

Sophie's Journey

Many of you know my little weiner dog, Sophie. She's a little plump, a little lazy, a little cute, and a **lot** lovey. I heard about the Weiner Dog races being held during the Oktoberfest street fair this year, so I signed her up. It could be fun and she just might win!

Sophie has never ran in a race before. What will she do? As we practiced, Sophie learned a new command: "RUN, Sophie, RUN!! Cool! Time for stage 2: racing against other dogs. I brought two of the other weiner dogs in my family over (Pearl and Ivan) so the three of them could practice together. They had a lot of fun playing, and they did get down to business and run a few heats. Sophie was really catching on. We no longer have the need for a treat at the end of each race. The running is becoming the pleasure.

As race day neared, Sophie's practices became a part of her daily life. Her running had generalized into a good habit of daily exercise. She looked forward to the practice sessions with the other two dogs, but I also saw her running around the back yard for absolutely no reason except for the fun of it.

The day before the race there was a group practice at the park for all race participants. She was so happy to be there with all of the other weiner dogs, just like her. Sophie just played. She wouldn't listen and worst of all, she wouldn't run. I asked myself, 'What will happen tomorrow at the race??' Anxiety was creeping in. If you have ever been to a Weiner Dog race, you know that it is a completely silly event with totally unpredictable results. 'It's just a stupid weiner dog race!' I kept telling myself, as I envisioned the various scenarios that could play out at the race:

- Sophie could win! All the training will pay off.
- Sophie could finish but not in first place: All the training will pay off. She learned something new and is better off for it.
- Sophie could get too interested in the other dogs and not finish the race: All the training will pay off. She learned something new and is better off for it. So, she's a social little dog who doesn't care too much whether she wins or loses. She is more interested in the friends who are there, both old and new ones.

Finally, the day of the race came. Sophie acted like she knew something was happening. We went downtown and met up with Pearl and Ivan. She ran to the car and she pulled at her leash - she could not wait to get there! Finally, race time! After several heats, it was Sophie's turn. There was so much noise, there was no way she would hear me yell the command. She won't stay in the gate, and she's too distracted to look at me waiting at the finish line. Did she finish? Yes, she did - in third place, but she finished! I can't say that for some of the other dogs in the race.

How does the silly weiner dog race have anything to do with our chapter? I see some parallels between Sophie's journey and our chapter:

- Try something new as a chapter, asking "Why not?" instead of "Why?"
- Set a goal and work to achieve it. Even if we don't win, we'll get something out of it.

- Find others like yourself and share common interests. Everyone has a part to play in a group. Some of us are runners, and some are socialites. Although we are all different, we all belong.
- The journey can become as important as the goal. What are we learning?
- The teacher can become the student.
- Don't sweat the small stuff - after all, it's only a Weiner Dog Race!

Thanks for the lessons, Sophie!

Karen Loughman, President
IAAP Book Cliff Chapter