

# AWMA Magazine

Quarterly Magazine for Members of the American Working Malinois Association

August 2005 Issue

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# The VPG/IPO Trial Helper

## Part 1

By Les Flores

Saturday, August 20th, 2005

The VPG/IPO trial helper has very definite duties as mandated by the VDH (Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen). The three levels of the sport, VPG 1, VPG 2 and VPG 3, are delineated by the organization and demands that helpers perform in a safe, consistent, effective manner to assist the judge in evaluating a dog in the protection phase.

Performance techniques of the VPG helper vary from individual to individual. This is usually due to different degrees of athleticism, physical make up, age and experience. Although these differences in style and techniques are apparent, the ability to work the dogs to safely and correctly test its abilities for the judge must always be present. Therefore, this article will only explain the proper procedures for the trial helper work and will not focus on personal techniques.

Before any instruction regarding the work itself, one must remember that, through out the trial work, the most important thing for a trial helper to remember is safety of the dog. Dog owners place great value in their dogs as well as time and effort spent training, this, as well as general public concern and perception, make safety a paramount issue.

During a trial, the helper works for the judge and must abide by his/her instructions short of providing reckless or unsafe work for the dog. The helper also must also listen to the handler and comply with his/her directions. However, trial exercises are sometimes not executed correctly by handlers due to nervousness. For this reason, many helpers have been known to assist the handler in proper procedure during the trial.

## VPG1

VPG 1, the beginning or the basic title, contains the least amount of grips.

- Standing in the blind for the hold and bark
- Step out of the blind when called out by the handler
- Escape when signaled by the judge
- After the dog engages, continue running until told to stop by the judge
- Re-attack
- Drive the dog and apply two stick hits
- Courage Test
- Side transport to the judge

## VPG2

VPG 2 has more control and one more grip than the VPG 1:

- Standing in the blind for the hold and bark
- Step out of the blind when called out by the handler
- Escape when signaled by the judge
- After the dog engages, continue running until told to stop by the judge
- Re-attack
- Drive the dog and apply two stick hits
- Back transport

- Attack out of the back transport
- Courage Test
- Side transport to the judge

### VPG3

VPG 3 has even more control and the most grips.

- Standing in the blind for the hold and bark
- Step out of the blind when called out by the handler
- Escape when signaled by the judge
- After the dog engages, continue running until told to stop by the judge
- Re-attack
- Drive the dog and apply two stick hits
- Back transport
- Attack out of the back transport
- Side transport to the judge
- Courage Test
- Re-Attack with two stick hits
- Side transport to the judge

These exercises seem simple when one reads it or when there is a coach that will show you how to do it. However, there are some finer points in the work one must keep in mind. These include proper equipment, correct positioning and finally, correct execution.

### Equipment

- Padded scratch pants
- Trial Jacket
- Trial Sleeve
- Padded Stick with seam sewn inside
- Good footwear with plenty of traction (cleats or turf shoes)

### Correct Position

#### Standing in the Blind

The helper must stand in the blind in a neutral posture. It is recommended that the helper stand with his legs slightly bent, feet separated with the strong foot placed to some degree behind the other foot. This tends to create an immovable position so that, if a dog comes into the blind and pushes or bites the arm, ideally the helper will not be moved about or pushed inside the blind. Sometimes it cannot be avoided.

The arm must be resting across the body and held in a downward angle protecting the helpers groin area. This is the sleeve position and angle that should be maintained through out the trial routine. The helper should avoid bending over from the waist and creating a defensive posture.

The stick must be hidden from view. It is recommended that the helper place the stick behind or on the side of the leg.

According to the rules, the helper is to watch the dog while he/she is performing the bark and hold. However, staring at the dog in a defensive manner or aggressive position is not allowed and it may be perceived by the judge as helping the dog to stay in the blind.

Standing in the blind flat-footed, legs straight, wearing dark sunglasses, sleeve parallel to the ground or resting across the chest is not acceptable or correct practice for the trial helper and should be avoided.

### Walking out of the blind (all levels)

After the handler takes control of the dog by either calling the dog from the hold and bark or picking the dog. The helper is to exit the blind in a non-aggressive, hesitant or excited way and set up in a pre-determined area. Once the helper has placed himself/herself and set himself to conduct the escape.

The helper should not move, but remain in that position until the handler has set the dog in the area indicated for the escape.

