

NIGEL WATKINS, WALES

Home: Llanddeusant, South Wales

Occupation: Farmer

Accomplishments: Three-time Welsh National Champion (2002, 2005, 2010); Reserve World Champion 2005

Dog: Jody (ISDS 290743) and Floss (ISDS 254392) – Reigning Welsh Champion

A man who knows the agony and ecstasy of sheepdog trialling is 14-time Welsh National team member, Nigel Watkins. A three-time winner of the Welsh National Championship, Nigel came within two points of winning the 2005 World Sheep Dog Trial in Tullamore, Ireland. Second that day behind Gordon Watt (England), Nigel well knows the pain of defeat. But the rewards for those who persevere often outweigh the pain that precedes victory, and so Nigel has persisted. In fact, in 2010, he not only won the Welsh National Championship, he also qualified two dogs to run in this year's World Trial in Cumbria – Floss, the matriarch of Nigel's farm, and youngster, Jody. Nigel and Floss captain a star-studded Welsh team at the 2011 World Trial.

Nigel grew up in a farming family and farms, with his partner, Janet, more than 1,000 Brecknock Hill Cheviot ewes and a 100 head of cattle on the beautiful Black Mountains. His trialling career now spans three decades and in this time, he has amassed a superb record on the trial field.

Nigel first qualified for the Welsh team back in 1988 and he has been a regular team member ever since. Peg, the Reserve World Champion in 2005, made the Welsh team every year from 1998 to 2004. She gave Nigel his first Welsh Championship in 2002. His second and third National Championships were won with Floss. With Floss, Nigel was 13th at the 2008 World Trial.

Now reaching an age where most dogs are happily pottering about the farm teaching youngsters, or sitting by the fire on a cold winter's night, Floss is leading a canine campaign against age discrimination in the workplace. She clearly has her own ideas on a mandatory retirement age and Nigel is happy for her to continue, so long as she is happy and healthy. In all likelihood, this will be one of her last appearances on an international stage and clearly Nigel will be aiming for the top prize. After all, it would not only be a fitting end to an exceptional competitive partnership but also it would represent a perfect juxtaposition between agony and ecstasy – a place Nigel knows only too well.



Further information: The 2011 World Trials at Lowther Park Estate, near Penrith, from September 15-18, are expected to attract up to 30,000 people and inject £2m-plus into the local economy. Competitors will include trialists from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Faroes, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA. Qualifying rounds will take place on three separate fields on the first two days of the trials, with the top seven from each field on the opening days going forward to the semi-final on the Saturday. The top 16 of these qualify for the final on the Sunday, from which a world champion will emerge.

Further info: World Trials PRO Robin Moule, Moule Media, on 01756-794027, mobile 07976-559961, e-mail: robin@moulemedia.com