



# A.W.M.A. ONLINE MAGAZINE

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## INTERVIEW WITH IVAN BALABANOV AWMA NATIONALS BY JIM DOWNEY

**Jim:** Your club hosted the Nationals and you also competed. What were some of the challenges in preparation for the trial both in hosting and competition?

**Ivan:** The idea of hosting the championship and entering it was to simply save money on traveling elsewhere. It was not the best idea. We have hosted the championship before, actually the very first AWMA Nationals was here in Plant City as well, so I had an idea what it takes, but not sure I will want to do this again - compete with my dog and organize the event, I felt I did not give enough time to my dog because of my trying to make sure the event runs smoothly. I am extremely fortunate to be surrounded by very good friends, not just locally but from all parts of the country, who came down and gave their time! I want to say thank you to them all, because really they made the event be what it was.

**Jim:** How about during the competition?

**Ivan:** I am very competitive, I unfortunately never have enough time to prepare my dog(s) the way I would like, because I am always gone giving seminars or training pet dogs for clients, my dog comes last. It can be frustrating, sometimes I really wish I had a different 9-5 job, as "normal" people do, so I can have time for my dog(s). Once the competition begins I am 100% absorbed by it, it is the best time for me. I always say that I don't like competitions but this is not really true. It is an addiction that I can't leave. I try to make sure I stay with my game plan and replay it in my head time after time... when to make the about turn, how exactly to make it, when to say the "out", how exactly to say it, how to hold the tracking line so it is as it will be during practice, ... things like that preoccupy my thinking during the trial. Then of course, I love to watch my competition, most of

whom are very good friends of mine. I have nothing but respect for anyone who has been able to prepare and show well at this event. But making strategies how to be better than the rest, which points to fight for and which to leave alone, it is such a mind game, I love that part, so no I don't have time for anything else to think about during competition but trying to stay focused and enjoy the moment! It is like a roller coaster, a crazy, but short ride, the only difference is that you can't really buy another ticket and do it again, which makes it even more special.

**Jim:** At practice, there was not much time. What was your goal with practice for Rock?

**Ivan:** My view on "practice" time? We (our local club) decided to keep it as short as it would be during the World Championships. The good part of this was that even us (the locals) were not able to use these fields prior to the event. I try to have me, and my dog ready for the competition way before the "practice" times, these times I only use for visualization, it is really not as important what exactly I do during these times with the dog, but I try to "see" the judge, my competition, the crowd, get nervous, get the butterflies, goose bumps, heart rates off the roof ..... and overcome all of it in a split second and go to my "trial mode" (he he) . Normally if I am in good state of mind I am able to make a nice performance, and what I mean by nice is that I will be happy with how it all went at the end of the trial.

**Jim:** I was at draw night, By the way, very nice accommodations and host hotel, you were running around with your video camera doing little interviews, you were very carefree.

*[continued on page seven]*

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## 2010 AWDF CHAMPIONSHIP

### BY ANNE CAMPER

The AWDF Championship was once again a chance to watch some great dog/handler teams and meet old and new sports friends from across the country. The event had a good showing of a variety of breeds, including a talented group of Malinois. As in years past, the German Shepherds through USA had the largest entry with the Malinois and AWMA next in line. But as you saw from the scores, AWMA teams had an impressive set of performances for which we can all take pride. I personally wish to thank the competitors, seasoned and new, for their support of the AWMA and sportsmanship on and off the field. It was a joy to watch each and every one of you.

The event was sponsored by O.G. Indianapolis and held at German Park in Indianapolis. The venue was scenic and very dog-friendly. There were people-friendly aspects as well, and these included a concession stand with beer and mixed drinks, a fantastic lunch barbeque one day, and on-site air-conditioned restaurant/bar (yes, the weather was a little warm and humid). One evening after an evening meal at the field I had the good fortune of talking with our two European judges, Clemete Grosso (tracking) and Robert Markschläger (obedience). The outdoors judges' dinner with traditional German cookout food was wonderful. Jeff Govednik's karaoke singing wasn't to be missed, including his renditions of Ozzy/Black Sabbath. It was worth going to the championship just for the socialization and fun.

