

“It’s just a lot of fun to work with her, creating new challenges and scenarios. Being outdoors, watching Pansy enjoy putting her nose to use for a purpose. It’s almost magical.”

— Jill Miller

turns in a vegetated field and pursuing the exact trail that is set for them. The dogs are released only after the track has aged from 30 minutes to two hours, making the scent trail less distinct. More advanced tracking is done on longer tracks, up to 1,000 yards, which have been aged for longer periods. They contain diverse and more complex terrain, and require more turns to follow the scent path. The track configuration differs with each test, and a handler never knows the route.

With a bit of training, any breed is capable of the basic levels of tracking, Miller said. Dogs as short as papillons or dachshunds succeed. But to advance to higher levels, they need a strong drive and an instinct and ability to overcome obstacles and maintain a staunch focus. Some experts believe a dog can detect odors at concentrations of parts per trillion, with a sense of smell that is 100,000 times keener than that of a human.

“It’s pretty amazing to watch the dogs at work, wondering what they are following: skin cells, perhaps?” Miller said. “There’s a lot of mystery attached to the sport, and tracking is simply shaping their existing abilities.”

Pansy may not advance beyond the beginner tracking stages. And that’s OK with Miller. The two have other goals.

“It’s just a lot of fun to work with her, creating new challenges and scenarios,” she said. “Being outdoors, watching Pansy enjoy putting her nose to use for a purpose. It’s almost magical.”



It’s an all-or-nothing deal, Miller said. The dogs either pass or fail, following a scent from start to finish, making multiple

