

Dear dog lover,

This month's story: "Going on a camping trip – my own 'little Iditarod', part 2"

We're renewing our web page, and the first step was to make the navigation for registration and payment easier. You'll now find a link to those pages directly in the yellow menu to the left, which should also not interfere with the form anymore (some people had the menu overlapping with the fields). The new pages (registration form and payment page) also explain exactly our **policies on waiting list sign-ups and cancellation**. For the first time since 2002, **we also had to raise the fees**. The 7-week behavior classes are now \$130 (pre-registration fee), and the 6-week agility classes are now \$120 (pre-registration fee). For other class fees, please check the payment page on the web.

We made some changes to the classes starting May 14/15. Due to the high volume of sign-ups for **P1 and ES**, we for each added **an additional class right before the original class**. Please check the dates and times below for all classes, I included the names of the dogs that are already signed up. **HS and RC have been moved to Friday, June 6th**. It depends if I need another overflow class by then, which time-slots we'll use. I'm planning on HS from either 5-6pm or 6:15-7:15pm, and RC from 7:30-8:30pm. The classes will be held indoors while the Open Play Times will be outdoors on those days. **For all May classes, I'll take 2-3 extra sign-ups** per class for the waiting list, to give people a chance to jump in if someone drops out before the class starts.

Sign-up is rolling for the Agility Classes starting May 31st, right after the Memorial Day Weekend. I've listed two classes each, to keep up with the demand. We'll fill the later beginners class first, and if we fill both, hopefully we can split them up by age/size/experience a little. This is a **fun Saturday activity for dogs and handlers**, and adult dogs can sign up without taking a behavior class first. The dog should be friendly (with other dogs and people), and come to you for a hot dog ☺. Puppies should be 6-12 months and have taken or at least started a puppy class. **After graduating from Agility Beginners**, every dog needs to go through **two Intermediate classes**, before moving up to Advanced. Advanced Trial is for dogs already preparing for competition.

Below you'll find:

- 1) Dates and times of upcoming classes
- 2) How to sign up for the classes
- 3) Information on the Open Play Times
- 4) This month's story: Going on a camping trip – my own 'little Iditarod'

1) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Behavior classes starting Apr 21st:

The classes will run for seven weeks, with a break on May 26th, and end Jun 9th.

Instructor: Rose

Mondays 6:15-7:15pm: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Tok, Misty, Jane, Dorkie, Tess, Bunny, Teddy, Scruffy; wait list: Max, Tallie, Rocky, Elizabeth

Mondays 7:30-8:30pm: [Foundation Class](#) (first week:6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Addie, Apollo, Phoenix, Maxie, Rosco, Tanner, Bowser, Buddy

Behavior classes starting May 14th/15th:

All classes will run for seven weeks and end Jun 25th/26th.

Instructor: Claudia

Wednesdays 5-6pm: [Puppy 2 - Kindergarten](#)

Huney, Jazz, Beau, Shadow, Pepper, McKinley, Dot, Chisik

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: [Elementary School](#)

Wednesdays 7:30-8:30: [Elementary School](#)

For both classes: Angus, Kona, Gizzy, Kaya, Osa, Sofi, Clooney, Woody, Max, Tux, Abby, Rebel, Sheeba, Sulay

Please let me know if you have to be in the early or late class, or if you are flexible.

Thursdays 5-6pm: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Thursdays 6:15-7:15pm: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

For both classes: Max (late), Tallie, Rocky, Elizabeth, Deshka, Toddie, Mia

Please let me know if you have to be in the early or late class, or if you are flexible.

Thursdays 7:30-8:30pm: [Foundation Class](#) (first week:6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Gabriel

Agility classes starting May 14th/15th:

All classes will run for six weeks, with a break on July 5th, and end July 12th.

The times below include 30 minutes set-up or take-down of the equipment. The faster the students are, the more time of that can be added to the class time ☺.

