

Aiming to please, more than 60 dogs compete in FD Kennel Club obedience trials

# Driven to obey



-Messenger photos by Ian Schmit

**JACKSON**, a great dane competing at the annual Fort Dodge Kennel Club's Obedience Trials, discerns which dumbbell has his owner Kathy Robinson's scent on it.

By **IAN SCHMIT**  
Messenger staff writer

**B**ig, lazy, oafish — It's the stereotypical great dane.

Fortunately for Kathy Robinson, of Des Moines, her great dane Jackson isn't content to just lie around on the couch. A giant standing among a mass of poodles and collies, Jackson performed alongside some of the more traditional show dogs at the annual Fort Dodge Kennel Club Obedience Trials.

"Great Danes don't have as much drive as some of the other dogs, so it's somewhat more of a

challenge to motivate him," said Robinson.

The trials Sunday morning gave owners of dogs, big and small, the chance to strut their control over their canines with a variety of exercises, including having the dog jump over obstacles and discriminate their owners scent among a pile of dumbbells.

Around 60 owners competed with their dogs in a set of increasing skill levels — novice, open and utility, which goes from simple commands like heeling on a leash to more



**WIZARD**, a standard poodle competing at the annual Fort Dodge Kennel Club Obedience Trials, retrieves a dumbbell for his owner Donna Yeast.

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advanced tricks like directed jumping.

This year, the kennel club is also starting to allow cross-bred dogs into the obedience competitions, said Liz Hawkins, Fort Dodge Kennel Club obedience chairman. So at least for this portion of the annual event, "it doesn't matter what your dog looks like," she said.

The change is an effort to attract more owners to the show, which had around 60 registered this year, said Hawkins.

As long as the dog is in good health, there are only two rules.

"Being shy is a no-no and biting is an absolute no-no," said Hawkins.

But as much as the show is about dogs, it's also about people, according to some owners.

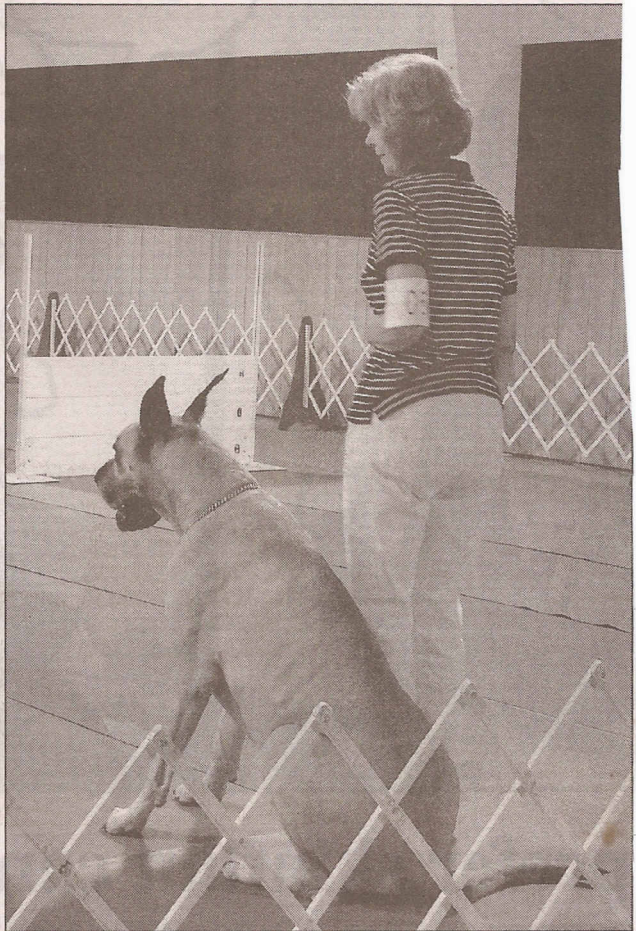
Owner Donna Yeast, of Des Moines, said she came not only to compete with her standard poodle Wizard, but for the people.

"It's not only the dogs, it's the camaraderie you have with all the other owners," said Yeast. "It's just about the people you meet."

Robinson agreed with the sentiment.

"Owners ... we train together, we go to trials together. We cheer each other on, and we cry together when they don't do well," she said.

For both owners, their interest in the competitions began with simple obedi-



-Messenger photo by Ian Schmit

**JACKSON**, a great dane competing Sunday at the annual Fort Dodge Kennel Club's Obedience Trials, waits patiently for a command from his owner Kathy Robinson, of Des Moines.

ence classes for their dogs. For Yeast, the classes sparked something and soon she was traveling across the state to compete.

"Every dog has a different personality and every

dog reacts differently in certain situations, and it's interesting to see," said Yeast.

But, said Hawkins, "it's really about spending time with your dog and having fun."