

# SPORTS & LEISURE

## Roper & Snook look for Swiss delight

*First trip to world championships of dog agility training*

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Staff Writer

Whoever came up with the saying that it really is a dog's life, after all, likely hasn't met Roper, the six-year-old Australian Kelpie.

A tireless competitor who has gained an international ranking for his performances at recent Agility Association of Canada Championships with proud owner and handler Nicky Snook of Georgetown, Roper does get well rewarded for his efforts.

"He's an athlete, so he does get the massage and chiropractic treatments and the best food-holistic blend," said Snook at the Campaign Dog Academy in northwest Georgetown, where Roper lives and trains. "Any athlete would take good care of their bodies and you do that for your dog. We've been lucky with injuries but I'm also very paranoid. If there's one little thing that doesn't seem right, I get him checked out."

Roper and the 34-year-old Snook are jet-setting off to Basel, Switzerland this week for the Federation Cynologique International world championships as part of the 10-member Canadian team. While it appears Roper lives a pampered lifestyle, Snook has spent the past four years training him for this Swiss experience of a lifetime, where they'll be competing in the Maxi Division in a stadium filled with about 10,000 spectators, with entries coming from 34 other countries.



Georgetown's Nicky Snook and her six-year-old Kelpie Roper are in Switzerland for next week's world agility championships. Having won the national championship for the 26-inch division last year and placed runner-up this past summer, the duo hope to be in the running for medals as part of the Canadian Agility Team.  
*Photo by Eamonn Maher*

Many athletes don't enjoy practising, but the obedient Roper gleefully navigates through an elaborate obstacle course in the academy's show ring, taking direction from Snook as if he's reading her mind.

But Roper is not spoiled, and despite having a "spooky and neurotic" personality for a while, Snook said he now has excellent temperament. At the recent Canadian championships in Burnaby, B.C., the duo looked to be in excellent position to defend their national title until a slip-up in the last event caused them to

finish just a few points shy of the winner, having to settle for second place.

"It wasn't his fault. I had some issues and sent him through the wrong jump," lamented Snook. "But he did win a couple of classes out there and was fourth and fifth in others, so he was happy. Roper has come a long way."

In Switzerland, the dog-and-handler combinations will get two attempts to run through a standard course, and are awarded points for successfully passing through each of the obstacles, which include

jumps, tunnels, A-frames and weave poles. The top three results from each country will then move on to the team event for medal contention.

Ironically, Roper will enjoy a family reunion of sorts when the, ahem, CAT contingent boards an Air France plane for the overseas trip. His litter-mate and brother, Infinity, was also selected to attend the worlds with handler Teresa Rector of Paris, Ont., Snook said she's fallen in love with the breed and is awaiting the birth of her fourth Kelpie next year.

"They're very intelligent and intense, but it's a different type of intensity from the boarder collie," she said. "Kelpies are very sensitive and have a fine line, but once they get it that what they're doing with agility is actually fun, they're great, and they have memories like elephants."

This is Snook's first trip to the worlds with her dog, and after the jaunt to B.C. for the nationals, she's done it at considerable expense, even with some sponsors. She worked for years in the horse industry, but because that meant weekend duty and prevented her from competing in shows with the dogs, she's now employed at a container manufacturing company in Milton.

"Roper's in his prime and I thought about it for a while and you wonder if he'll ever get another chance after this one," she added. "Anything can happen. I've lost dogs to medical problems at a young age and you just never know. Then again, he might go to another three world championships."

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### Four receive Lee Award

Each year, four players from the Georgetown Soccer Club's youth house leagues are presented with the Steven Lee Memorial Award for their fair play and sportsmanship. The award was created in memory of Lee, a coach and avid soccer player who died of cancer at age 43. Pictured above, Marta Lee shows Laura Sturridge the permanent plaque that hangs in the GSC office as Colin Bijaoui (far left) and Scott Miedema look on. At right is the other award recipient, Hollie Stoyles.

*Submitted photos*



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