But of course the real reason for attending was the competition. A total of 56 dog/handler teams competed in IPO 1-3 and five were there to do an FH. Twelve IPO 3 entries came from the AWMA. I did not have a chance to watch tracking, but my understanding was that it was in tall grass where dogs either did very well or had a difficult time. The FH tracks were run in the heat of the day and to make things worse it rained. This led to some extremely tough conditions. Heat was also an issue for some of the dogs on the field, especially those from more northern regions who hadn't seen temperatures in the upper 80s yet. Regardless, there were some good performances and memorable moments. Because I was in the group for most of the event I was able to watch closely all of the obedience. I had a great seat for the protection phase as well. During the event I was able to talk with all of the helpers, and you couldn't ask for a better set of guys. Wayne Kemper and

Alex Beyer did a great job with the 1s and 2s. Kyle Krotter did the front half of the 3s and Joe Brockington was in charge of the back half. These two provided great pressure on the dogs while maintaining safe work. Even with the heat and humidity they were fast and consistent throughout. Kyle had a challenge via the set-up for the escape bite, which was at an angle and position that proved to be difficult for several dogs. This resulted in a few cases where the dog made contact with his hip instead of the sleeve, some elbow bites, and a few outright misses.

At the risk of not being able to mention everyone, and for the sake of brevity, I'll comment on a few of the Malinois highlights. John Soares and Vion put on one heck of a show that led to a beautiful score of 293. This team was High in Trial and High HOT. The high protection score of the event, a perfect 100, went to Susan Borgen and Bosco. I've only seen one other 100 in protection and that was from the legendary Lestat who also had a 100 in obedience at the 1999 USA Nationals in Reno. Just a point away from perfection was Mark Natinsky and Eddy with a 99 in protection and an overall score of 286 for 4<sup>th</sup> place. It was also a joy to watch David Greene and Luigi compete to a 6<sup>th</sup> place finish with a respectable score of 282. Rounding out the Malinois in the overall list of top ten competitors was Phil Hoelcher and Master in 8<sup>th</sup> place with a score of 280. John/Vion and Phil/Master declared for this year's FCI Championship and will be representing the US at that event.

And I forgot to mention that this was the same weekend as the Indianapolis 500. Hotels were full, traffic was interesting. But it was well worth the trip out to Indiana to watch some of the best dog/handler teams in the country demonstrate the heart and level of training that goes into this sport.

Anne



Anne with 'Bekqa' d'Ile du Chien, IPO 3.





# SOME THOUGHTS ON TRACKING .....

By D.C. Craig

The tracking phase of IPO sport seems to give a lot of people trouble. Since every dog is different, no one strategy will work for all dogs. Opinions on how to teach IPO tracking are about as common as noses – everyone has one. I have borrowed (stole might be a better word) the ideas of many, many trainers, from novice all the way to World Champion.

Before I begin, I should also like to say that I have never force tracked a dog. Every dog I've ever come across enjoys rummaging about for food and that's essentially the drive that I am trying to modify into IPO tracking behavior.

Beginning tracking with a pup.

Here is a random assortment of the techniques/methods/strategies I that come to mind:

