

# THE SCHUTZHUND COMPETITION

## THIS SPORT'S INTENT IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD

BY SHARON PFLAUMER

In its purest form, the ultimate objective of Schutzhund historically, and International Pruefungsordnung (IPO) as it is called now, is the development of the relationship between dog and owner such that the rapport between the two makes the dog a wonderful, lifetime companion. Many are unaware of this and mistakenly conclude that dogs trained in the sport behave aggressively toward people and thus are vicious. No doubt, that's because of the negative connotation attached to the German word Schutzhund which means protection work, i.e., one phase of the sport involves a dog gripping and holding onto a padded sleeve worn by a Helper. (The Helper plays the role of the criminal.)

### SCHUTZHUND BECOMES IPO

Due to the implementation of breed specific laws banning so called "fighting" breeds in many countries and the pejorative connotation of the word Schutzhund, the Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen (VDH), the German National Kennel Club, changed the name Schutzhund to Vielseitigkeitsprüfung für Gebrauchshunde (VPG), or Multi-Faceted Examination for Working Dogs, in 2004.

The VDH changed the name again to IPO in 2012. As a result, the rules for the sport changed as well. IPO rules are governed by the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI)



*After retrieving the dumbbell on the flat, Navigator returns to Helen Gleason and sits in front of her with it in his mouth. This exercise is part of the Obedience Phase. Photo by Martha Hunt.*

and differed somewhat from those of Schutzhund. In 2004, the rules for the two came closer together and, in 2012, they became identical.

(Note: For internal purposes, the Verein für Deutsche Schäferhunde (SV), the German National Club for the German Shepherd Dog, decided it would keep the Schutzhund designation in 2004 despite the above. But, as of 2012, the name Schutzhund disappeared entirely and there is only IPO. Both the SV and the Deutsche Hundesportverband (DHV), the German Working Dog Association, now only use IPO.)

### UNFORTUNATE CONNOTATION

Far from encouraging aggressive behavior, IPO is a performance event that tests a dog's character, intelligence, courage and athleticism. Schutzhund, its predecessor, was developed in Germany in the early 1900s to evaluate which German Shepherd Dogs were suitable for breeding in an effort to preserve the breed's working ability. Historically, Schutzhund Trials were held to ensure that breeding stock passed on the most desirable traits to future German Shepherd Dogs destined to work as police, military, and search and rescue dogs.

Given the above, it's unfortunate that a negative connotation was attached to the sport due to its name historically when, in fact, dogs titled in Schutzhund in the past and those now titled in IPO are among the most temperamentally reliable.

"The minute any of my nine grandchildren arrive at my house, they ask me to let my dogs out so they can play with them," Helen Gleason says. "I always do so without hesitation. I know that my dogs, all of



*Navigator is pictured about to retrieve a dumbbell over the scaling wall. Photo by Martha Hunt.*



which have earned advanced level Schutzhund titles in the past and IPO titles now, are the safest, most temperamentally reliable dogs that my grandchildren—or anyone's children—could be around. That's because the mind of a Schutzhund/IPO trained dog is carefully shaped and developed with a very precise training program."

In the past, Gleason's American bred dog, PAM V-CH. Nocturne's Navigator KKI 1life, SchH 3, CDX, NA, NAJ,AD, BH, "a", OFA Normal, earned the most advanced title in the sport, a SchH 3 and also went on to become an American Kennel Club Breed Champion. Gleason, who is an AKC Conformation Judge as well, imported two German-bred dogs, a male and a female, that earned the advanced titles of SchH 3, IPO 3, Agility Excellent, Agility Excellent Jumpers, Utility Dog, KKL1 for life titles and were the foundation stock for her second entry into the breeding of German Shepherd Dogs in the early 2000's. Her first litter was whelped in 1969 and she limited her breeding to one or two litters per year until she started judging in 1985. Gleason then took a break from whelping litters until 2002.

