4
EXERCISE	Drill weaves	# REPS:	4
EXACTLY WHAT WE DID AND WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED:			
<p>Great workout. Did all of the above.</p> <p>Winston doesn't particularly like targeting with his food in a food tube. He prefers to have me run with him or at least put the target on a lid so he can get it soon as he gets there.</p> <p>Worked the box and Winston is tight and responsive as ever!</p>			
SUCCESS ANALYSIS - WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING DONE WELL			
<p>Winston ran great in the park. He loves the race-me game.</p> <p>He ran fastest in the weaves when I ran with him.</p>			
THIS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WEEK'S MONTH'S GOAL:			
Speed! Fast weaves, independent pinwheels, 270's			
LONG TERM GOAL:			
GP qualifying leg; master titling leg			
COMMENTS:			
Work on figure 8's over jumps tomorrow.			

Sample journal page

DATE: 5/8/03	DAY: Thurs	LOCATION(S) Park/yard
CONDITIONS: Hot/humid		
EVENT: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRAINING COMPETITION TYPE OF TRAINING: Obedience/freestyle		
WHAT I PLAN TO TRAIN (INCLUDING ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE RESOLVED):		
Practice all obedience exercises at the park. Work extra on stand		EXERCISE SKETCH
For freestyle work on backing up straight...from front and side; work on tight circles around my legs.		
Begin backing around me exercises.		
EXERCISE	Jump chute	# REPS: 8
EXERCISE	Drill weaves	# REPS: 8
EXACTLY WHAT WE DID AND WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED:		
Went through all obedience exercises in the park. Winston remembered everything. Heeling was a little wide, worked on that.		
At home started working back-up on patio against wall. Winston tries to scoot out behind me. Put a leash on him to keep him beside me. He is less nervous now about being between me and the wall.		
Began teaching him to back up around me. His back end keeps going in the wrong direction. Keep working on this.		
SUCCESS ANALYSIS - WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING DONE WELL		
Winston remembered all his obedience exercises. I think he will do well in the trial Saturday.		
THIS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WEEK'S MONTH'S GOAL:		
Obedience exercises; back up training		
LONG TERM GOAL:		
WNKC CD this weekend; freestyle routine by November.		
COMMENTS:		
Go slowly with backing up around me. Teach him to get his rear end in!		

increase distance between jumps in back yard for next week's agility exercises.

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Tip Sheet #4 — Yards Per Second Matter!

Quotable Quote: Henry Ford said, "Those who think they can and those who think they can't, are both right."

How do I figure my dog's yps (yards per second)

When you attend the judge's briefing just before walking a course, you make note of the yards she announces and the time given to run the course (sct—standard course time). Those numbers take on new meaning when you begin to track your dog's yps. Knowing your dog's yps can affect the way you train and what goals you set for yourself and your partner. You will know how your dog compares to other dogs in your division. The rule books for the 4 main agility registries give a range for allowable yps. Knowing your dog's yps can tell you if you are ready to enter him in USDAA as yps is set higher in USDAA than in AKC. NADAC jumpers courses run very, very fast!

To figure your dog's yps (yards per second), take the following steps:

1. For any standard run that includes a 5-second table count, (a) subtract 5 seconds from the number of seconds it took your dog to run the course and (b) divide the number of yards the judge gave as the course yardage by that figure.

Example: The course yardage is 182 and your dog ran it in 61.66 seconds

(a) $61.66 - 5 = 56.66$ (your dog's actual running time)

(b) $182 \div 56.66 = 3.21$ (your dog's yps)

Note: To figure the yps the judge has given to run the course, do the same thing. For example, the course yardage is 172 and the time allowed is 71 seconds:

(a) $71 - 5 = 66$ (actual running time)

(b) $172 \div 66 = 2.60$ (yps at which your dog must run the course)

2. To figure your dog's yards per second for any run that does not include the table count (JWW for example), simply divide the course yardage by the time it took your team mate to run the course.

Keep in mind, many factors can influence your dog's yps on any given day such as the way the judge wheels the course, how technical the course is, how the weather and/or surface conditions affect your dog, how rested your dog is, and so on. So you will need more than one run to get a true picture of your partner's yps. You will want to look for trends (indoors, outside, on grass, mats, carpet, loose dirt). In addition, you want to keep your various events separate for tracking purposes. For example, track AKC standard runs together, USDAA Jumpers runs (no weaves to slow you down!) together. This way you will be comparing apples-to-apples!

Once you know your dog's yps you can begin to take steps to increase them!

Probably one of the most important reasons for knowing your dog's yards per second is that this is a way to measure your progress. If you keep a record of your runs and yps, you will begin to see a trend — are the yps increasing? decreasing? This isn't necessarily a just a measure of how fast your dog runs. This figure will also aid you in knowing how your handling and training skills are progressing. Are you running the course efficiently? Have you taught yourself and your dog to make tight turns, fast contacts, and other skills necessary for running an efficient course?