### Prevention of an attempted escape from the helper (all levels)

When the handler recalls the dog from the hold and bark (VPG1, 2 & 3) or picks the dog from the hold and bark (VPG 1), the handler advises the helper to come out of the blind. The helper must exit the blind while maintaining the sleeve in a neutral position and ensuring that it is between the dog and the helper. He must exit the blind in a normal determined way and not in a slow hesitant manner.

Once the helper is outside the blind, he must find a spot to stand and prepare for the escape. The helper should place himself/herself in the direction he will take off running, but not in a stance that will disclose his intentions to the dog. After the dog prevents the escape by gripping the arm, the helper must run with the dog in tow for 10 to 12 paces. It is advisable for the helper and judge to speak prior to and during the trial so the helper can adjust to the judge's specifications in how fast he should do this exercise.

In breaking down this exercise, the helper takes off running, making sure the angle of the bite bar is in the correct line of strike for the dog. Slight movement of the arm as the helper is fleeing is not faulty but, prior to the actual strike, the arm must be still. At the moment the dog strikes the sleeve, the helper should tuck the sleeve in and gain leverage on the dog. This adjustment changes the center of balance so that the helper is in control of the work and not the dog. This tactic works best if, when the dog strikes, the helper focuses on running to the predetermined location rather than trying to fight the dog.

The best way to keep the dog from taking the upper hand in the escape is for the helper to place the end of the sleeve close and tight to the body right before the strike. The moment the end of the sleeve moves away from the body, the dog has the momentum and can switch the center of balance by striking the sleeve and moving to the front and side of the helper. When this happens, the helper is moved out of position. This is one of the most common reasons helpers fall during the escape. In other cases, there are dogs that strike the elbow side of the sleeve and again moves the helper out of position by changing the balance to the back of the helper, at this point, the helper has to manhandle the dog back in the correct position. This type of strike by the dog is dangerous to the helper because a lot of stress is put on the shoulder and the rotator cuff.

As an example of why the center of balance is so important, let us assume that the escape was executed without problems. When the helper ends the escape, he must face the handler, the stick should be hidden from view and he should stand in a non-threatening posture identical to the stance that was presented when standing in the blind. This particular movement may be accomplished by slowing down slightly before the stop, pivoting with the weak foot and setting the dog in the correct position by bringing the strong foot parallel to the weak foot. Another way to maintain the sleeve in the correct position is, just before the stop, the helper places the sleeve in the correct position but adds the strength of the hip and legs. This is accomplished by wedging the sleeve in the crook of the legs and the side front area of the crotch. If the dog is very strong and continues to push the helper, it is advisable to

hold the end of the sleeve with the stick hand, making sure that the stick is not out, but hidden from the dogs view. Problem solving on the stop is achieved by ensuring that, before stopping, the helper slows down. What happens when the helper stops too fast? The advantage and strength is on the dog. The momentum will carry the dog past and move the helper out of position. The helper will most likely, find it necessary to readjust in order for the dog to position himself in the correct place. Most of the times it is achieved by manhandling the dog which adds added conflict.

### Defense of the attack out of the guarding phase (re-attack) (all levels)

After the stop comes the re-attack. If the helper used proper procedure for the stop, the sleeve should be in the correct position and the bite bar is in the proper angle to perform the re-attack. This position of the sleeve and the angle are very important because, when the movement to attack is displayed by the helper, the dog must have a proper presentation or he will be denied the opportunity for a full grip in the re-attack.

The helper movement on the re-attack should be to step forward at a 45-degree angle and when the dog engages the sleeve, move or drive him. By attacking the dog at a 45-degree angle, the helper can avoid running over the dog. Additionally, this angle will make it easier for the helper to place the dog in the pocket and perform the drive smoothly. It should be noted that the stick should be moved upward at the same time as the attack on the dog is made.

Keep in mind that sometime there are dogs that bark too close to the sleeve and it makes it hard to just drive the dog at the 45 degree angle. Some times we have to slightly move the sleeve upward to present the correct angle for the grip. Many times when this movement is not performed correctly, the dog gets a 3/4 grip or bites under or over the sleeve. Many times this can be prevented by slightly moving the sleeve upward, but making sure that the move upward is from the elbow and not the shoulder. The movement from the elbow maintains the angle of the bite bar in line with the dog's mouth. The movement of the shoulder moves the angle of the bite bar away from the dog's mouth.

