



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB



Dog and Handler Overcome Injury to Return to Agility Competition After Nearly Two Years

By [Melanie Haid](#)
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[Agility](#) is an athletic endeavor for both dog and handler. Taking care of your body and your dog's are equally important, but for many, rehabilitation is the key to getting back out there in the ring. So what happens when you *and* your dog are out of commission? If you're anything like Connie Griffith and her six-year-old [Poodle](#) Streak, you get back up and you keep going.

After a nearly two year hiatus overcoming injury and illness, Connie and MACH Safranne's Silver Streak IIMXS MJS OF CA ("Streak") are returning to this year's [AKC National Agility Championship](#) (NAC), taking place in Tulsa, Oklahoma from March 16-19, 2023. After what they've both had to endure, it's no small feat.

A Promising Career From the Start

Griffith initially bred and showed [Doberman Pinschers](#) for about 18 years, but married a person who was afraid of large dogs. Over the years, they had an All-American Dog, a [Scottish Terrier](#), and Griffith eventually started another mixed-breed dog in agility. She found that her latest agility prospect dog was anxious around loud noises and wasn't an ideal fit for the sport, so she pivoted her plans and sought out another prospect. In doing so, Griffith found Streak.



Streak with some of her ribbons

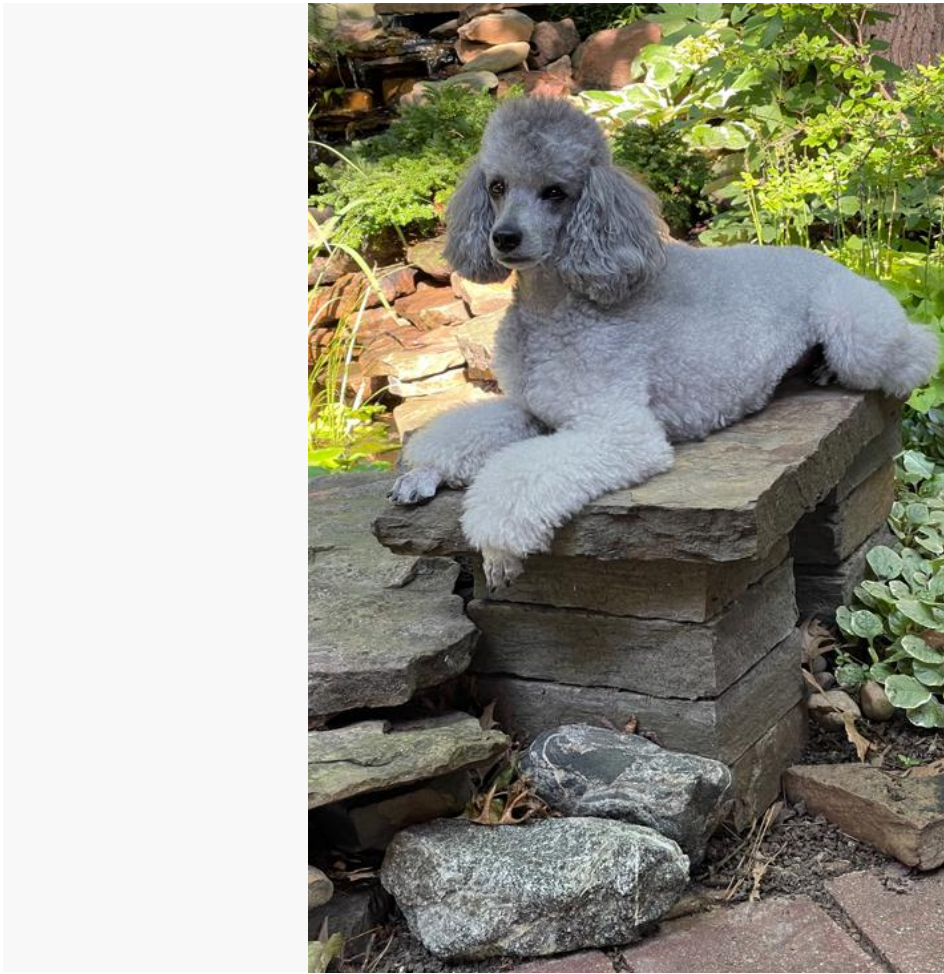
Connie Griffith

From the start, he was talented. He finished with his Masters in Agility Champion before he was two-years-old, and has found a great deal of success in agility during his life. Griffith started training with him at just nine weeks old, starting with groundwork. As he matured he was jumping, weaving and collecting ribbons across all kinds of courses.

Pressing Pause on Competing

Griffith first noticed something was wrong in September of 2019, when Streak was stutter-stepping at a trial. It took awhile before he was officially diagnosed, but at the [European Open](#) (EO) tryouts, she had to pull him from competing. The veterinarian there said that he had an Iliopsoas injury in his leg, that the injured muscle was very tight and that if he continued competing, he'd be out for good.

[All Star Dog Sports](#), a group Griffith is part of in Blue Spring, Kansas, has been instrumental in getting Streak back at it. Two trainers helped him rehabilitate, along with acupuncture, chiropractic work, PT work and specialized exercises. She believes Streak was originally injured running in a large field by their home where they often train.



Connie Griffith

Streak enjoys relaxing and running around outside just as much as she loves agility

“He’s a runner, he loves it,” Griffith said, “But he was definitely hurt from that. He’s very energetic, extremely active – very uninhibited when it comes to his body.”

Slowly, Streak worked his way back up to [12-inches jump height](#). They also use a laser-wrap coat to help with healing and prevent further injury.

Setbacks for Owner and Dog Alike

Just when it looked like Streak was going to be able to return to the ring, more problems arose – this time, for Griffith. She thought she’d had a hamstring injury after competing in Topeka in 2021, but the injury was actually to her back. After some procedures, she was still limited in what they could do together. She focused with Streak on groundwork mainly, and had another surgery in December 2022.

She had planned to participate in NAC last year, but days before the event, a friend accidentally gave her COVID-19. The illness prolonged her and Streak’s return even further.

“The first one was a little more difficult,” Griffith said regarding her surgeries. “The second one was a lot easier. But I planned that in the fall so I would have January and

February to recover.” Now, she and Streak are back again, competing in this year’s AKC National Agility Championship.

Working Towards Their Goals

Griffith said she’s had to be realistic about the future for her and Streak in the ring since these injuries. “It’s disappointing for me,” she said. “My goal of wanting to be on a world team might not ever manifest, and I’m okay with that.”

She says that no matter what, she’s still excited to be continuing to compete and bond with Streak. The connections she’s made over the years in agility have created a second family for her, and she wants to keep going.



Connie and Streak won first place at an AKC Agility Trial.

“I would just like to enjoy this sport with my dog as long as I can, I just love it so much. I want him to be healthy and I want to be healthy.”

Agility at All Ages

Continuing in the sport over the last few years definitely hasn’t come without challenges.

“It’s a great sport for people our age” She said, but it doesn’t come without issues.

“When things happen to our bodies, we get creative. We love the sport so much – it keeps you physically fit and keeps your mind sharp.”

Though people of all ages participate in agility, Griffith warns people not to underestimate competitors over 50. (The average age of AKC Agility competitors is between 45 and 55.) Griffith says she feels much younger than she is, and hopes more young people will become involved in agility.

“It’s a rewarding thing to do with your family dog, and it becomes so important in your relationship because they really do bond to you and you bond to them.”

Head to [AKC.tv](https://www.akc.tv) to watch the 2023 AKC National Agility Championship on March 17, 18, and 19. Finals of the AKC National Agility Championship will air on the ESPN family of networks this spring.