Think about your dog's yps. You can probably come up with many ways to apply that knowledge to your training program. It will provide purpose to your training which can be quite motivating. The successes will come as a result!

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Tip Sheet #5 — Train Smarter...NOT Harder

Early in your training, establish a regular time of day and days of the week for training.

Keep a journal of your training sessions that includes what you trained and your accomplishments.

- Make training a priority! Make it a part of your daily schedule. Be sure it is near the top of your "to do" list and when you "stack" it with other chores (bank, grocery, etc.), put it first!
- Be sure your family and friends know how important your training is to you so they can be cooperative and encouraging about your training schedule.
- Keep goals and plans flexible. Be willing to adjust them as you go along.
- Warm up yourself and your dog before a training session.
- Keep training sessions short
- Always keep the safety of your partner in mind.
- Be flexible. If what you planned for today's training isn't working for you or your dog, switch to something else for this session.
- Vary the type of training. If you have a formal training class at night, in the morning you might consider non-stressful exercises. If you have no class, some "thinking" exercises might be appropriate.
- Play with your dog often during training sessions.
- Practice like you compete — work fast and with intent!
- Train at a time of day when you and your dog are motivated (before dinner?).
- Use a motivator that results in a happy training session; one dog works well for treats, another works best for a ball.
- Reward often and praise often.
- If your treat-motivated dog has a weight problem, use his dinner for training treats.
- When teaching a new skill, if your partner starts to stress, take a step or two back to where he was last successful. You may have to go to something else and return to the exercise later.
- Train in baby steps. For example, when training go-outs, gradually increase the distance to the far obstacle by inches. Backchain.
- Don't practice mistakes. Your dog will begin to think what he is doing is correct. If your partner isn't getting it, back up a step or two or change to a different technique or a different exercise and return later (maybe even weeks later) to whatever you're having trouble with.
- If your dog starts sniffing or showing other signs of stress, do a familiar exercise, play ball for a few minutes, or just play with your dog. Return to the exercise later.
- Understand how your dog learns. It will influence your training plans. Is he a latent learner? Does he sometimes seem to forget everything he ever knew?
- Review all the tools in your tool box often to keep your skills sharp.
- Training should be fun for both you and your partner. If you're not having fun, stop for the day.
- The training session should always end with a success. Do an exercise your dog knows well and is comfortable with and can have fun with. For dessert...throw a ball!
- When the training session is over, set up equipment for your next training session.
- In your journal, write what you have learned and accomplished today, and go ahead and write on the next day's page what you want to work on next.

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Tip Sheet #6 — How To Use Your Record Books

When you are at a trial, establish the habit of taking your Agility Competition Record Book to the score board with you and record your dog's time and placement, course yardage and course time and times for dogs who placed. That way you only have to write it once. While you're sitting around waiting for your next run, fill in the date, trial information, judge, etc. Then figure your dog's yps (as well as that of the other competing dogs), number of title points, and total legs and points. By doing so you don't have to make time after you get home to do those things. You may lose the paper you wrote it on anyway. Also this is a good time to record comments you'd like to make while they are fresh on your mind. Be sure to note the weather and surface conditions, too.

Record ALL runs, whether qualifying or not and in both cases, use the comments section to record any particular challenges you encountered.

(For further information, see Tip Sheet #4: Yards Per Second Matter.)

For Obedience, take your book to the score board and write down your score, placement, etc. Ask to see the judge's score sheet for your run so you can learn your score for each exercise. This will help you know what you need to work on. Often the judge will tell you what your weaknesses are and you can record this in your book while it is fresh on your mind.

Once you've established the habit of doing this "paperwork" while you're at the trial, you'll find yourself referring to it over and over and wondering how you ever got along without it!

Your Agility and Obedience Competition Record Books are flexible and you can easily adapt them to suit your specific needs, for example:

1. Some people have a separate book for each dog.
2. Some people have a separate book for each dog and several venues in that dog's book.
3. Some people keep a couple of dogs in the same book by putting a tab halfway through for the second dog. One friend keeps three dogs in one book. She divides the book into thirds with a tab for each dog. Another friend puts one dog's results in the top record on the page and the other dog's results in the bottom record.
2. If you run in several venues and want to keep them all in the same book, you can separate each venue with a tab. Another option is a chronological record where you highlight qualifying runs with different color markers (for example, USDAA yellow, AKC Blue, UKC pink, etc.).

I have a separate book for each dog and keep all venues in one book. I highlight important information (qualifying legs, for example) in blue for AKC, yellow for USDAA and purple for UKC. My trial "history" is by date and I can flip through and quickly locate AKC, USDAA and UKC information. In addition, at the bottom of the applicable pages, I highlight those runs that qualify us for national competitions with an orange marker (Orange? Well, it was available.).

Look for ways, maybe a combination of the above, to adapt the book to meet your specific needs.