### The drive

The trial helper has a choice of which drive he would like to use and may perform either the running drive or the skip drive. The helper is to take four steps while applying a stick hit. Continue four more steps and apply a second stick hit followed by running four more steps and finally come to a stop.

The application of the stick hits is a matter of much debate. Some people like helpers to hit the dogs hard; others wish to see pressure put on the dog not only by the stick hit but also by the overall work of the helper. It is best to speak with the judge prior to the trial and find out what the judge likes to see.

A trial helper must always remember that he is working for the judge and not the spectators or for himself. Leave the ego at home.

In VPG 1 the handler will heel the dog to a predetermined area to perform the courage test. Attack out of the back transport (levels 2 and 3) Following the out from the drive, the handler will approach the dog and tell the helper to step back, turn around and move out. The movement from the helper should be fluid and at a normal pace. As the helper begins to walk away from the handler he must ensure that his pace is normal and not hectic. The helper must also keep in mind the height of the handler. If the handler is smaller than the helper, the helper should walk at a slightly slower pace and in the same token if the handler is taller with longer legs the helper should walk a little faster. The reason for that comment is that the handler and dog team in order to receive full points for the back transport exercise, they have to be five paces behind the helper.

The attack out of the back transport should be performed when the judge signals the helper to make the attack. The helper should turn on the sleeve side, catch the dog and drive him.

Some dogs will commit to the sleeve side and others to the opposite side. Both ways are acceptable and the helper must read the dog and move with it as it attacks to avoid a jam. For the dog that hits sleeve side, the helper must pivot with his weak foot, follow through with his strong foot and proceed to smoothly into the drive. For the dogs that strikes and pushes to the opposite side, the helper must pivot with his strong foot, follow with his weak foot, then set the dog down for a fraction of a second and follow it with a drive. The helper should ensure that the dog is given a chance to clear the helper's body and not become spun in the drive. Once the catch is completed, the helper must drive the dog for ten to twelve steps, threaten the dog with movements and apply pressure with the drive itself.

### Attack on the dog out of motion (all levels) (Courage Test)

In VPG 1, the handler heels the dog from the re-attack and stops at a pre-determined area in the center of the field to proceed with the long bite. In VPG 2, the handler will take control of the dog after the attack out of the back transport and proceed to a predetermined area in the center of the field for the long bite.

In VPG 3, the handler will heel his dog after the side transport from the attack out of the back transport and proceed to a predetermined area for the long bite. If one helper is used on all the levels the helper will go to a blind and wait for the judge to tell him when he needs to come out to perform the a courage test. If two helpers are used, the second helper should already be in the blind waiting for the judges signal to come out.

When the helper is signaled by the judge to come out of the blind he is to in VPG 1 walk out of the blind to the center of the field and then run toward the handler and dog team. In VPG 2 and 3, he is to run to the center of the field and then run toward the handler and dog team. Once the helper has turned, faced the handler and dog (all levels) and began to run toward the team, he should run at a normal pace with threatening gestures and sounds in an attempt to deter the approaching dog from engaging. The sleeve should not be presented in front of the helper as a target, but carried to the side. The sleeve should be presented fully when the dog is about ten to twelve pace from engaging the helper.

After the dog engages, the helper should drive the dog for a minimum of 10 steps and then come to a stop. In levels 1 and 2 the handler will come to collect his/her dog, disarm the helper and then do a side transport to the judge. In Level 3, the helper will wait for the dog to out and wait for the judge's command to perform the re-attack. Here the helper once again attacks the dog at a 45-degree angle and drive the dog applying two stick hits.

The courage test is a difficult catch. The helper is running toward the dog while the dog is coming toward the helper at approximately twenty five to thirty five miles an hour (depending on the dog). There is always a question regarding the dog's impact, where the momentum will carry it and should the catch be made to the left or the right. These decisions must be made within a fraction of a second. If the catch is performed to the wrong side, several things may occur including injury to the dog, injury to the helper, and poor presentation resulting in a shallow grip that could make the dog come off the bite.

There are several ways to absorb the impact of the courage test such as the Side Catch, a Step Over Catch, a Stop Catch, a Run Through Catch, as well as few others. To execute either one depends in the physical ability, coordination and courage of the helper.

Part two of this series will discuss the four fail safe ways to catch a dog, differences between the running drive and the skip drive as well as techniques to pull the dog into position for a correct drive. We will also examine the side catch, step over catch, stop catch and the run through catch.

## IPO World Championship!

Good luck to Ivan Balabanov and Qenny of Vitosha IPO3, representing the US at the 2005 IPO World Championship in Breda, Netherlands!