Instructor: Claudia and/or Kat

Saturdays 10-11:30am: [Agility Beginners / Puppies](#)

Saturdays 11:30-1pm: [Agility Beginners](#)

Saturdays 1-2:30pm: [Agility Intermediate-A](#)

Saturdays 2:30-4pm: [Agility Intermediate-A](#)

Saturdays 3:30-5pm: [Agility Advanced](#)

Saturdays 5-6:30pm: [Agility Advanced-Trial](#)

Behavior classes starting June 6th:

HS will run for 4 weeks, and end June 27th;

RC will run for seven weeks, with a break on July 4th, and end July 25th.

Instructor: Claudia

Fridays 5-6pm or 6:15-7:15pm: [High School-CGC](#)

Cabela, Sadie, Sukie

Fridays 7:30-8:30pm: [Rally College](#)

Rooster, Abby

You can also check the schedule on the web for a class that fits you, and just sign up for it! Look for the weekday that says “START CLASSES” to find out the exact date of a class start. All classes run once a week, so follow the class downwards the same weekday to find the day saying “END CLASSES”.

Reserve your spot! Your payment is never lost, even if the class is already full. Your payment will 1) save you a spot at the class, 2) or save you a spot on the waiting list, or 3) can be carried over to a later class, 4) can be fully reimbursed if I couldn't get you in the class you chose, or 5) can cause me to open an overflow class ☺. Just as a note: I sometimes get up to three dogs per class moved in from a waiting list before the class even started.

2) HOW TO SIGN UP FOR THE CLASSES:

It's easy now!!! Just use the yellow menu bar on the left. You'll find a button “Registration”, which brings you directly to the **one registration form for ALL classes**. After clicking on “enroll” at the end, you'll get to the payment page, which explains all payment options, policies, and allows you to pay online, too.

Please note **our registration policy: Only the payment will hold your spot**. Spots are reserved in the order I receive payment for them. For P2 voucher holders, the voucher will be your payment. You can email me the number of the voucher, after you filled out the registration form, mail the voucher to us or drop it off at the facility. You can always sign up for the class you want to join, even if it would be full. Only the payment will keep you on the waiting list, in case somebody else drops out before the class starts. If I can't get you into that class, your payment will either be used for the next available class, for another class you wish to join instead, or fully reimbursed!

Puppy 1 Preschool clients, please remember you can also purchase the **Puppy School Packet**, including P1 and P2 class. You only have to commit to the seven weeks of P1 class, and will receive a voucher for P2, valid for 1 full year!

3) SOCIAL HOUR - OPEN PLAY TIMES:

Due to the success of the Open Play Times, we'll continue offering those year-round, twice a week. We're still indoors, on Tuesdays AND Fridays. We'll move outdoors when the weather permits, probably after Memorial Day weekend. Come with your dog for one hour of dog play and dog owner social time. Each dog must be supervised by an adult handler, one dog per handler only. First-timers: bring your vaccination papers, in case we ask for them!

Fee: \$7 at the door, punch card \$35 for 6 visits. Vaccinated dogs only (5-way/DHPPi, dogs over 6 mo: Rabies, Bordetella).

Dates: every Tuesday and Friday evening

6-7pm: small, young or timid dogs (up to ~40#, very timid or small dogs will play within the additional safety of a pen)

7-8pm: large and rambunctious dogs (over 50#)

You can check the web page www.bettercompanion.com for info on classes, facility, and schedule, read testimonies from other students, print out the registration form...

Or contact us by email or phone (see below).

4) GOING ON A CAMPING TRIP – MY OWN ‘LITTLE IDITAROD’ – PART 2

Isn't the weather crazy! Last week I thought my story would be totally outdated, everybody being ready for sun, warmth, and summer. But, the winter gear is out again, and the continuation of my "little Iditarod" couldn't be timed better. After some delays, we finally got to go last weekend, when the snow came. Seeing 4 inches coming down in Knik, **we needed to prepare for much more snow** up north. Even if it's ok now, we could get snowed in overnight.

