

West Brookfield, Massachusetts is a gorgeous area. It's remote and it's pastoral. We were going there to attend a match, and as a special interest activity, the match had added a go-to-ground as well as terrier racing.. Aside from toying with my dogs in my own back yard or in the woods near by, I hadn't ever competed with my dogs in either event up to that time. I belonged to an all-terrier club which had planned to have both events in the upcoming months, but this was not connected with that club & we were looking forward to watching, getting some training tips and perhaps entering.

It was a picture perfect day in the fall, blue blue sky and lots of sun. We were certainly impressed with the property as it was a mini estate that featured paddocks with several Morgan horses and lots of fields. The owner had allowed the club to hold its match there and later we discovered that the "racetrack" and go to ground areas were permanent fixtures. The lady didn't own terriers... she had dachshunds.

The match went fine. I was showing a Smooth Fox Terrier I had purchased from Liz Battista from Illinois (she was one of the earliest supporters of model dog showing as well as having this breed of live dog). I had him flown in about 6 or 8 weeks prior to this event and he settled in well and took to training on the lead, on the table and in the ring. His call name was Zorro and he was definitely "Peck's bad boy" --- a true terrier. He was my first Smooth tho I had been interested in the breed for years. My husband had German Shepherds when we met (as I did) and outside of that breed, he had little tolerance of anything else. Terriers were not his "thing".

Anyway, Zorro took the breed and was Group 2 during the breed judging. Matches are simply training events so one need to remember they are not at Westminster!

We had ambled over to the race course. She had it set up like a quarter horse straight away. At one end there were boxes (like the starting gate at a Greyhound track but much smaller) and at the other end there was a wall of hay bales with a window in the center. The hay bales formed a window around the lure operator. His was an old fashioned wheel which pulled a rope and at the other end of the rope was a pelt.

Zorro had never seen a course, never seen a pelt, never been in a box but we were there to have fun so I entered. Outside of dachshunds, there was one Jack Russell. All the other entrants had seen the course before (the majority of the Doxies belonged to the property owner). They arrived barking in anticipation. The barking peaked Zorro's interest—we wanted to get in and mix it up with those hot dogs for sure. We followed the stewards instruction and brought him to the box and basically we stuck him in! When we went to the spectator area nearby, I could see him thru a little window in the

front of the box and knew he was confused and probably a little scared. Then the fellow with the pelt lure came down the center of the straightaway and dropped the pelt in front of the 5-entrant box. THAT got Zorro's attention. When the lure operator got back to his position behind the hay bale window, he tugged on the rope to be sure his equipment was working. Zorro did not miss the tug on the pelt. I swear I could see his eyes light up and he locked onto that pelt like a heat-seeking missile.

To open the box simultaneously, someone pulled a rope which was run thru each of the front doors, like an overhead garage door. Someone yelled something, someone pulled the door rope and the lure started moved as the dogs leaped out of their temporary restraint. Zorro was in front faster than Secretariat negotiated the first turn during the Preakness Stakes.

OK, OK. He had longer legs than the doxies but they had the experience and they were on their home turf (literally).

Later, we were told that the lure operator never cranked that lure faster that he did that day. He saw Zorro inches away from the pelt and his job was to keep it that way. I think the fellow was stunned when Zorro came flying thru the window, intent on getting that pelt (which he did). The hay bales are supposed to stop the entrants, not provide a steeplechase obstacle.

He got a round of applause and folks were laughing and smiling with "did you see that dog?" all around.

I was concerned that Zorro would run off and have a ball on the fifty plus acre property but he was so proud of his catch that he paraded it and brought it to me like it was a house mouse. The pelt had a short life that day.

Racing, terrier or otherwise, is not a sanctioned event with the American Kennel Club. It is added as a fun event to some all terrier clubs, but it's not just a terrier thing.

Dachshunds and Jack Russells have several areas to race and sometimes the events also feature small jumps. Usually, the event is on a level, well-groomed course, most of the time grass, and can be any distance. 200 yards is not unreasonable. (Understand that I am not speaking of lure coursing or races connected with that sport.)

As I mentioned, the starting gate isn't like the ones you see at a horse racing track. If you have been to a greyhound race, you get the idea. I've not seen starting boxes for these events that have more than 5 boxes. They are completely enclosed with the exception of a small window in front. The dogs are not restrained in any way inside this box. Their owners place them inside and the back door is closed. The dogs have a few minutes to settle and check out the course in front of them. Sometimes the pelt is

waved in front of the boxes to get their attention. Little or no schooling is necessary as it's a "learn as you go". As my story indicates, Zorro got the idea immediately.

Owners are usually at the "finish line" to catch their dogs. There are also usually "catchers", volunteers from the host giving club there to assist as well.

Without question, every dog there enjoyed this event. They were bright eyed and excited. Zorro was pumped and looking for round two but we headed for the go to ground area ... which may be another story in the future.

The people enjoyed it as well—the owners of the entrants, the spectators... but perhaps not the lure operator!

Consider this event when planning props for performance events for your model Dachshunds, Jack Russells (yeah, I know, Parsons Russell as well!), and Smooth Fox Terriers. Step out of "the box"!!