"While protection work may look ferocious, it's just a big game to the dogs," she says. "Just as accelerant, narcotics and explosives detection is a game for the specially trained dogs that search for them so they'll be rewarded with a tennis ball, likewise, IPO trained dogs think 'Yippee' whenever they see a padded sleeve come out. That's because sleeve work is the most fun thing these



*Navigator, a SchH 3 titled German Shepherd Dog, pictured with his young friend, Sean Hunt. Photo by Martha Hunt.*



*PAM V-CH. Nocturne's Navigator, KKI 1life, SchH 3, CDX, NA, NAJ,AD, BH, "a", OFA Normal shown finishing his American Kennel Club Breed Championship with handler James Moses under Judge Barbara Woefel Lopez. Helen Gleason is Navigator's breeder/owner/handler/trainer. Linda Bankhead is his co-owner. Photo by Cary C. Manaton.*

dogs do all day. They're continuously praised, but they also like the push and pull and the give and take that sleeve work involves."

Here's how the IPO protection work "game" is carefully shaped to ensure total handler control from the beginning.

"We start them out playing tug of war with a strip of burlap when they're puppies," Gleason says. "Then, we run with the burlap strip hanging out of our pocket and encourage the puppies to run after us and grab it. We look for high ball drive in the youngsters because, after that, we start playing ball with them. When the ball is retrieved and they bring it back, we ask that they give it back gently and quietly when we say the word 'Out.' Later, when the dog works with the Helper during protection work and it hears the word 'Out,' the dog knows it means disengage."

#### PROFILE OF AN IPO TRAINED DOG

"In order for a dog to earn even a beginning level IPO title, it must have a strong character. That means it isn't bothered by loud sounds, sudden movements and has the ability to adapt to any situation. It must get along with other dogs, other kinds of animals and people. It must be capable of solving problems, willing to work and have a lot of ball drive," Gleason says.

It's also imperative the dog be physically sound. Because adult dogs sometimes are picked up off of the ground by their teeth when gripping the padded sleeve during the Protection Work Phase, they should have a good bite, strong jaws, strong neck muscles and a strong back. Good ligamentation and balanced movement also are desirable. CONTINUED ON PAGE 92



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### THE GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG CLUB OF AMERICA— WORKING DOG ASSOCIATION, INC.

While Schutzhund remained a breed test during the past century, it also evolved into a competitive sport that gives dog owners an opportunity to compete with each other for recognition of both their ability to train and their dog's ability to perform required exercises.

Because the GSDCA is a member of the World Union of German Shepherd Dog Clubs and the GSDCA-WDA is affiliated with the GSDCA, the GSDCA-WDA is able to provide opportunities for sport enthusiasts to participate in IPO Trials in the United States that are patterned after those available worldwide.

Specifically, GSDCA-WDA member clubs host IPO Trials, conformation shows and breed surveys in keeping with the "Total Dog Concept." This underlying concept supports the breeding of dogs that conform to the breed standard and also are proficient in working skills: herding, tracking, obedience and protection.

(Gleason has been a member of the German Shepherd Dog Club of America since 1965 and one of its Board Members for more than 20 years. She also is an active member of the German Shepherd Dog Club of America-Working Dog Association, Inc. [GSDCA-WDA] and a member of the SV.)

### REQUIREMENTS FOR GSDCA-WDA IPO TITLES

At GSDCA-WDA events, titles can be earned at three levels: IPO 1, IPO 2 and IPO 3. In order to earn a title at each level, a dog must demonstrate proficiency in obedience, tracking and protection work by completing a series of exercises at a single trial. It must score a minimum of 70 points out of a possible 100 points in each phase.

During the Obedience Phase for the IPO 1 title, the dog must perform eight exercises, which include off-lead heeling, walking sit with return by handler, walking down with a recall, retrieving a dumbbell on the flat, retrieving a dumbbell over a one-meter jump and retrieving a dumbbell over the scaling wall. The dog also must perform a send away exercise and a long down with distraction as well as pass a test for gun shyness.

