

Dave Imas, Cheney, WA

About a month before moving from to Olympia, Washington from Campbell, California I stopped in at the San Mateo Animal Shelter and fell in love with a red and white pup. I had no idea it was an Australian Cattle Dog nor what that would eventually mean. A year or so later it was painfully evident this young dog needed a job and that was the beginning of a long sordid life path change.

Other than fitness, we don't have special preparation for the Finals. When we work at home I look for the same level of work I expect on a trial field. This allows me to not have to hope for "the best run of our lives." If we do the same work at the Finals that we do when gathering a field to put sheep to bed in the evening I know we will be fine.

Tip has a number of traits that have allowed him to be very successful. First, he generalizes well. Doesn't matter the field or the terrain, he understands his job is to find his sheep and bring them to me. No fuss, no muss. Controlled and in a workmanlike fashion. Another trait is his ability to read sheep. About the time the lift is finished Tip has sorted what he will need to do to bring the sheep down the field. Range ewes, farm flock, Katahdins, Cheviots... Tip seems to manage them all differently without much guidance from me. Lastly, he is a tremendous partner and an absolute joy to travel with and be around. He makes my heart swell.

Beyond finding the right dog, when we are starting out I believe finding the right mentor is extremely important. Work with someone you admire... admire the way they run a dog or train or is where you want to be from a success perspective. We often find ourselves working with someone that is one chapter ahead of us in the manual and that can be limiting. Not from lack of effort but just because we don't know what we don't know. I've been extremely fortunate to have a number of incredibly generous people take me under their wing and help me with trialing, training, attitude, perspective, etiquette... Different people at different times... I found them, they found me... If you demonstrate to people you are serious and working hard they will bend over backwards to help you. I'm not sure how we all came together but I can't begin to thank them for everything they have given me and I can't begin to tell you how important it is.