I wasn't sure how my small team would hold up in deep snow, since most of the training was on hard packed trails. So we changed our plans, and that's actually what mushers have to do a lot, go to Plan B. Frank would leave his team at home, take the snowmachine instead, and **give me his lead dog Annie** to power up my team. I LOVE Annie in my team, and already used her at other occasions. Her biggest advantage: I can start having her free-running with the team, which keeps the initial dog power down, and then add her later when the first steam is gone. And it's always good to have an extra leader in the team.

Now our trip resembles more **the serum run**, a run in commemoration of the original relay-run to bring the serum to Nome. This isn't a race, but rather an expedition of mushers and snowmachiners, traveling about 600 miles from Nenana to Nome, covering 30-60 miles per day and overnighing in cabins along the route. Every musher has his personal **snowmachine accompanying his team**, helping with carrying supplies or tired dogs, and preparing the cabin for the musher's arrival.

That's exactly what Frank did. He'd have the axe/chainsaw to open up the trail, extra supplies for the cabin, and transported little Lucy for me 😊. Now I kept only some **survival gear** with me in case we would get separated, like sleeping bag, freeze dried meals and hot water, some dog snacks, booties, hand warmers and extra gloves. After two hours driving northeast, Frank parked the truck and helped me get my dogs ready, and **off I would go with my 5-dog-team**.

I had a blast! The trail was ours, we didn't meet a single soul. I could actually start with only 4 dogs being hooked up, and Annie running free with us. The first part of the trail is an unmaintained road, and we had one truck passing us from the front. No problem, I tell my team "**woah**", **and they stop**, I set my snowhook, bring the dogs off to the side and hold the leaders plus loose Annie. The snow wasn't deep at all, but the landscape white, and the skies blue on the second day. **No noise disturbed the wilderness** but the panting of the dogs and the sh-sh of the runners on the trail.

People ask me if I'd **ever go on the real Iditarod**, or maybe another race. The answer is "no", I'll keep my recreational team, and there're many reasons for me:

I get stressed out at the start, when the team is anxious to go, overpowers me easily, and everybody gets even more nervous in the race atmosphere. With my recreational team and no other teams nearby, it's easy for me to only hook up as many dogs as I'm comfortable with, letting the others free-run, and adding them later when I'm ready to add their power. And this weekend showed me **the fun of free-running dogs** even more. At the cabin, I just unhooked everybody from the gangline, put 5 bowls down for them and fed them right there. As we went in and out of the cabin, the dogs went with us, slept with us inside, and didn't even want to get out with Frank the next morning. They waited for me to take them out for a potty break and a morning snack. After a 3hr run, they had a 19hr layover, and still hung out with us in and around the cabin **as calm as could be**.

At a steep downhill passage, I left only two dogs in the team, to help me keeping the sled straight, and all others ran free along the side. Way more relaxing than doing the **roller coaster-like Dalzell Gorge** with a powerful 16-dog-team! You can't have loose dogs in a race, considering the number of mushers, and a lot of racing Huskies are so pumped up, they'd run all the way to the next checkpoint without their musher.

Without a tight race schedule, I can decide easier to take a break, have a snack for me and the dogs, take pictures, enjoy the loneliness and again, let my dogs run loose while I'm doing all that. **Frank is a great snowmachine companion**. He stays away enough not to disturb the silence with the noise of the machine, yet is always there when needed. We took some breaks together, and some I took alone, knowing Frank is on the way to the cabin getting a fire going.

With the snow giving us trails around the house again, I can't wait to get out again with my little pet-recreational team. This trip gave me **a lot of confidence**, more sled driving experience in difficult terrain, more faith in my little team than before, and the knowledge that I can make it to our remote cabin in 2-3hrs.

I can see where people benefit from the experience and confidence they gain with each race they enter and hopefully finish, but I'll leave the sled dog races to others and continue to enjoy the thrill of competing with just one dog at a time in agility and obedience trials. ☺ So long, until next month's story, maybe about agility competition...

See you at the Regine Dog Training Facility,
Claudia



Ready to roll after a short break



We ate, now we'll have a nap in the cabin



Brevig is such a good camper, she can be our front hook.
No Ruby, I won't hook you up yet. You'll get to run free first!

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