- ☛ I like my dogs to be pulling and wagging their tails and 'in drive' when they track. With the way I train, speed is my problem and speed creates mistakes. However, I never have the problem of dogs quitting on me or panicking or shutting down as I see many dogs do. Pick your poison, I guess.
- ☛ Track the young puppy as soon as I can and as often as I can. The more often the better.
- ☛ Use a fur saver on a dead ring with the lead pulled through both sets of legs. I keep the lead held low so as to keep it from annoying the pup's groin area and becoming a distraction.
- ☛ Used to use a pinch but now I seldom do.
- ☛ Try to maintain the same tension on the lead at all times.
- ☛ Let my pups pull a bit. I work on pulling later.
- ☛ Choose a food that my puppy really, really likes and is used only for tracking.
- ☛ Choose a food that is not too easy to see.
- ☛ Try to never, ever, get mad or frustrated with my puppy. No matter how lousy or unfocused or ditz or unmotivated they may be. If they're just not with it, I will put them away and try again another day. One of the advantages of having multiple dogs is that you can leave a dog alone if it's not having one of its better days and concentrate your energies on your other pooches.
- ☛ Don't want the pup to be too hungry. Too much hunger creates frantic behavior. I would like the dog to be calm but intense. I will dial up or down its hunger to get the attitude I want with each dog.
- ☛ Figure out how much food I want my pup to eat and then, once that is determine, I now know exactly how much food I have to bait the track and this then determines how long the track will be.
- ☛ Always talk to my pups before they begin each distinct phase of IPO. For example, when taking them out to track, I usually ask them if they want to go "look for food?" and "where's your flag?" (I was just corrected by my editor and she says I say, "Where's your flaggy?" I stand corrected.) The point here is that I always want the pups to know what it is they are going to do.
- ☛ When taking my pup out of their crate to track, I always give them a piece of the food they are going to find on their track. Later I will do this at trials as well. *[continued on page five]*

## FROM THE EDITOR

Our apologies for an error in the Fall 2009 Edition. Credit for the article on Jerry Bradshaw was inadvertently omitted. We thank Nancy Pritz for her work preparing the article.

## 2010 FMBB World Championships



Congratulations to this year's AWMA teams:

### IPO

Ivan Balabanov & Rock of Vitosha  
 Sean Rivera & Bronson's Fekkaui Rouge  
 Dre Hastings & Kaden Ot Vitosha  
 Mike Morgan & Bacchus vom Drachenherz  
 John Soares & Vion La Maschera di Ferro  
 Shawn Thompson & Cevin ot Vitosha

### Agility

Shari Lipski & Tisa du Banc des Hermelles

We wish you all the very best and hope you have a safe, fun, and eventful trip across the pond. Bring home the gold guys!

For information about the 16th Annual FMBB World Championships, please visit [www.FMBB2010.net](http://www.FMBB2010.net).



## FROM THE PRESIDENT, ANNE CAMPER

Another AWDF Championship has come and gone, and as you will see in the accompanying article on the event, AWMA did well. Congratulations to everyone, but particularly to John Soares and Vion for their first place finish. By virtue of winning the event, they were guaranteed a position on the US FCI IPO team. Also declaring for the FCI team were Phil Hoelcher and Master. These two teams will be representing the AWMA at the event later this year.

Plans are underway for the 2010 AWMA National Championship that will be held over the Halloween weekend in Pennsylvania. Jim Honda and FreeDog!! Hundesport have stepped forward to host the event. The stadium is the same as the 2009 AWDF Championship and the site is in Lehigh Valley, PA. Helpers have been named, judges selected, hotels contacted, and most of the details ironed out. In the near future we'll have a call out to sponsor trophies and we would appreciate your support. Please plan to attend the event; as always, we will have a great time and we invite all of you to compete or participate as a spectator.

Other exciting event news is that the Motor City Working Dog Club in Kentucky will be hosting the 2011 AWDF Championship. The AWMA will be supporting John Wiitanen and his club members in this endeavor. This will be the first time an AWMA club has stepped forward to host this important event and I hope that all of us will do whatever it takes to be sure it is the best one yet. For those of you who are thinking that far ahead, keep in mind that as per a vote by the executive board taken this year, the following policy holds: *To represent the AWMA at the AWDF Championship, you must be a current member of the AWMA and have an AWDF scorebook. Any dog that has an AWDF scorebook that lists the dog as a Belgian Malinois, regardless of whether it is FCI registered or not will be eligible to represent the AWMA.* AWDF scorebooks are available through the AWMA and keep in mind that you can have your dog listed as a Belgian Malinois in a new AWMA issued working listing privilege scorebook if it is not registered through an FCI recognized organization.

