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THROUGH THE EYES OF A YOUTH



Staff Photo

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North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association

RUNNING THE NAVHDA NATURAL ABILITY TEST AS A 9-YEAR-OLD

By Mary Latremore

Mary was nine years old when she ran her 9-month-old puppy, Lilly, in the Central New York NAVHDA Natural Ability Test held in Tully New York in July 2021. Mary is now ten and in the fifth grade. Mary has a younger sister, Megan, and a younger brother, William. There are not many opportunities to test dogs, so this test was her first moment to show off the abilities of her puppy. Mary also has a nine-year-old chocolate Lab at home that was raised with her. Her Lab's name is Lucy. Mary helped raise and train Lucy. Months before the test Mary worked daily with Lilly on smelling things, tracking things, and playing fetch. Lilly isn't the greatest at fetch, however Lucy shows Lilly how it is done a lot.

Hi, my name is Mary, and this is my dog Lilly. Before the Natural Ability test, I knew that she was going to pass the test. However, when I got there, I saw all the other dogs, and I felt nervous that she would not pass. My dad kept asking me if I was nervous and even though I was a little, I told him I was fine, and Lilly was smart and knew what to do. I mean this is a natural ability test, so it should be natural for Lilly. This was Lilly's first test, and this was the first time I participated in this test.

On the first part of the test, this nice lady, Judge Dawn Watkins, went through what I was going to do and how I was going to do it with Lilly. The first part of the test was pointing out birds in the tall grass. Lilly started looking for the bird and slammed on her brakes with the bird just inches from her nose. Lilly pointed this bird and held it until the bird took off. After a short chase, Lilly was on another bird with a fine-looking point. I was nervous the judges would be upset when Lilly jumped and grabbed a bird out of the air, but everything was fine. We flushed six birds together, and Lilly did great. After this part of the test, I began to feel pretty good about how Lilly would do. My dad and I also had lunch there. Thank you CNY NAVHDA!

After lunch, Lilly and I began the second part of the test, the swimming. Lilly hasn't practiced much in the water because we got her in November, and the water was too cold for her to swim as a puppy. I threw a few bumpers in the water, and Lilly hesitated for a short moment and then bolted for the bumpers. She retrieved it and showed the judges that she could swim and swim well. After the swimming was done, the judges checked just about everything on Lilly. Her coat was good, ears and teeth were clean and healthy, slight overbite, and we found out she was missing one tooth. Lilly likes to play, so I think she lost a tooth when she was playing.

After this was done, there was one part of the test left, the tracking part. The judges released and chased her first pheasant, and it got away from them and circled back behind us and Lilly. Lilly watched it take off, so we had to wait until the end to do this final part. That scared me a little, but when it was Lilly's turn, I knew she would do well. Lilly didn't spend much time sniffing the feathers when she started. Lilly found the track and slowly lost it and I became nervous. Lilly picked the trail back up and took off into the tall wheat field and nearly caught the bird. I called Lilly back and put her leash back on. I felt good on how Lilly did on this test. When it was time for the judges to score Lilly, they gave her a 110 out of 112. Lilly lost a little bit on the tracking. This is a great score for Lilly and me as this was our first run at the test together.

I would like to thank the Central New York NAVHDA for holding this event and helping me and Lilly take this test. I would also like to thank Dan Kremers of Lunatic Fringe Pudelpointers for giving us Lilly and showing me how to take this test. Finally, I would like to thank the judges (especially the Judge Dawn Watkins) for helping me with the test.



Recently, my dad and I took Lilly out to look for some grouse on our property. We went out for about two hours, and Lilly ran all over the place holding a good thirty yards in front of us. Lilly didn't find any birds for us, but she did point a feather pile where it looked like a bird has recently died. Lilly is now a year and 4 months old and has graduated from her kennel to my bed and keeps me warm through the night.

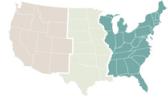




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