

SPORTING GROUP

to train for every type of encounter. The judge might approach your dog with hands outstretched—this approach may be unusual for your breed. Practice various approaches in handling class. Sometimes Chesapeake are not as outgoing as the other retriever breeds. They may tend to be reserved and serious with their owners. After the judge has finished going over the head, hold onto your dog's muzzle. This will give you more control over your dog. If your dog is extremely friendly and at ease, this may not be necessary. Talk to your dog in the ring, and use a little bait.

Sometimes judges are arbitrarily assigned to an Owner-Handled group by the show chair. A Toy Group judge would be used to judging all the dogs on a table and may be a little unsure about larger dogs being judged on the floor or a ramp. It does not matter where the dog is examined (table, ramp, or floor), the judge should always return to the front of the dog before examining again. Once the judge's hands have left the dog after examining the rear, if he wishes to re-examine any part of the dog again, he should walk to the front where the dog can see him. A judge who suddenly puts his hands on the dog's rear after he has completed an initial exam could cause the dog to overreact and flip away. In handling class your instructor should approach the dog not only from the front but also from the side,

so he gets used to various approaches. Judges should only approach from the front, but sometimes mistakes are made.

The rules for judges of the National Owner-Handled Series have become very specific since the program originated in 2012. Effective in 2017, a judge who is approved for one full group may judge any of the seven groups and Best in Show (OH). A judge with a breed or several breeds in one group may only judge that OH group; no judge may judge *all seven groups* and Best Owner-Handled in Show.

And now a controversial question: Do you think that the Owner-Handled Series has helped to increase the number of group placements by owner handlers in the so-called "regular" groups?

Comments welcome ...
—Betsy Horn Humer,
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[American Chesapeake Club](http://AmericanChesapeakeClub.com)

Curly-Coated Retrievers

Thanks again to Jenny Dickinson, who shares with us insights about readiness in training.

READINESS IS ALL

"The readiness is all."—*Hamlet*

Having served as obedience chair at numerous



trials, I have acquired a ridiculous number of anecdotes that reflect the human tendency to hope for the best rather than plan for the worst.

An old friend had a bumper sticker that read, "Don't complain: Train!" That's what I want to talk about in this column.

I love obedience because you don't have to win your class to achieve your goal. You might be happy with a 185, or a 175, or just a pass.

You might just want to get a title and be done with it. It is entirely up to you. But you have to *qualify* to earn anything. There are several card-punches you really must accomplish before you send in that entry.

At a recent trial, an AKC obedience judge competed with her young dog and NQ'd. She complained to me that a spectator had gone past the ring with a wheelchair, and this had

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caused her dog to fail. *Are you kidding?*

Nobody wants to see a dog NQ. What can we do to lessen the increasing number of heartbreaks we in obedience experience? We prepare our dogs for every ringside distraction we can think of, that's what!

Here's what I'd like to suggest: Call and talk to owners of training centers in your area. Find out who has a wheelchair, baby stroller, walker, crutches, and so on. Many training centers offer therapy dog testing, and they have these mechanical devices to use in their tests. Make an appointment for floor time. Bring a friend and work this piece! Have your friend roll the apparatus back and forth along sides of the ring as you heel your dog.

Then have your friend sit against the side of the ring, against the baby gates. At my last trial, I saw this happen before the steward could shoo her away. Then have the friend hold food right at the side of the ring. I've seen that too.

I had the great privilege of working with Teri Arnold for several years, and she had great understanding of "unpredictable distractions." You are not looking to catch the dog and correct him; you are looking to show the dog he can indeed work WITH the presence of a distraction. You DO NOT want your dog to be AFRAID of the distraction. In your practice with the wheelchair or stroller going past, you

support the dog's confidence with voice and food if needed. You condition the dog to mayhem outside the ring, because no matter how ideal the show site, there WILL be something that surprises you. BE READY for the weird phenomenon, to the extent you can be.

When I was competing before COVID, I used to say as I arrived at a trial, "I wonder what weird thing will happen today." After it did happen—and there was always something—I would say, "Oh, good, that's out of the way now." Expect the unexpected and untoward. It will happen. Your readiness is all.—J.D.

Thank you once again, Jenny!

—Ann Shinkle,

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[Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America](#)

Golden Retrievers

SURF'S UP!

Ricochet ...where do I begin? Born to surf. Born to comfort. Born to heal.

Ricochet, the famous surfing Golden Retriever from San Diego, is a furry testament to the healing power of what is known as canine-assisted surfing therapy. A registered and certified therapy dog, Ricochet surfs with children and adults with special needs and disabilities, wounded and/or active military members, and veterans with PTSD. Her



Golden Retriever

COURTESY/ LINDA BEAM