We have had our first request for authorization from the AKC to list titles obtained from an AWMA trial on a Belgian Malinois' pedigree. Since the last newsletter, all of the policies and procedures have been finalized and implemented. The program is retroactive to titles offered since 2000, but they must have been earned at an AWMA sponsored event and the dog must have an AWDF member club issued scorebook that documents the trial and qualifying score. Details can be found on our website under the "News" section. A recent development is that the AKC is now also allowing handlers the opportunity to have the titles recorded without the need for issuing a pedigree for the dog. The new option is less expensive than if a pedigree is issued for the dog that has acquired the title. In both cases, when registrations are issued to offspring of a dog that has had titles recorded, those titles will be listed on the pup's registration. Similarly, any pedigrees that have the dog's name listed will also have the titles recorded.

Another new development is the recent elevation of Christopher Smith from apprentice judge applicant to apprentice judge. This means that Christopher is now able to fully enter into the apprenticeship program on his way towards becoming an AWMA judge. I am also pleased to announce that Cynthia Zimmerman has applied to the judge's program and is now an apprentice judge applicant. I commend these two individuals for supporting the AWMA and our judge's program. Our credibility as an organization is greatly enhanced by showing growth in the number of qualified judges, and these two individuals will contribute significantly to that effort.

I'd also like to encourage each of you to recruit new members. If you know of a Malinois handler who currently belongs to another organization, invite them to become a member of the AWMA. We need strength in membership numbers, particularly those who are actively participating in the sport. One of the unique aspects of our club is that the vast majority of the membership is out there training, trialing and titling dogs. Even more impressive is that these dogs are primarily owner handler trained. We also need more member clubs - if you are in a group of fellow sports enthusiasts, consider going through the process of organizing as an AWMA club. The more clubs we have, the more trials we can offer. This gives us the opportunity to showcase our Malinois while also providing more opportunities for titles that can be recorded on pedigrees.

As a reminder, if you haven't already done so, please send in your membership renewals. The AWMA is still a great bargain at only \$30/year. With the recent improvement in membership benefits (new scorebook program for non-FCI registered dogs, new IPO 3 club, ability to list titles on pedigrees) I hope that you agree that we deliver the value for your dues. And if you have any suggestions on what we can do for the membership, please get in touch. If it is feasible to implement an idea, we'll give it a shot.

Anne Camper, AWMA President



Anne with Bazouka ("Zouka")  
van de Trinekesdreef, IPO 3



## AWMA SHIRTS!

The new AWMA T-shirts are in and they are NICE!

The shirts are high quality, heavy cotton with the AWMA logo design embroidered on the left chest.

The stitching is very well done and really "pops."

These shirts are a fundraiser for the AWMA organization. Show your support and superb sense of style by ordering your AWMA shirt today!

<http://www.workingmalinois.org/shirts/index.shtml>



## FROM THE EDITOR, JIM DOWNEY

Don't forget if you have any articles, ideas, pictures, that you'd like to submit for publication in the newsletter, please send them to me [fataddie@yahoo.com](mailto:fataddie@yahoo.com)



## MEMBER ADVERTISING

Are you an AWMA Member who has a dog related business?

Do you have a litter of Malinois you would like to advertise?

Take advantage of your membership and advertise for free in the AWMA Online Magazine!

The Magazine is available for viewing to everyone who visits the AWMA website.

Please feel free to contact Jim Downey ([fataddie@yahoo.com](mailto:fataddie@yahoo.com)) to get your business in the next issue.

