

Who are the Spok-9's?

The Spok-9's is a NAFA-recognized organization based in Spokane dedicated to training flyball dogs and competing in sanctioned tournaments. The Spok-9's attend five to ten tournaments each year and enter two to three teams into each tournament. Currently the Spok-9's have about twenty trained flyball dogs with several more in various stages of training. Those interested in training for competition are urged to contact the team to learn about the sport.

Where Can I Learn More?

The NAFA website has information on flyball, upcoming tournaments and links to many of their recognized flyball clubs. Internet searches will reveal other flyball clubs all over the world. Most clubs have information on their dogs, training methods and so on. The Spok-9 website has information on our current members, their dogs and regional tournament schedule as well as links to other regional flyball clubs.



Flyball Resources

Spok-9's Flyball Racing Team
www.Spok-9s.com

Spokane Dog Training Club
www.spokanedic.org
509-922-2645

2620 N Locust Rd.
Spokane Valley, WA 99206

North American Flyball Association
www.flyball.org



Flyball Racing Team

Spokane, Washington
www.Spok-9s.com

What is Flyball?

Flyball is a relay race for a team of four dogs. Each dog runs down a 51 foot course containing four hurdles, deploys a ball from a spring-loaded box and returns over the same 51 foot course and four hurdles to the start line. Once the first dog completes the course a second dog runs until all four dogs have run the course. A dog that fails to complete a clean run must run again after the first four dogs have completed their runs. A dropped ball, missed hurdle, crossing the start line before the previous dog returns all require the dog to complete a rerun. The height of the hurdles is set four inches below the height of the shortest dog on the team (within a minimum of 7" and a maximum of 14"). Two teams run in side-by-side lanes. The first team to complete clean runs on all four of their dogs wins the heat. A race consists of three to five individual heats.

The fastest flyball dogs can run the course in four seconds or less, including the time necessary to execute a 'swimmers turn' on the box and accelerate back to the handler. Handlers time the release of their dogs to pass within inches of the start line. Tournaments are electronically timed with drag race-style starting lights and clapsed times measured for each dog and for the overall team.

Flyball is popular throughout the world. Within the United States and Canada the sport is sanctioned by the North American Flyball Association (NAFA). Most tournaments within the northwest are held in western Washington and British Columbia.

What's Involved in Running Flyball?

Flyball can be an informal sport for sport-oriented dogs or it can be a serious competitive event. Flyball leagues and public flyball demonstrations are available for those who desire to participate at a recreational level. Those interested in more serious competition join tournaments teams.

Participation in a NAFA-sanctioned tournament requires sponsorship of a team by a NAFA-recognized club. A club can enter as many teams into a tournament as they desire. Most tournaments have 10 to 15 clubs with up to 40 individual teams. A team consists of up to six dogs to allow for some dogs to rest while others are racing. Each team designates a 'seed time' prior to the tournament to allow the tournament sponsors to divide the teams into different divisions. Teams that run faster than a breakout time established for their division lose that 'heat', teams breaking out three times during the day are disqualified from winning awards within their division.

Putting together a team is a careful process to balance 'height' dogs small enough to drop the height of the hurdles for the entire team, 'start' dogs that can consistently cross the start line within 0.10 seconds or less of the time the start line becomes active, 'anchor' dogs that have the competitive drive to race the other teams last dog to win a close race and other dogs that are willing and able to pass within inches of each other quickly and consistently.

What Dogs can Run Flyball?

Any dog healthy enough for physical activity and non-aggressive enough to race with other dogs can run flyball. All breeds and mixed breeds are eligible for competition. Dogs of all speeds can compete since tournaments are divided into divisions based upon a teams seed time. Successful flyball dogs usually have a strong interest in balls and retrieving.

How Are Dogs Trained for Flyball?

Many training methods are used depending upon the individual dog and handler. Early training naturally focuses upon teaching the dog to turn on and deploy the flyball box and stay within the hurdles. Advanced training emphasizes passing and speed. Handlers are also taught the skills necessary to run their dog as part of a team.

Flyball classes are taught by the Spokane Dog Training Club during the spring and summer.

