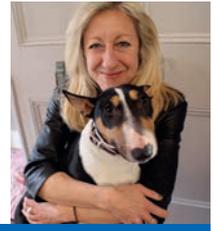


Going for Bronze

Prudence challenges the Mini Bull's 'untrainable' reputation. Owner **Anna Webb** explains.



ABOUT ANNA

Dog and cat lover Anna Webb is the co-presenter of BBC London's 'The Barking Hour'. She also appeared regularly on 'The Alan Titchmarsh Show'. Find out more at www.annawebb.co.uk

Being a bit of a stage-school mother, I hope that Prudence will score a hat-trick, by achieving the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Good Citizen Dog Scheme Awards. These test the fundamental skills that make a good canine citizen.

We waited until we could go to Alpha Dog Training in Finsbury Park, where I'd taken these Kennel Club tests before. Unfortunately, less than 24 hours before our Bronze test, my trusty Mini Cooper fell victim to the hottest day of the year — steam billowing like fog from under the bonnet indicating that the cooling system was kaput.

The breakdown put paid to our agility lesson, cunningly planned as practice for the Bronze test, but we could still get there by bus, stopping en route

to the bus stop to admire some cool doggy street art.

ALL ABOARD

Prudence leaped on board her first double-decker London bus like a seasoned traveller, delighted to be off the hot pavement, and negotiated the tight staircase to the upper deck without a second glance. Taking the best seats at the front, she sat transfixed with intense concentration, as if she was driving.

She wasn't terribly impressed with having to

disembark, and even less so with our mad dash across Finsbury Park. We arrived with 30 seconds to spare, both panting like trains. Prudence slurped her cool water with exaggerated infantile noises, just to make sure everyone noticed we'd arrived.

Looking around, I sensed rebellion in Prudence. If the seven other participants weren't distraction enough, Finsbury Park was in summer mode. How on earth could I compete with the aroma of a nearby barbecue, let alone all the sound and movement from joggers, acrobats, jugglers, and other dogs, which had caught Prudence's eye?



TESTING TIMES

Without any treats or toys to motivate her, the only trick I had up my sleeve was my own enthusiasm. Singing our 'walking song', I jollied her along to make a decent job of our loose-lead, straight-line walking with sharp turns.

The vet examination and grooming parts of the test, alongside her show ring practice and the individual attention from our examiner, Grahame Godby, meant Prudence was centre stage, so we got a pass.

Struggling to contain my nerves, we lined up for the one-whole-minute stay. We were now at the mercy of Prudence's whims. At all costs, I had to remain humble. As the only Mini Bull attempting any of the tests that day, Prudence was flying the flag for the 'untrainable'.

Devilishly, she stood up from her sit but, miraculously, she

didn't move from her spot. Responding like an obedient dog, on cue to my hand signal, she sat again. Against the odds, we passed that challenge too.

As the penultimate pair to attempt the recall, there was nothing else I could do but act the dramatic clown to tap into Prudence's sense of humour. Unclipping her lead, she gave me that 'maybe I will, maybe I won't' look.

FLYING FINISH

I ran away from her, arms akimbo, calling her, and simultaneously reaching into my bra, where I occasionally keep some dogs treats! None were there, but Pru didn't know that.

Her flying cannonball run was direct; there was no taking the scenic route and no lackadaisical attitude... meaning we totally passed our Bronze!