

Top dog heading to Europe to compete

By: Melissa Verge

Posted: **3:00 AM CDT Monday, Jul. 22, 2019**

Despite being a professional athlete, Ventress lives a modest lifestyle.

The Manitoba-raised miniature poodle is humbly travelling across the world this week underneath an airplane seat.

Her destination? The European Open Agility Competition in the Netherlands, where she'll compete against other top dog-letes from around the world.

"She is the best working partner I've ever had," said owner Diana Dafoe, who lives with her husband and talented canine in Lenore, an hour northwest of Brandon.

The pair have been working together — Dafoe at the helm as Ventress successfully performs tricks of all kinds, weaving in and out between poles, running through tunnels and clearing jumps.

Her skills landed her a spot on the Canadian Agility Team and a chance to perform in Europe. They're the first Manitobans to make the team.

The seven-year-old poodle remains calm under pressure, which makes her easy to work with, Dafoe said. She's had time to practise competitively after the team performed at nationals for the past two years, last year bringing home third place.

"She seems to be pretty good; it's very rewarding," Dafoe said. "It's really neat to when it all clicks and that team work is going smoothly. It's (all about) positive reinforcement."

114 Shares
Ventress likes to play tug-of-rope and fetch, and "she also likes to do a little victory lap every once in awhile, and I let her



Diana Dafoe and Ventress are competing in an event in the Netherlands later this month. (Submitted)

114
Shares do that with the toy. She's just blowing off some steam."

They practise almost every day in the summer for about 20 minutes, Dafoe said, but when the winter rolls around, it drops to about once a week as they work to find an indoor facility they can use to escape the frigid temperatures.

The pair have a Team Canada practice coming up on Wednesday at the European Open, and will compete on Friday in a three-dog team. On Saturday, owner and dog will complete together individually, and if they do well, move on to the finals on Sunday.

Building a good relationship between dog and human is important, particularly for competitions such as these, she said. It's also her favourite part of the sport.

"You need that relationship so the dog finds you interesting and rewarding to work with, and then you have the attention and the very willing partner."

At one point, things were uncertain if they would be able to try out this year at all, Dafoe said. Ventress was possibly going to become a mother, but it didn't end up happening, and she was able to stay in the game a little longer.

That worked well — both parties are enthusiastic for the competition, although Ventress tends to show her excitement more through her actions.

"She always wants to be up. Like, she's always willing to try and she's always ready to go."

» mverge@brandonsun.com

» Twitter: @Melverge5

We need your support!
Local journalism needs your support!

As we navigate through unprecedented times, our journalists are working harder than ever to bring you the latest local updates to keep you safe and informed.

114
Shares

Now, more than ever, we need your support.

Starting at \$12.42/month you can access your Brandon Sun online and full access to all content as it appears on our website.

or call circulation directly at (204) 727-0527.

Your pledge helps to ensure we provide the news that matters most to your community!