<http://www.fci2005.nl>

*Flash from the past*



The 1995 Team...Mary Allen with "Arlo," Gordon Jackson with "Faust," Jean Claude Balu, Ivan Balabanov, Augusta Farley with "Aaron," Kelly Martin with "Shane."

## A word from the editor

Saturday, August 20th, 2005

Hello again...

My intentions are for this on-line magazine to come out quarterly. The schedule is that the first issue came out in June, this second issue coming out in August, and then the third issue will come out towards the end of October. Then we will be on a normal three month schedule beginning in January.

Before each issue comes out I will send out an email to notify everyone that it has been posted. If you have not received an email like this from me and you would like to be on that list please send me your email address.

I would also like to encourage people to send me any ideas of stories or information that they would like to see in the magazine. I am currently looking for someone to write a story about malinois doing other working sports such as agility, or ring. I hope everyone is having a great summer!

Best Regards,  
Desireé Shaw  
[dezireeshaw@yahoo.com](mailto:dezireeshaw@yahoo.com)



*Boras 'Strike' van Joefarm*

# 2005 AWMA Nationals

Saturday, August 20th, 2005

## *3RD ANNUAL AWMA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS*

October 21-23, 2005

Marietta, Georgia

*Host Hotel Information*

### [Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites](#)

2265 Kingston Ct

Marietta GA 30067

(770) 952-7581 call hotel direct or (800) 350-1872 (Dana Huckestein, Lewis Travel)

AWMA dog show group discount \$75 per night plus tax and NO additional pet fee. King or 2 double beds

Hotel has a bar and restaurant on location. Draw night and the judge's dinner will be held here.

Grass area to walk dogs — handlers are responsible for cleaning up after their dogs!

### *Rental Cars*

Dana Huckestein of Lewis Travel has negotiated a discounted car rental rate with Budget Rent a Car. The best way to get this rate is to follow the link below, which automatically enters the Convention Discount Number for you:

### [Budget Rent a Car](#)

You can also call Budget at **1-800-772-3773** using the Convention Discount # U065022. Using this discount number ensures you receive the lowest rate.

Questions? Email [Mike Morgan](#) at [malimike52@earthlink.net](mailto:malimike52@earthlink.net) or call 678-640-8906 or email [Joey Leigh](#) at [maitai1roth@hotmail.com](mailto:maitai1roth@hotmail.com).

For more information visit the national website:

<http://www.awma2005.com>.

*We're ready to go to Atlanta. Are you?*

## 2005 H.O.T. Tournament & NOC

Saturday, August 20th, 2005

June 23-26, 2005

By Robert Miller

**Greenville, PA** -This year's trial was in Greenville, PA and hosted by the Penn Ohio Working Dog Club. This year's overall entry was bigger than the 2004 H.O.T. trial, however the Malinois entry was down with only 3 entered. Mike Baker and his dog Varak du Chenil Victoire showed at the SchH3 level, Bessie Huneryager and Ulric du Belle Pratique (Ric) showed for a SchH2 and I showed my boy Ukon du Belle Pratique (Jack) in the National Obedience Championship as an OB1.

Thursday 6/23 was the National Obedience Championship. There were five OB3, one OB2 and one OB1. There were also two BH entries. I went with the OB2 dog and worked first. We had a clean and correct routine. The two judges were Nikki Banfield and Jakob Meyer SV. After we were done the judges said, "Nice Routine." There was no critique and the score wasn't given until after all the dogs went. The judges then averaged their scores. Then the PA announcer read the names and gave the scores. "Jack" and I received 97 and were declared the Champions. It was nice to back up our 2005 Mid Eastern Regional Championship performance under Mike Caputo. There we completed our SchH I with high Obedience 97, and Protection 98. Our tracking was 79 and we are working on this phase.

On Saturday, 6/25, Mike and Bessie had tracking. Bessie and "Ric" received 70 points. The tracking judge Nikki Banfield commented on how much grass "Ric" ate, "he must have been hungry." Mike and "Varak" also did very good with a 94.

Sunday put the "hot" in the H.O.T. trial. It was sunny, hazy and humid. Bessie and "Ric" had a nice obedience routine with slight issues with downing on the send away and the returning to basic position after the long down. They finished with 88. Mike and "Varak" had a nice routine as well finished with 86. The Obedience judge was Mike Hamilton.

