



Photo by Todd Minnella

Anna the Farmdog



Anna the Farmdog, owned and handled by Sally Frankel, enjoys the title of the current U-FLI™ Top Dog with 13,860 points. Anna is a Danish/Swedish Farmdog, a breed that dates back to the Vikings. Anna's Father was the first US born and from a litter of one; Anna is the 10th US born Danish/Swedish Farmdog.

InsideFlyball: What is Anna's full name and nicknames?

Anna's Mom: Flora's Lady Eva Annelise. She is also known as: The Banana, Little Varmint, Freckle Belly Hound, Flea and Dozer (her first name because she would bulldoze her way into the best teat and then doze off to sleep). My husband still calls her Dozer. It took me three months to figure out her name. Flora is her grandmother and also her kennel name. That one was a given. Since Anna is a Danish/Swedish Farmdog I was trying to find a name that was both Danish and Swedish. Eva and Annelise fit the bill. Months after Anna came to live with us I realized that her initials spelled FLEA.



Anna's a Rescue Dog. She rescued me!

—Sally Frankel, Anna's Mom

InsideFlyball: Tell us the story about how Anna became part of your family.

Anna's Mom: Anna is from a litter of three and all three play Flyball as well as her Mother, Father and Grandmother. The day that Anna was born over 30 people on the waiting list received an e-mail telling us of the birth and announcing the three lucky parents. When I arrived at Mel's house (the breeder) she fed me dinner and then asked if I wanted to take Anna back to the hotel to spend the night. It was so exciting! Anna spent the whole night running into the bathroom to bark at the strange puppy in the mirror. She watched TV and played with her new toys. She wasn't crate trained yet, and when I tried to put her in she howled and wined. The hotel didn't allow dogs and my room was located right next door to the office. So I held her in my arms all night and was afraid to fall asleep for fear of crushing her.



Early the next morning I received a phone call from my stepdaughter telling me that they couldn't come get me because they had to evacuate their house due to the Southern California wildfires. They didn't fly up and I couldn't get home. I tried to cut my trip short and fly home but ended up spending the whole day in the San Jose Airport. That evening Mel called me to make sure that I got home and when I told her I was still there she came to the airport to pick me up, took me out to dinner, washed my clothes and gave me a warm bed to sleep in. But the best part I got to be with Anna and her siblings an extra day. We drove to Fresno to a Flyball tournament to pick up Anna when she was 11 weeks old. I waited a bit longer so that I could take vacation time to be with her; the delay also gave me a little more time to work on my husband. He didn't want another dog, let alone a small dog. He was so mad at me but he did drive with me and our Chessie, Rags to pick up Anna. He tried so hard to ignore Anna for about three months and refused to call her by her name (that's why he calls her dozer), but Anna won him over and now he is one of her biggest fans.

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InsideFlyball: Was Anna a natural at Flyball or difficult to train?

Anna's Mom: Anna was very easy to train. She is very focused and she loves to tug more than anything in the world. Anna's favorite position is on the end of a tug. I am truly convinced that the reason Anna was the last in her litter to be born was because she was too busy tugging on the umbilical cord. Anna can run any position; it is her human mother that has a hard time starting. She watches the judge and knows when the race is going to start, she knows my visual and takes off on cue. She knows when the judge blows the whistle that there is a false start and she settles down until she sees the judges hand point towards the lights or she sees the blue light goes on. Then she starts barking at the dogs behind her to hurry up and get this race going so she can run.

InsideFlyball: You practice with more than one team and live far away from one of the teams. How often are you able to practice?

Anna's Mom: In the beginning I practiced every day with ball retrieves and clicker training. I live in a small beach community and we don't have yards so any practice had to be someplace else. At first we used a large grass area in the middle of an on-ramp to a bridge. It has several large Palm trees around the perimeter. I would tie a 100 foot long-line around a tree trunk in the center and place balls on the ground about 75 feet on one side of the tree, then I would take Anna about 50 feet on the other side to release her. She would run 125 feet to get a ball and return to me as I ran in the opposite direction with the tug. I was able to figure out which way she would turn and condition her at the same

time. When she was older I tried adding 2" jumps. When she was five months old I began practicing during the week with two former Woof Gang teammates (Lisa Heitmiller and Melinda Dayhuff). Other than Anna's breeder giving her a great start, Lisa Heitmiller, was the one person that helped me the most with Anna's training. If she didn't know what to do, she would call Katy Kaylor for advice. Katy knew my dog several months before she met me. Both Anna and I were like sponges wanting to learn everything we could. We first worked on getting her to single stride and when she was fully grown we started on box work. Tuesdays I would practice with Lisa and Melinda and later with Sue Cone from Orange Crush (she has Tillie, Anna's Aunt). On Friday nights I would practice with the Woof Gang (close to my home) and on Saturday and Sunday I would practice with a new team that was forming in Palm Springs called 2 Fast 4 Paws. Later I started going to San Diego to practice with Lickety Splits on Sundays. All these practices were at different places, with different dogs, and all required many hours of driving. Anna never got distracted and we never had a problem with her focus. Now I try to practice on Fridays with Woof Gang and once a month I drive to San Diego (200 miles roundtrip) to practice with Lickety Splits. We have been running in about one tournament a month.



