

SUPADOG AGILITY RESCUE LEAGUE - DEFA'S AWARD RUNNER UP 2008

Satorius Rouse and Fiona Stewart-Vidler



Rouse's story featured on website <http://www.supadarl.co.uk>

It is just an unusual doggie tail, another version of the ghost of Christmas past... two years ago my fit bouncy soulmate merle collie suddenly collapsed and passed away quietly at the vet hospital later that evening riddled with undiagnosed spleen cancer... I said a final goodbye to his finally sleeping body late that night... and had just got home.. I was just thinking my world had collapsed after struggling through three very traumatic years and asked my guardian angels what am I going to do now? I was aware of a light in the room, a presence and my dog's spirit peacefully soaring out into the universe. The answer came back, "the one they think should be your mother's next dog, is your dog, the long awaited Satorius, she is the grandmother dog."

Armed with this almost biblical information of an angel visitation, I came down to the breakfast table instead of being a wreck, asking whether it would be a good idea or not to adopt a black and white collie.

Born April 2005, Rouse had left his idyllic countryside world age six weeks, the same day I had left my paradise, he then went on a difficult journey (like myself in life) which started pleasantly in one can guess suburbia with a loving family, however being a border collie/working sheep dog, he unfortunately needed daily exercise and a working dog lifestyle, something a busy family obviously didn't have time, and if it didn't happen it made him grouchy, barking, attention seeking, separation anxiety on departure and an undesirable family member and I discovered to my horror within week of having him, that he jumped up onto the settee the moment you picked up the remote control ready for the DVD to start, begged for my rare treats of chocolate (poison), pizza and crisps as if this was the norm, didn't like the door closed on small rooms or the light being turned off and flinched if your hand waved past his head inadvertently.

This meant at 18 months old, he arrived at Blue Cross Kennels which he found a strange world though he liked the kennel staff as didn't relate to wire cage kennels and being surrounded by other dogs, didn't relate to dogs actually they were inferior species, when bed was a young boy's duvet. He drove himself demented, hysterical, stressed himself out, lost weight, couldn't absorb his food properly, thin coat, and was smaller than average with slightly stunted growth and development. Nobody wanted him, and his behaviour wasn't welcoming, also he had one blue eye and one brown eye off-putting did he see properly or not? By now was nearly two years old and said "odd baggage" and no-one wanted him. The Blue Cross were worried as so stressed out and unable to cope, he was going to have to be put to sleep, so as a last resort asked the local agility club if they would foster yet another collie. Luckily they agreed, thought no problem, someone will take him, so everyone was asked if they wanted him or knew anyone who would take him, again no-one really wanted the rather wolf-like, border collie with strange eyes who was now aging. Then complications set-in as foster parent broke her ankle with twelve dogs to care for too.

I only saw his picture on the internet, they said I have something to tell you about him, I took a deep breath, he has a blue eye wolf side that you may like, however he is rather small and not sure how well he will get on with other dogs. As it was decided he could only go to a single owner with no other dogs that was OK. I agreed to meet him, only if he got on with my parents dogs as initially would need to socialise with them one day a week, on a longer work hours day, and was known to have separation anxiety and also if he took to me as would have six months to work with a truly difficult case that hated me. Nervous at our meeting, it was 'love at first sight' for both of us, as we walked off into the solstice sunset late afternoon with a ball and lead. So off we went and he miraculously was not sick in my car (the first time anyhow).

We made some adjustments to his diet, set up a disciplined exercise and obedience training regime as after five ball throws on a line, he just lay down and coughed in the cold morning air. We nearly had recall within a week, which was scary the first time I let him off in a field he spotted a deer speck in the distance.

Then I nearly lost him within the first two weeks, when a bull dog probably illegally trained for fighting came shooting round the corner and clamped his jaws over his head in a park, luckily the tight collar clip sprung apart and he wriggled free, bolted for his life nearly under the wheels of a car, and luckily stopped for an instant and I grabbed him, as recall under duress was not trained yet.

He had a heart of gold, but was stressed out still and very sensitive. So I applied my reiki master touch to him to try and relax him, gave him massage, played him meditation sessions, alongside diet, exercise. I had agreed as part of his development to six agility sessions at the agility club. This was the 'blind leading the blind', though luckily our trainer was very patient. He was rather ball obsessive to say the least and we decided that, as he wouldn't part with the ball before the next sequence, that we should retire for a while and practice on our own in the garden. We tried a fun day our first year and with a bit of coaxing, meandering got a miraculous clear round, but it was more him trying to please me and I wasn't going to be one of these owners pushing their dog forward into anything. So we took our time, relaxed had fun, I didn't have a clue what I was doing agility wise so in no hurry either. We decided to go for a local class, which proved tricky as a Labrador took a passionate hatred to him unsettling him greatly, we weren't alone apparently, it just made it difficult. After 4 lessons, he was out jumping the other dogs and it was just for fun anyhow, so I began to review my options, the dog had agility potential, err the handler another story.. it was definitely a case of "great dog, shame about the handler," however champion Greg Derretts DVD of the same name inspired me, as did "Discover Dogs", Satorius Rouse was now jumping clear rounds in training and one day practising in the garden, ball obsessed I wont let it go dog, brought his toy back to me, dropped it at beginning as if to say do it again Mum that sequence. This meant big gulp, the dog is serious, so registered him for Kennel Club and UKA, went back to his foster parents to register for agility coaching classes at their club 40 miles away, its time to give this agility competition scene ago.

Petrified nervous, we emerged at our first Easter celebrations at kennel club, nearly a thousand dogs, after several moments hesitation shaking rooted to the spot as I guess it sounded like a giant kennels to him (I had promised I would never in his lifetime put him into kennels ever), I was just about to withdraw him, when we left the start line and he was off like a natural, nearly going clear on his first agility round. If a big black dog had not barked in another ring, he would never have jumped off the dog walk, but the judge was a honey and let him go back on for confidence then he romped home to astounding astonished applause from our friends competing there.

That first season, we took it slowly it was developmental, if he was having fun made progress, then we booked another one in a few weeks time. he then went on to do 16 shows, gaining 32 rosettes, a 3rd and 4th. A memorable hat-trick of clear rounds at a top kennel club dog show, where a lovely lady said your dog as we sat in middle of field surrounded by six rings is such a beautiful runner and so calm, he has a certain presence, I love to watch him run. Then a year or two ahead of our wildest dreams, for experience we had a go at a team match trial, got selected grades 1-2 with two fast clear rounds, then on the day he did his bit with a fifth place in agility, running first off with a lovely run and helping the club win the trophy, just before xmas 2008. This was the dog that nobody wanted, almost got PTS and although they say you should never have a dog for Christmas, I had booked off three weeks to show my other dog, the new countryside location walks and the timing was sadly perfect. On my merle collie dogs birthday this year, I felt him running alongside me and Rouse, as Rouse brought home three clear rounds at his first 'camping in a tent' agility weekend which he loved.



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