

**Results of the May 8, 2011
Palo Alto Foothills Tracking Association, Inc. VST test
San Jose and Saratoga, California**

After a couple of years of not holding our traditional Spring VST test, we had lost our regular date. PAFTA found a weekend after our unusually long field tracking season that did not conflict with any of the local area TD/TDX tests or any VST tests within reasonable driving distance. So Mother's Day it was!

We hold our VST tests at 2 community college campus sites: Evergreen Valley College, San Jose and West Valley College, Saratoga. Our judges were popular locals and club members: Barbara Adcock of San Jose and Kaye Hall of Napa. The club offered 4 tracks and I had 12 entries for the draw! After a variety of reasons to withdraw, on test day we had 6 entrants remaining.

Located in Silicon Valley, our campus sites are not as open as other areas of the state, or the country for that matter. A number of our large lush lawns have given way to new building construction over the past few years with only xeriscape planter beds dotting the landscape. Some of the existing nicest, largest lawn areas are continuously used on the weekends by organized soccer teams and impromptu dog flyball groups. It can be quite a challenge to plot regulation tracks, let alone the dog/handler teams running a track at these sites. Unfortunately we had no passes this time.

Holding the test in May can be very tricky with our weather, too – warm, hot, cold, rainy, windy – take your pick. After a number of days of 80s and a couple of 90s, the heat dissipated to cool and pleasant for plot day and downright cold and windy for test day. Plot day was very productive, thanks to Chief Tracklayer Donna Highstreet; and the judges were able to work in 3 tracks at the first site and 2 at our 2nd site for a total of 5 tracks offered. Very exciting! Tracklayer Lynne Benson-Colbert brought breakfast goodies to Evergreen Valley College and Tracklayer John Galloway brought lunch to West Valley College. We lacked for nothing!

After plotting, the judges returned to my house where they worked on their maps and I played "Suzi Homemaker" preparing dinner for them. Barbara returned home and Kaye stayed over. My young sheltie male took a real fancy to Kaye and I had to be sure he didn't follow her out the next morning on our way to the test!

A bit of drizzle on the early morning drive to the test site, the first 3 tracks were laid exactly as plotted and precisely on time. Just as the judges were returning from watching one of the tracks go down, club member Sue Pokart pulled up in her mini van and brought out box, after plate, after container, after bag of WONDERFUL food and drink. Just as I thought it was all out, she opened up another van door and MORE delectable delights were set out. We had Starbucks coffee (YEAH!), hot water for tea/cocoa and oatmeal, fresh fruit, croissants, muffins, tarts, and baklava. So much food – where to start... (I started with the baklava!)

The tracks were ready to go immediately after the draw. We were able to walk to the start of all the tracks at this first site.

Track 1 went to a Bernese Mountain Dog, bitch that started well, circled the 1st corner, made the MOT, and found her 1st intermediate article. At the end of the building on this leg, the dog searched around behind the building, out of view of the gallery, to the whistle. Tracklayer Lynne Benson-Colbert worked with the team to complete the track.

Track 2 went to a Beagle, dog that started well, but just kept going past the 1st turn. Tracklayer Barbara Fowler worked with the team to complete the track.

Track 3 went to a Belgian Tervuren, bitch that started well, but missed the 1st turn. Tracklayer John Olds worked with the team to complete the track.

A bit of a drive to the other campus for the remaining 2 tracks. Since we had so much wonderful food and drink left over from breakfast and the judges were so proficient in completing their paperwork, we all decided to skip going to the local restaurant Mimi's Café (remembering it was Mother's Day) and munch out at the tail gates after the completion of the test. With the logistics rearranged, we car pooled to the start of the next track.

Track 4 went to a German Shepherd Dog, dog that missed the 1st turn. Tracklayer John Galloway worked with the team to complete the track.

We were able to have the 1st alternate dog/handler team test on the 5th/additional track plotted.

Track 5 went to another Bernese Mountain Dog, bitch (same handler/owner as 1st dog) that worked the 1st leg, made the 1st turn to the 1st intermediate article, made the 2nd turn, but went right instead of left at the 3rd turn to the whistle. Tracklayer Mary Ann Graziano worked with the team to complete the track.

Back to the cars to tail gate and get the judges' debrief on the tracks and the many thank you's from this Test Secretary to all the wonderful club members who worked the test, the dog/handler teams for entering, and the spectators for support and interest for our test.

Thank you to Chief Tracklayer Donna Highstreet who hired the best tracklayers and made sure my wayward radios were working and returned at the end of the day. Thank you to Tracklayers Lynne Benson-Colbert, Barbara Fowler, John Olds, John Galloway, and Mary Ann Graziano for giving up their weekend to put on an efficient test and work with the dog/handler teams. Thank you to Driver Lisa Newton who came out even though she was fighting off a virus; feel better soon! Thank you to Terri Southard who, behind the scenes, is "Johnny-on-the-spot" with producing the premium and catalog for all our tests. Thank you to breakfast diva Sue Pokart who provided enough food to feed us 2 and 3 times during the day. Thank you to Treasurer Linda Stamper who arrived to

cheer the entrant teams on, check book in hand. Thank you to Judges Barbara Adcock and Kaye Hall, you were a pleasure to work with. I always learn from you both.

I want to say a heartfelt thank you and acknowledge the special support I received from my darling friends, Lisa Newton and Mary Ann Graziano. During the past year, my elderly Father's health required in-home hospice care. The last couple of months, he had started to rapidly decline. He celebrated his 93rd birthday with family and friends April 16th. He passed away Wednesday May 4th. Lisa and Mary Ann both were on call during this time while my family dealt with this impending sorrow. Thank you, my friends, for standing by to make sure the test proceeded as scheduled. I am truly grateful.

Respectfully submitted,

Rita Crawford
Test Secretary