

Australia's First American Cocker Spaniel Tracking Champion LARAMIS CAROLINA BELLE, CD

Dogs Queensland has advised that Dizzi is the first American Cocker Spaniel in Australia to gain the title of Tracking Champion.

She was born on 30th August 2007 in Sydney, NSW, bred by Bronwynne Goyen and sired by Ch.Tamdale Dream On Jo out of Ch. Laramis Virginia Belle AD, JD. This little fluffy ball of black and white wool with a curly tail, flew to Queensland at the tender age of 9 weeks to begin life in her new home near Samford, with the Bickerton family and a couple of Shetland Sheepdogs and 2 cats, as companions.



2007 – about 10 weeks old



2009 - Me with one of my new friends

She was allowed a mere 3 weeks to settle into the family before she commenced her tracking career. At least 3 times a week, someone would run about 5 metres away from her while another person held her, who would then allow her to go and collect her reward. So she progressed to longer straight-line hunts, then to not seeing where the person was going and later to curves, then was put onto a tracking harness without a lead, and at around 5 months, started her training for the 'real thing': lead on and handler.

She passed her Tracking Test – (300 metres, with article at the start to give the scent, one corner and find the 'bait' at the end), in June 2008 when she was 10 months old. Her TD 1 track was completed just 2 weeks later (800 metres, 2 corners, 2 articles and a known person to be found), and her TD title came another 3 weeks after that – similar track but searching for an unknown person. These last 2 tracks had a delay of at least 30 minutes from laying until she started the track. All tracks from here on were seeking unknown people

2009 started well with her TD4 track in May (1000 metres long, 4 corners and 3 articles to find along the way, and at least 1 hour delay). This was the time that Dizzi discovered that she was a cocker spaniel, and quail were thick on the ground. She was initially distracted as would be expected of a gun dog, but managed to drag her attention back to the job on hand, and when a herd of cattle, lead by a stropby bull stood in her track, she composed herself, waited until they headed off *along the track she was supposed to be following* and then got on with the job. It took a long time to find the 'lost person' but her composure with the cattle was a credit to her and her ability to track the person along ground overlaid with cattle scent, was exceptional for such a young dog.

The rest of 2009 was a dead loss – “hey, there's huntin' to be done out there, and I'm gonna do it! If someone wants to get lost, let them stay lost – there are more interesting things to do around here”, was her view.

However, apparently, obedience was OK that year, and she gained her CD title with the reasonable scores of 175, 187 and 188 between April and September. 2009.

2010 has been a very different story in tracking. In late April we successfully passed our TD5, (still 1000 metres long, 4 corners, a minimum of 60 minutes delay before we started tracking *and* a known person had to cross the track 30 minutes after the original bait passed through). Three weeks later we scored our TD6 - TDX title – (1200 metres, 5 corners, one of which has to be acute, and once again a person crossed it, this time someone unknown to her). No problems for our lass!

She completed her TD7 (Tracking Champion) track, about 5 weeks later. The day began cold, with strong gusty winds coming from all sides. The handler is given a sealed bag with an article scented by the 'bait' to present to the dog before the start. (This track is 1200 metres long, has a start at any point between 2 flags set 20 metres apart, 6 changes of direction, including 2 acute angles, 2 cross tracks by unknown persons and a delay of at least 1½ hours before starting). She had to navigate through 2 gates along the way, a herd of resting cattle and past a dam with ducks on it, with the wind changing direction every few seconds, before she finally found the almost frozen body of the 'bait' which qualified her for her Tracking Championship!



2010 - taking a hard-earned rest in camp



On the job!



I'm a Tracking Champ (held by Judge Deb Sunners)

We would like to express our thanks to the judges who qualified us along the way:

Tracking - Test – Mr. Des Strong: TD1 – Mr. Stan Gurney: TD Title – Mrs. Coral Pethers: TD4 – Mrs. Debby Lamprecht: TD5 – Mrs. Coral Pethers: TDX Title – Mr. Ron Jackson: Tracking Champion Title – Ms. Deb Sunners.

Obedience: Mrs. Pam Fischer, Mrs. Margaret Bauman and Mrs. Ruth Clarke and also to Chris and Gail Reilly of Tansey - (Wintoppi Labradors) - on whose property all our competitive tracking has been done, and without whose kindness in allowing the tracking clubs access, none of Dizzi's achievements would have been possible.

2011 is hopefully going to be the year we collect a Track and Search title, *and* an Open obedience title.

Dizzi and I have had some wonderful experiences in our relatively short friendship and made a lot of friends in the tracking world both human and canine. She is a self-opinionated little dog, who has very definite ideas of her own. She thoroughly enjoys tracking, which allows her mostly to do her own thing and, so far as she is concerned, the camping part of it is definitely a bonus - everybody loves and spoils her! After many years of owning Rhodesian Ridgebacks and Shetland Sheepdogs, she's a breath of fresh air and I adore her!

Her mother has Agility and Jumping titles to her credit, and this indicates what a versatile breed the American Cocker Spaniel is - it's a shame that there are not more of them out in the field, as the elation of achieving with a dog you have trained yourself, cannot be unsurpassed.