

See how this aquatic Afghan Hound rewrote the record books with one big jump.

The Afghan Hound is an ancient breed, honed over centuries to help hunters chase game through the desert. Four-thousand-year-old images of the majestic dogs on the tail of gazelle and hares have been discovered in Afghanistan caves.

Spin forward to today, and Afghans have not changed much. They are still elegant with flowing hair and astounding speed.

Wonder is no exception and carries the prey drive of her ancestors.

When no deer or

rabbits entered her yard in South Carolina, she turned her attention to the most prevalent creature—dragonflies. The buzzing and darting of the insects put her into high gear. She chased them relentlessly.

Owner Karin Shapiro admired her skill one day while she stalked a bug.

“Suddenly, I saw Wonder jump and clear my 6-foot fence into my neighbor’s yard after the dragonfly. She cleared it effortlessly without much momentum, and I knew she could jump very high,” Shapiro says.



BY PENNY LEIGH

TROUBLED WATERS

Despite a difficult start to her life and a long journey to her permanent home, Wonder maintained a great attitude and willingness to try new things.

About 12 years ago, the Afghan Hound Rescue of Southern California learned about homeless Afghans in Korea and began working with a rescue group there. They also hooked up with an Afghan-owning veterinarian, who taught at a veterinary college in that country, Blount recalls.

In 2015, a connection sent Blount a photograph. “It was the most heartbreaking little face, pleading for help.

Once she retrieved Wonder, Shapiro, a long-time dog-sports enthusiast, looked at her swimming pool and thought Wonder might have a new career. This desert hound has a distinct trait not found in most Afghans—she likes to swim.

A year later, Wonder became the first—and only—Afghan Hound to earn a title with North America Diving Dogs (NADD) with a best jump of 18-feet-9-inches. Her 2018 average was 17 feet 7 inches.

“I have never heard of or seen another dock diving Afghan,” says Sandy Blount, manager of Afghan Hound Rescue of Southern California. “She is unique in more ways than one.”



She looked so cold on that cement floor. She was probably 7 months old. Of course, we took her.”

Wonder arrived in the United States shortly after. “She was totally unaffected by the flight and everything her life previous held. She was outgoing, playful, and fit right in with my dogs,” Blount says.

On the opposite coast, Shapiro was in search of her next dog. Shapiro has had a successful career in agility and obedience with a Labrador Retriever and Border Collies, but her heart belongs to Afghans.

“I have always been captivated by Afghans. I wanted one when I was a kid. They are so regal, and they are not aloof as many people

believe,” she says. “They have that side, but they are also loving.”

Her first Afghan, Fury, who was born in a shelter, earned the AKC Master Agility Championship in 2001 and appeared on the *Late Show with David Letterman*.

Shapiro wanted another rescue Afghan, and a friend found Wonder on the internet. “She said ‘This dog looks athletic. Check her out.’” Shapiro recalls. “As soon as I saw her, I knew she was the one.”

But there were barriers. The Afghan Hound Rescue of Southern California has a policy of not adopting out of state. If the situation does not work out, they want to get the

Take a Leap

Whether you have a Newfoundland who lives to dog paddle or a lap-lounging Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, you can still participate—and earn titles—in the sport of dock diving.

Canines of all kinds—purebreds or mixed-breeds—are welcome in the pool, according to the North America Diving Dogs (NADD), an organization that promotes a sport in which taking a flying leap off a pier is not only encouraged, it’s rewarded with titles and ribbons. NADD titles are recognized by the AKC through its title recognition program.

If you are interested in trying this fast and fun sport, visit the NADD website (northamericadivingdogs.com), which offers a list of permanent facilities that have diving pools, classes, and competitions. The site also offers instructional videos on the fundamental skills needed to participate, such as ramp work, jumping, and throwing a toy (there’s a right and wrong way to do it to motivate a diving dog).

dog back easily.

Shapiro was pleading with Blount when the two realized that they met years ago at an Afghan national specialty.

“It was one of the first AKC agility trials, and Sandy had seen how well my dogs did,” Shapiro

recalls. “She said ‘You can adopt her. She is a handful. She stole a melon off my table today and needs someone who can keep her busy.’”