For the protection phase the helpers were; for the SchH 1 and 2s Brian Hendricks, the SchH3s front half was Pat Matarrese and back half Clark Niemitalo. Bessie and "Ric" had a good day showing under Jakob Meyer SV. They earned a 97 and new SchH2 title. By the time Mike and "Varak" went, the heat was more intense. They still had a nice routine earning a 93, that with an abbreviated blind search, remember I mentioned it was hot!

Another personal highlight for me was watching Ronnie Weiss, my helper who I've trained with since 1998, score a 98 in protection with his GSD "Dera" to go with his 96-93 to finish with 287 and second place overall. High in Trial was T. Floyd with 290.



Robert Miller and Ukon 'Jack' du Belle Pratique



*Robert Miller and Ukon 'Jack' du Belle Pratique*

## TCTWDA Summer Trial

Saturday, August 20th, 2005

July 16, 2005

By Cynthia Zimmermann

**Adolphus, KY** - The weather in Kentucky the week of the trial gave us our first light rain since May 15. I was glad for those trialing as tracking conditions had been nothing but dead, dry grass. Saturday morning dawned with overcast skies, hot and humid.

Our first track at 7:00 a.m. featured Gerry Zimmermann and his dog Civa van JoeFarm. They were entered for an IPO 1. Gerry's dog had been ill and training had been difficult, but they made it through with a passing score.

Our second track was an IPO 3 with the dog/handler team of Laura Fahrenkamp and Ken Mar King Odin of DeVal. As our judge, Glenn Stephenson, DOJ, AWMA and myself walked to the track, the skies began to darken and the wind picked up. As the team stepped up to the scent pad and with the command of such, the skies opened up and a torrential deluge descended on them. Odin made it down the first leg to the corner, but then was overcome by the conditions. The track was called and both Glenn and I finished the rest with them. At the last article and Odin's indication, the rain stopped for the rest of the day.

Back at the field, after a quick change for everyone, we began our BH obedience phase. All teams passed with flying colors. They were:

Dustain Vance & Xbo Ot Vitosha  
Don Cates & Winrush Jamis Takela  
Don Cates & Bocca van Joefarm

A special note of recognition here for Don. It was his very first trial where he showed both his dogs and did a wonderful job! Thanks to Dave Barmore and Bodi for standing in as our "smart" dog.

Next up was Gerry and Laura for obedience. All went well for Gerry and Civa up until the send away where Civa decided it was really the second command that meant he should go down. Laura came through this phase with no additional problems from Mother Nature.

Giving the IPO dogs a break, we went into the traffic portion of the BH routines. All I can say is dang, Glenn, you are a fast jogger! I had to really keep up with you on the bike. After the tie-out portion all the newly titled dogs and their handlers came together for the presentation and some well deserved applause.

Onto protection. I don't think I have ever seen my husband Gerry so nervous before, except maybe our wedding. He had an unfortunate training incident the night before that involved the call out of the blind. He was sure things were going to go wrong. I told him what my coach always tells me, "What you think will happen, will. Think and see that all will go well and they will." Well Civa did look away in the blind, but the call out as well as the rest of the routine went fine and they passed their IPO 1.



*Odin - Escape*

Laura and Odin were our final team. The two never cease to amaze me. Odin is an AKC conformation show dog. We most affectionately call him, "pansy boy," and he is 6 years old. He always gives 110% of everything he has. The two made it through the routine fine with a few glitches on the attack out of the back transport, but received a passing score. Laura, your dedication to training really came through! The team will try again in September and I have no doubt they will pass and receive their IPO 3.

The BBQ was fired up and we all ate some great food that everyone had brought and

trained dogs.

Gerry and Civa received the High In Trial trophy which is a new perpetual trophy that will be up for grabs at our next trial in November. It was donated by SV. OG. Sulz. The BH certificates of achievement were given out and I decided to break some rules and awarded Laura and Odin with the High Obedience award.

Our sincere thanks to Glenn Stephenson for traveling to judge our trial. I know how tight your time is, Glenn and all of us at TCTWDA say thank you. Thanks as well to our helpers, Dave Barmore and Gerry Zimmermann for their work as well. To view some of the pictures of the trial, visit our TCTWDA photo gallery at:



*Cynthia and Judge Glen Stephenson*

<http://gallery.workingdogworld.com>

Our trial date in November will be posted on the AWMA web site under the club listing. Come join us for the next one. We can always promise a fun time.