

*Meet.....*

*Owner Handler*

*Mikie Woodworth*

---

### **1) How did you get started?**

Growing up in a large family and always had at least two standard poodles in our home. I believe it sparked in me the interest in dogs. I also have always been interested in watching dog shows on Animal Planet and the Discovery Channel. I am not from a breeder or show family. I just had the burning desire to show, or at least try it out. Our family got our first bitch from BRF Danes, Ray and Betty Streeter in the fall of 2005, which we called, BRF's America's Hope because she was born on 9/11/2005, but to us she is "Emily". My mom and I took her to a handling class with our breeders to learn how to show her and then Betty offered to show her in breed. I of course went to all of the shows that Emily and Betty were in. My first teacher was Beth Brock, who handled Flat Coat Retrievers and a very good friend from 2005-2007. My first show was back in 2006 at UKC and showed Buddy there to get his UKC Championship title in addition to AKC. During this time, I watched the Professional Handlers in the breed ring as well as Junior Handlers. Each handler has their own style and I wanted to know why and how they developed this in order to succeed. So, I guess the best answer is my mom who wanted to show, took me to the shows: Betty Streeter who encouraged me, Melissa Ayer who helped me to gain confidence and watched me, who also assisted when she saw that a different approach with the handling of our dog in the ring was warranted, and finally Joel Rosenblatt, whom I would like to best emulate as he has taken the time to critique me each time I went into the ring. Joel as well as Melissa has taught me that it was critical to watch ringside to see what each judge was looking for and to feel as if not only you had the best dog at the end of your lead but to run into the ring with confidence as if this ring was yours! When I initially started to handle Emily, it didn't turn out at first well because I needed to get used to her and to know the breed more. When I become somewhat experienced, I decided to learn with our new dog, UKC CH. Maitau's America's Dream known to us as "Buddy". When both myself and Buddy were learning, we thought it would be a great opportunity for both of us to learn together. This was the beginning of a great road experience with the two of us and we bonded as the Dream Team. Joel felt I had a natural gift of showing dogs and encouraged me and showed me different techniques on how to handle our stubborn dog "Buddy". I showed him in Juniors and Joel showed him in Breed for 2 yrs then wanted me to show him both in Breed and Juniors when I was ready. Joel got his first 3 points in West Springfield, MA show in July 2007 and I finished singling Buddy. He and I were the Dream Team initially and we showed together in Breed and in Junior Showmanship until he was 4 years old. We decided to retire him in 2011 as he gave us his all and it was time for Buddy to relax and enjoy all that we had accomplished together. He deserved it!!! I plan on bringing Buddy out again in the Veterans class. Then, In 2009, "Lily", UKC CH. BRF's America's Ray of Sunshine joined the family and got her



first 3 point major, Major Reserve and 6 points and then my younger brother, John Mark who is part of the Dream Team, in February 2012 due to my OCD knee surgery has helped put on Lily's 2<sup>nd</sup> final major at the Trenton Specialty, in NJ and 2 singles. Lily only needs 1 single point to obtain her AKC Championship title all owner handled by, teenagers myself and John Mark! Showing dogs in breed is a lot of hard work, and with that and determination and help from our mentor Melissa Ayers as well as many professional handlers that have assisted along the way such as Mike Teneriello, Karen Pacino, Pat Ciampa, Rick Zahorchak, Auburn Lyons, and Brian Witmier to just name a few, when everything comes together, it is so very rewarding. I just want to thank everyone that has helped both John Mark and myself to assist us to getting where we are today, because without them taking the time we would not be where we are today!

## **2) What has been your most valuable lesson?**

I have learned so very much in the ring as well as ringside due to most recent OCD Knee Surgery is that both inside and outside the ring you continuously learn how to improve skills by watching others and you notice more on what is going on around you.

I believe that the most valuable lesson I have learned is since I started showing in breed is to believe in yourself as well as your dog. As long as you keep working and practicing every day, it pays off in the long run. I have worked with Buddy and Lily since they were just 7 weeks old so that we could work together as a team when showing. Both dogs are obedience trained which helps a lot in the ring. For example, I taught them "step" which I use when Lily or Buddy does a free stack and want their feet to move forward to get in correct stack. It doesn't matter your age when showing, it is all in confidence that your handling skills, research your judges as to if they will like your type of dog and in my case if they would take me and my brother seriously as we are teenagers. Working with your dog and relationship with your dog is very important. But being a team player is extremely important with any success in life, and you and your dog are a team. Since dog showing is a team effort and as a team you must believe as whatever you feel goes down the lead to your dog and knowing all of this will help you be successful not only in the ring but life as well. I have made many mistakes but I have learned from them and are good life lessons. If you don't hear what the judge said, ask the judge to repeat the question or if you did the wrong pattern in the Junior ring, learn from it and next time you're in the ring, you would do it correctly. This works for the breed ring as well. Learning from your mistakes is how you grow as a person as well as improving your handling skills.

## **3) What tip could you pass on to others starting out wanting to owner handle?**

Be observant, ask questions, go to obedience class as well as handling classes, work with your dog as well as have play time. Showing should be fun for both you and your dog but in this dog sport, you really have to have thick skin. Never listen to gossip as it sometimes is difficult to hear and may not be true or taken out of context and whatever you hear, always keep to yourself because if someone tells you something it can be not true. Make sure to have someone that is trustworthy to talk to and never talk bad ringside as people can hear you. If something bothers you, how you as a handler can improve on, or something happened at a show, talk about it in the car with windows down or at home. For Junior Handlers, if you lose, always ask the judge what you can improve on as a handler or what you did wrong in the ring and ALWAYS congratulate the winner in Breed as well as Junior Showmanship. Never give up because in the long run, it will all be worth it and if there is a new comer, always go up to the person, introduce yourself, and offer to assist if they need help.

*GDR would like to thank Mikie for taking the time to answer our questions.*