RIPPLE EFFECT

On March 13, 2016, Shapiro picked up Wonder at the airport and the

puppy settled into her new home.

Wonder became curious about the pool while watching Shapiro’s Border Collies swim.

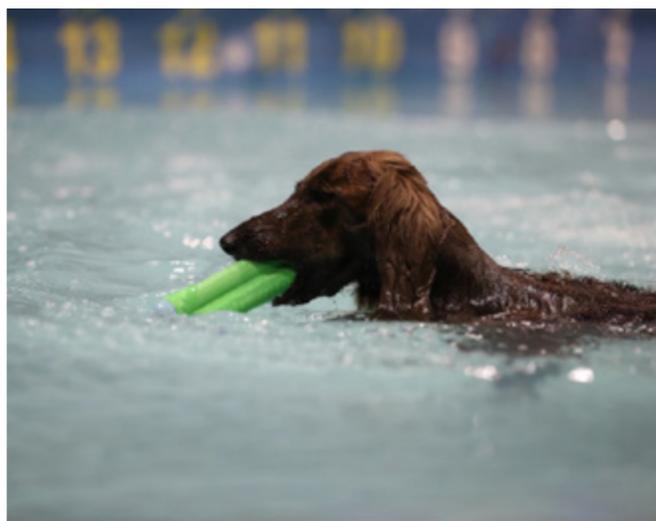
“Her first entry into my pool, I placed a vest on her. It has a handle on top, so I held onto it, guiding her into the

water, first introducing the steps. I took her around in a circle and towards the stairs, showing the way out. She learned quickly and, before you know it, was swimming with her buds.”

After witnessing her catapult over the fence, Shapiro taught Wonder to retrieve a bumper.

“I started holding a toy above my head to see if she would jump up and grab it. She did, going straight up effortlessly. ... She still does this as a fun warm-up.”

Wonder began jumping off the side of the pool, so Shapiro took the plunge and had a dock built into her pool. When



Wonder jumped confidently off the dock, they entered a NADD competition at Teamworks Dog Training in North Carolina.

ONE BIG SPLASH

“I didn’t have any expectations—I just had fun. I never expected Wonder would win first place in her division and qualify for the nationals.”

The team compet-

ed in December at the NADD Championships in Orlando, Florida, establishing another first as the only Afghan Hound to compete at the event. Wonder was nervous with the loud indoor atmosphere, having only jumped in her backyard and smaller outdoor competitions. But Shapiro played with her, tugging the bumper, and the nervous energy

soon dissolved.

When Wonder’s turn came, she bound down the dock and into the air, hair flying.

Her best jump was 18-feet-6-inches, and she placed in the top quarter of the 150-plus dogs in the Open Senior division.

Shapiro hopes to qualify 3-year-old Wonder again for the championships and try lure coursing and agility.

“I am so grateful Sandy realized Wonder needed a home where she would get training and an outlet for her willingness and drive,” she says. “I call her my Wonder Girl, and I tell her every day that she is wonderful.” **FD**

Penny Leigh is the program manager of the AKC GoodDog! Helpline and a competitor in several dog sports with her canine team.

familydog 41st Annual Photo Contest



Think your dog has that certain “star quality”?

Are you an accomplished shutterbug (or aspiring to be one)?

Then we invite you to enter our **41st Annual Photo Contest**. It can be an elegant portrait, an image of your dog with his best buddy (that’s you!), or a lively action shot—creativity, quality, and originality are the only parameters.

Well, there are a few rules, too.

For rules and additional details, go to akc.org/products-services/magazines/family-dog/photo-contest/rules.

So start snapping!

DEADLINE:

The 2019 AKC Photo Contest began on April 15, 2019. Entries must be postmarked by January 31, 2020, and received no later than February 7, 2020.

SEND ENTRIES TO:

AKC Magazines Photo Contest
The American Kennel Club
101 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10178
or Email: photocontest@akc.org

PRIZES:

First Place **\$500**
Second Place **\$250**
Third Place **\$150**