

Kevlar earns awards but steals one woman's heart

By Allison Kozak & Patricia Hartney

"Kevlar" PAM Rescue's Second Chance UD GO TD NAJ

Competition dog sports have been Patricia Hartney's enduring hobby for many years. Almost 10 years ago, she noticed several friends who successfully participated in these sports with rescued GSDs. She wondered if it would work for her.

She submitted an application to GSRNC and on December 3, 2011, she went to see 3 male siblings, only 3 months old, who had been dumped in a county shelter. They were named Larry, Curly and Moe. She had great fun playing with the puppies but, wanting to test sound curiosity, she threw a metal ring with several metal washers attached into the corner of the yard. One puppy immediately went over to investigate the sound, picked up the metal ring and brought it to her. "That's the one!" she thought. "Moe" became "Kevlar" and home they went.



Socialization began the very next day and Kevlar loved people, especially kids, and dogs. These are traits essential for competition. Patricia started training at home and in classes and she quickly laid the foundation in obedience, tracking and agility. Kevlar was demonstrative and loved to work.

But at age 6 months he suddenly stopped eating. Despite vet visits, Kevlar was rapidly declining, refusing to eat or drink, and seeking out hiding places in which to die. Finally, Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI) was confirmed.



EPI is a condition whereby the pancreas does not produce enzymes with which to digest food. Without digestion, no nutrients are absorbed, and the dog starves to death. But by adding digestive enzymes into the dog's diet, the condition is easily managed.

But the problem was, Patricia used treats for training. She couldn't feed Kevlar treats with his EPI. What to do? She spent a lot of time just playing ball with him trying to figure things out. Gradually she realized that play could be used as a reward. She resumed training

using only toys and they were again making progress. But a few years later, she almost lost Kevlar again.

After eating breakfast one morning, Kevlar began licking his lips and trying to vomit. Patricia saw his gut was hard and distended – BLOAT. She rushed to the vet for this mother-of-all-emergencies. He had full torsion which also ripped his spleen, but surgery was a success.



Once again, they resumed training. Feeling that every day was precious with this boy, her goal was to make every day FUN. Some exercises, like scent work, were so intrinsically rewarding for Kevlar, she needed no reward at all. For others, like tracking, she had to do extensive research to figure out how to adapt the classic training techniques to play-reward rather than food. She soon figured out the highest-ranking toy: the Kong! The party was on when she brought out the Kong!

Kevlar obtained the AKC titles of UD (Utility Dog), TD (Tracking Dog) and NAJ (Novice Agility Jumper). The combined

achievement of these separate titles made Kevlar eligible for the prestigious *Performance Award of Merit* issued by the German Shepherd Dog Club of America. He won in 2019!

Patricia says, "I am so very proud of my loving, sweet sweet boy. Thank you, GSRNC, for giving me the opportunity to love this most special German Shepherd Dog."

Did you know? Even a rescue dog can get an AKC name. Kevlar's competition name is Rescue's Second Chance. Several years ago the AKC opened competition in companion events (obedience, tracking, agility, etc.) to both mixed breeds as well as recognizable AKC breeds but who were without "papers". Kevlar's name is actually a play on words: a rescue dog who got a second chance and 'Second Chance' is the name of the manufacturer of Kevlar vests for police protection.