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InsideFlyball: Tell us something about Anna that makes her especially wonderful to you and others.

Anna's Mom: Anna seems to understand people and dogs and she treats them accordingly. She is very clam around our old, lame dog and wild around healthy dogs. When Anna was six months old I was at a Flyball tournament in Madera. This was the first time she had been together again with her mother, father, grandmother, brother, sister and two aunts. She was so wild and happy to greet any person inquiring about her. A young women who apparently had Downs Syndrome came up to me to ask about Anna. Anna sensed that she was different from all the other people she had greeted that weekend and was very calm and cuddly with the woman. I was holding her in my arms and could feel the calm come over her. I knew then I was holding something very special and was the luckiest person in the world.

InsideFlyball: What tournament stands out in your mind and why?

Anna's Mom: Anna's first debut was in Logandale eight days after she turned a year old. She ran third on Lickety Splits Division 1 team. Anna had only run with dogs in the other lane a couple of times; I had just met the members of the team about a month prior to her first race. I had to learn how to pass and how to get out of the way at that tournament. None of us knew if Anna would be able to compete or not. The first heat was a scene from a "Keystone Cops" movie; the whole team fell apart. But the next heat and everyone after was flawless. Anna earned her FD, FDX, and FDCh in her first tournament weekend.



Photo by Todd Minnella, Cape by Sally Frankel

InsideFlyball: Anna has the energy of three dogs. In addition to Flyball, what else does she do?

Anna's Mom: In the beginning I wanted to focus just on Flyball and when she had that down I would try other sports. We started Canine Freestyle with Carolyn Scott last year but we haven't been able to practice or do much because time and life circumstances don't permit it at this time. Plus Anna barks at me because I am way too slow. We did a little Go-to-Ground her first year, but because she is not an AKC breed she was not able to title. Anna placed 2nd at Wags Obstacle Lure coursing the last two years. She really loves that thing. We just started beginning agility classes. Anna passed her herding instinct testing at Wags when she was 10 months old. And outside of dog-related sports, Anna frequently goes with me to visit my mother at a Senior living facility (and visited my father in a convalescent hospital before he passed) so she is an un-official therapy dog and very entertaining to the residents.

InsideFlyball: What is in Anna's future?



Anna's Mom: It looks as if Anna will soon be an only child. She seems to know that her time with Rags, our Chesapeake Bay Retriever, is growing shorter. She plays with her more and cuddles with her frequently. Instead of trying to be the Alpha dog, she seems to allow Rags to hold that title until the end.

Some day I would like to field train Anna for hunting. If we add another Chesapeake I will more than likely field train them both. I hope to get back into Canine Freestyle and continue with some Agility. Anna's sister is doing tracking that might be fun to do also. And maybe some day we will try our hand at herding. There is nothing more exciting then to see dogs doing what they were bred to do. The dogs love it and it shows. As far as Flyball we are hoping to earn the Top Flight Expert Milestone Plaque (20,000 pts) by the Wags for Wishes tournament this year.

When asked to describe how Anna makes Sally feel, her response was more than touching: I love how good Anna feels curled up in my lap and next to me when we sleep. She offers so much comfort and an escape from the difficulties in my life at this time. Her focus and dedication to me is so special; we make a pretty good team; just like the cowboy and his horse. We need each other.



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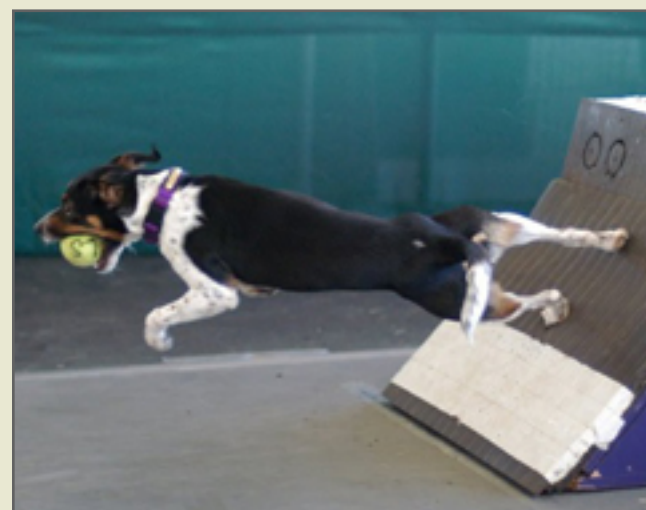


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