- ✂ Start with scent pads so that the pup does not get the idea that tracking means go forward.
- ✂ Make the scent pads fairly small, say two or three feet by two or three feet.
- ✂ I stay with scent pads until I get the feeling that my pup is searching the scent pad for every piece of food and not wandering off.
- ✂ One objective I have is to have the puppy begin to identify the tracking flag with the scent pad. Walking toward the scent pad, I'm hoping my pup is keying in on the flag since it has come to associate the flag with the start of the track. (This can create problems later on however. If you ever have to walk a long distance to your track and the path has been marked with flags, you will have a dog that is chomping at the bit the whole way down and may have a dog that's used up a lot of energy on the way to its track.)
- ✂ Go get the puppy and set it down near the scent pad and let it find the food there.
- ✂ When the puppy's done, pick it up, praise it, give it a kiss and put it back in its crate.
- ✂ Repeat this process two more times per tracking session. Three scent pads per tracking training until I feel comfortable that the pup is concentrated in one area.
- ✂ The amount of time this takes will vary from dog to dog.
- ✂ Put food in every footstep for the first year of my puppy's life.
- ✂ I do straight lines until the pup methodically moves down the track eating each piece of food.
- ✂ Try to find tracking surfaces that are obvious to the young dog. If I can find smooth dirt that I can see, wunderbar!
- ✂ Don't have a problem with my dog using its eyes. I want it to use every sense that is available to it.
- ✂ Make sure my puppy eats each piece of food. This means I may have to experiment with the size of the food pieces, etc.
- ✂ In soft dirt, I make sure I can make a good, deep impressions in the dirt and I place the food in the heel.
- ✂ Make sure that when I lay a track I keep the track on a single line. I don't want my footsteps too staggered. I don't want my pup's head moving too much from side to side.
- ✂ Prior to getting into articles, etc., when the pup has moved past scent pads to footstep tracking, I track from a scent pad to another. For example, I might lay a normal scent pad followed by thirty paces, right corner, thirty paces, left corner, thirty paces, concluding scent pad.
- ✂ Just as I want the pup to understand exactly what it is going out to do, I also want the pup to understand when the tracking is over. I do this on the final scent pad where I praise and pat the dog while its eating. I also unleash my dogs for the walk back to the dogmobile. The pup should understand clearly the beginning and ending of each phase.

*To be continued....*



Ivan: Yes it was nice to see everybody there, we had a good turnout, pretty much all of the top competitors came and were ready to show. A trial can be only as good as is the level of the competitors, and fortunately for AWMA we have some awesome dogs and extremely talented and committed trainers, what else could you ask for : ).



Jim: At tracking you were all business, I had this idea in my head that once you are as seasoned as someone as Ivan, you calm down a little on trial day. What's going through your mind? On the way to the field? Getting your dog out of the car? On the field?

Ivan: OK this when I tell myself "it's time", I do anything I can, not to think about getting "out of the car", or "going to the field", it is all one moment of concentration and trying to fight with my nerves, I really wish I am already on the field working. Sometimes I try to stay away from my dog if I feel that I have not overcome the anxiety yet. I don't try to do much with my dog right then, there is nothing my dog would do different, it is all "working" on me to manage to get on the field in the right mind set.

Jim: Conditions for tracking were tough...how would you describe them? How did you feel about Rock's performance in tracking?

Ivan: Because of where we live, tracking can vary greatly from day to day, it is almost like we don't have to go too many other places to practice, because our conditions change so much all the time. From being cold and rainy, to hot and humid, to windy and dry this can be the tracking for the next 3 days ... On the trial day the field looked awesome, plenty of dew on the ground, nice green short grass, could not ask for better. Once I passed the scent flag I knew my dog had no confidence (or not the usual confidence) it takes only couple of steps to know how it is going to be. I thought he is sick, because we had no problems in tracking whatsoever, somehow I walked out with 92 points. I was happy that my dog was able to finish and somewhat adjust to the track as it was going. The thing with tracking is that no matter how much you train you never know until the last article what is going to happen, so yes I was relieved that at least I made it through, not with the score I wanted but I still had a shot at it, if I can make a nice showing at the stadium. I was one of the first to track, so I had no idea yet what to make out of it, I had to wait and see how the other dogs do. It proved to be a very difficult tracking for all of us, I have no explanation ... other than in tracking it can go so many different ways, this trial it was definitely very deceiving conditions - it was not easy at all!

Jim: Okay, for OB, there were some highly competitive OB dogs out there. That was matched with even more competitive judging. Only 2 V scores in OB. What do you think that Rock and you had that for others was just out of their reach?

Ivan: Competitions are very close nowadays. I also share all of my training techniques, so if someone wants to, they for sure can use it and in some ways I don't have the advantage of having "secret" weapons. Well sometimes I really think I am luckier than others, but I show pretty consistent high scores at championships, so it is not that. I really don't know... I think I have better strategy and understanding of competitions than most. I have learned how to train for the 6 minutes on the field over the years. Maybe I should write a book or something one day on this, it really is something that is not covered during seminars or dog training videos - how to train for the competition and for the sake of looking good in training.