During the Tracking Phase for the IPO 1 title, the dog must follow a

track 300 paces long with two 90-degree turns. It must find two articles—small pieces of either leather, wood and/or fabric—and then immediately indicate them.

During the Protection Phase for the IPO 1 title, the dog must protect the handler in a controlled manner. A Helper, carrying a padded stick and wearing protective clothing and a padded sleeve, hides in one of the six blinds set up on the course. The dog is first sent to search one empty blind to see if the Helper is hiding in it.

Next, the dog is sent to the blind where the Helper is hiding. After the Helper is located, the dog must do a "hold and bark" until the handler either calls the dog out of the blind to heel or the handler goes up to the Helper and heels the dog away. The dog is placed

on a down and the handler then leaves to search the blind himself. At this point, the Helper runs away and the dog must stop his retreat by gripping the sleeve and holding him until the dog is given the "Out" command. The handler then approaches the Helper and his dog. The handler disarms the Helper by taking the padded leather stick, then heels the dog and the Helper back to the judge to finish the exercise.

In the next portion of the Protection Phase, the dog and handler go to the opposite end of the field and turn to face the Helper, who comes running out of the blind in a threatening manner. The handler remains in place and sends his dog to stop the Helper. The dog stops the Helper by gripping the sleeve and holding it until the dog is told to "Out." The handler then returns to the Helper, again takes the padded leather stick, and escorts the Helper to the Judge in a controlled heeling pattern.

As the level of IPO tests advance, competition requires more precision and more difficult work in the three phases.

Before a dog can compete in a Level 1 IPO Trial, it must prequalify. To prequalify, the dog must earn the International Companion Dog Degree (BH) by successfully performing another series of exercises. The BH is divided into two parts. The first part tests the handler's control of the dog with formal obedience in a ring by having it perform the first four exercises required for IPO 1 level obedience plus on-lead heeling. The second part tests the dog's character and is performed on the street, i.e., as the handler heels the dog through a crowd, a person participating in the test approaches. The person says hello and shakes the handler's hand. If the dog behaves fearfully or becomes aggressive during the exercise, it fails.

GSDCA-WDA tests are open to all breeds—not just German Shepherd Dogs. Given the requirements of pre-qualification and all that's involved in passing the three phases at each title level, participation in IPO requires extensive training and thus is not for every dog owner. For more information about the tests and the GSDCA-WDA, visit <http://www.gsdca-wda.org/main-page/main-page.html>.

### American Kennel Club Working Dog Sport Program

In January 2007, the American Kennel Club® Board of Directors granted the request of four Parent Clubs to approve the Working Dog Sport (WDS). The breeds approved to compete in the new sport were the German Shepherd Dog, Bouvier des Flanders, Doberman Pinscher and Rottweiler.

The WDS Program was designed to enable dogs of the above breeds to demonstrate the physical and mental abilities needed to perform International Pruefungsordnung (IPO) type scent and protection work, while maintaining a high level of control and a strong degree of obedience.

The WDS program, whose events primarily were held at the above breed club's national specialties, was run on a test basis for three years and then reviewed. At the end of the trial period, the German Shepherd Dog Club of America and the AKC Performance Events Department jointly concluded that the best way for the AKC to recognize the working skills of the German Shepherd Dog and the other three breeds was for the AKC to recognize the titles earned in the events held at an IPO organization selected by the Parent Clubs rather than duplicate an activity already being handled well by existing organizations, i.e., All IPO events held in the United States already were governed by rules set by international IPO organizations based in Europe. Thus the AKC Working Dog Sport Program was ended in 2009.

At the same time, the AKC Parent Club Performance Titles Program was implemented. It recognizes titles earned by dogs in all AKC Parent Club events that test the skills needed to maintain and enhance each breed's historical function.