Jim: Protection, what were you thinking going to into protection, there were a few dogs that could have won it with a good score in C?

Ivan: Absolutely! The trial is not over until is over. AWMA has some world level dogs and trainers, I am very proud to be part of them, the scores were as they would be in the FMBB.

For me and my dog the protection phase is always the one that I am least prepared, I don't have access to helpers as much as I would like. I do a lot of my protection training myself, and it is not the best thing to do, my dog needs to see different stuff, this what I lack, this is where the Europeans have an "edge" on us.

Jim: What were some dogs that caught your eye at the trial? Good representations of the Malinois.



Ivan: I watch everybody! I would watch competition any day, I don't like watching training. I find that I learn more by watching competitions. So this is a hard question because I really remember all performances. Of course I was paying close attention to the dogs from my breeding kennel, and my competition... so you see there was not one dog that stands out more than another for me, some dogs are more seasoned which makes them show better, some dogs are young and "raw" which is also fun to watch, some have training issues and some don't. I don't try to compare them, but appreciate their effort at that moment.

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## DAVID GREENE AND LUIGI DU DANTERO

Relatively new to the sport, David Greene and his four year old Belgian Malinois, Luigi Du Dantero, have made what many call an impressive debut into the Schutzhund world.

Luigi has been handler owned and trained by Greene right from the beginning. Greene, 37, and Luigi have achieved 2010 AWDF Nationals IPO III 6th place; 2010 SW Regional SchH III Champion, HIT Obedience; 2009 SW Regional SchH III Champion HIT Obedience and HIT Protection; and, 1st Place 2008 Dogstock Protection Tournament.

"Luigi embodies the traits of intelligence, power, and speed which make an excellent working dog," Greene said. "We have a great working relationship in that Luigi always wants to make me happy and tries hard to never make mistakes."

Greene became involved in the sport of Schutzhund 6 years ago with another Malinois. Although he was able to put a BH and SchH I title on the dog, nerve problems made the animal noncompetitive.

"I knew early on Guido wouldn't work so I retired him and started searching for a new puppy," said Greene, adding how he went to Dantero Kennels in San Diego County.

He stuck with the Malinois breed because of its high drive. And coming from the background of training Border Collies for herding, Greene wanted to continue with that type of dog mentality. Greene had his sights on another puppy, but his wife, Christina, zoomed in on Luigi.

"I liked Luigi because he was able to roughhouse with his littermates, come back to me for affection, and then go back and roughhouse some more," she said.

Before the official puppy pick, Greene's mentor and trainer, the late Tom Riche who passed away in 2009, saw the litter at eight weeks and agreed that Luigi was the one.

Greene's first goal in the puppy phase was to build Luigi's self-confidence. "I allowed Luigi to be very powerful as a puppy and never added discipline until he was older," he said. "And I didn't add any obedience until he was very competent in his protection work."

An out of control Luigi was introduced to obedience when he hit 14 months. That was when Greene and Riche noticed Luigi's strong presence toward the helper.

What many don't know, though, is Luigi was a late bloomer. "Luigi actually wasn't interested in protection for the first 6 months of his life," Greene said. "When he got closer to a year old, that's when he woke up and it all started – Tom and I knew then that Luigi just wasn't your average dog."

Luigi earned his BH at 21 months old. Within 13 months of that time, Luigi earned all his titles and received his SchH III at a regional event.

From the start, everything with Luigi has been a fun game. "He learned through my training that if he works hard he'll get his toy," Greene said.

Since Greene and Luigi have competed, he hears one common compliment from the judges: Luigi has excellent intensity and work ethic.

With an eye to the future, Greene's plan is to compete with Luigi in the 2010 Malinois Nationals in Pennsylvania. And hopefully, Greene can qualify or declare for the 2011 World Team.

"What I really want most of all is to make the World Team with Luigi – and I believe Luigi's the perfect dog that can make it happen," he said.