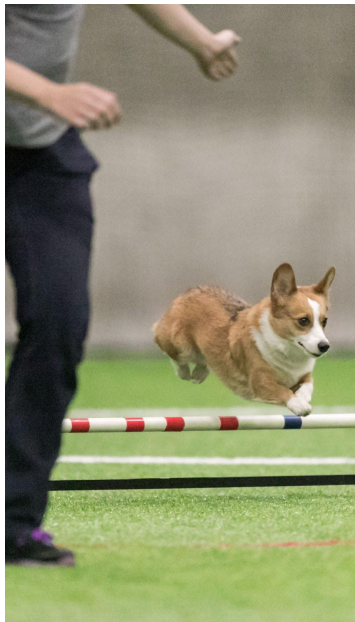




AKC Competitor

A mobile app strategy for the dog world

Design Challenge by Lacey Kobriger



Understanding the problem

Sport events are an important part of the American Kennel Club (“AKC”)’s mission statement and business. Although most events are run through local breed clubs, these events are governed and tracked by the AKC.

In recent years, attendance for events has declined. The AKC has focused on rule changes to encourage new competitors, but hasn’t done anything to improve the experience at or around events.

There is an opportunity for technology to help improve show entries and connect new people with the fancy. A mobile app could be a helpful part the AKC overcoming this challenge.

In the last 10 years

Fewer dogs are earning novice titles in AKC sports

-25%

Shrinking novice entries mean fewer people are getting started in sports.

There are fewer AKC sanctioned events

-10%

Fewer events means less revenue for breed clubs and the AKC.

Fewer people are earning titles in AKC Obedience

-24%

Obedience has been hit the hardest and has seen the greatest reduction in participation and earned titles.

The AKC currently does not have an app geared towards dog sport competitors

The AKC website does not serve dog sport competitors well. Signing up for an event may require a lot of digging on breed club or 3rd party websites to find the information needed to register. Although several factors have contributed to a decline in attendance, the reliance on hard to find paper forms has not helped.

In contrast, the UK Kennel Club has several online entry services for their events. The number of events and participants has increased in the UK over the last 10 years.



AKC's Goals

Attract new competitors

The current competitor demographic skews older and fewer new people are getting involved in sports. New competitors are critical to the continued success of performance events and the AKC.

Increase participation in sports

Despite adding several new sports and titles in the past 10 years, the amount of events, participation, and awareness has declined. Fewer people are getting started in dog sports and staying involved than in previous years.

Reduce manual record keeping

Entering events, running events, and processing scores is still a very manual process. Increasing accuracy and decreasing processing time will offer a better competitor experience. Reducing the amount of human labor needed would also be a cost savings to breed clubs and the AKC.

Who should this experience serve?



PERSONA

New Competitor

New competitors may also be new to purebred dogs. Typically looking for a fun way to spend time with their dogs or build their skill as dog trainers.

SUCCESS IS

- Having fun with their dog.
- Finding a new sport they want to continue to grow in.
- Making new friends with similar interests.
- Becoming more confident in their abilities.
- Learning new skills.

CHALLENGES

- Not sure how to get started in sports they are interested in.
- Learning how to fill out paper entry forms for each new sport.
- Not sure what to expect the day of the event or where to get help.
- Long wait times at events - novice events are typically the last events of the day.
- There is a steep learning curve for each new sport which can make it challenging for newcomers to reach their goals.



PERSONA

Veteran Competitor

Spends years training their dogs in order to compete in different events. Although competing can still be stressful, veteran competitors generally know what to expect at an event.

SUCCESS IS

- Bonding with their dogs and having fun.
- Challenging their skills as a trainer.
- Earning champion titles or competing at regional/national events.
- Reinforcing their reputation as a breeder or competitor.
- Spending time with friends.

CHALLENGES

- Finding events and planning to attend in advance can be challenging.
- “Hurry up and wait” : Hard to know when you will go in the ring so most competitors spend 6+ hours at events each day.
- Tracking progress towards titles is still relatively manual.
- May be handling multiple dogs in a given day.
- Dog events are typically Friday through Sunday, which can make it difficult to balance other responsibilities with events if a competitor is not retired.



PERSONA

Event Volunteer

Either a member of the breed club or a local competitor, volunteers are an important part of a successful event. Volunteers run the event : setting up courses, holding leashes, assisting judges, running information booths, and recording scores.

SUCCESS IS

- Keeping the event running smoothly.
- Keeping competitors organized.
- Supporting their breed club or sport community.
- Gaining experience to be a judge or a better competitor.

CHALLENGES

- First time volunteers may not know all the rules of a sport or how to help.
- Organizing competitors to ensure they are in the ring on time.
- Communicating with competitors is difficult. Most events are run by volunteers yelling across the venue or finding people to speak to one-on-one.
- Events can run long if a competitor is late or if something unexpected happens in the ring.
- Ring schedules are done on paper or whiteboards and are manually updated.

What's the environment like?



ATMOSPHERE, SPACE, PEOPLE

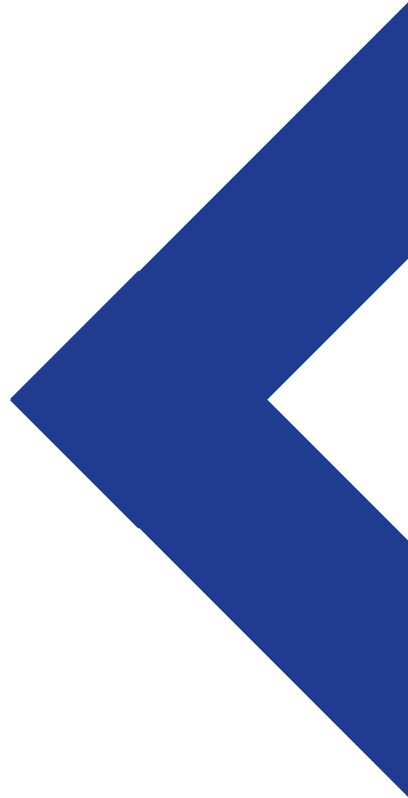
Understanding dog events

- Competitors and volunteers need to be focused on the event, especially when their turn is approaching.
- Most competitors have a smartphone or tablet they bring to events. Many record their runs using these devices.
- Any apps or devices should not be a distraction during a run. Most mute their phones or leave them in crating areas.
- Events can be indoors or outdoors and in a wide variety of settings.
- Wifi isn't always available. Cellular data service may also be limited in some areas/buildings.
- There is no system of communication at these events other than shouting or speaking one-on-one.
- Most events rely on paper and people to record scores and maintain a schedule.

Vision Statement & Road Map

VISION STATEMENT

Create a more **connected event experience** that reduces friction so competitors of any level can reach their goals, have fun, and promote the sport.





AKC Competitor App

WHY AN APP?

- Competitors are often on the go - training, at events, or traveling.
- An app will offer a streamlined experience and allow us to use core mobile features across platforms (e.g. push notifications).
- Has high repeatable value. Easy to reference.

WHAT PLATFORMS?

- iOS & Android phones at launch.
- Support tablets in the future.
- A web portal will be necessary for breed club/event admin.

Start with Finding Events & Signing Up

Make it easy to plan for and attend events

Allowing competitors to be notified of events relevant to them and sign up in the app would likely have a positive impact on attendance.

64% of survey respondents cited planning, travel, and time commitment as barriers to entering events.

Make sign up easier than paper forms

Finding events is a very manual process. Suggesting events that fit a competitor's goals and current progression could make it easier to plan.

31% of survey respondents cited the manual sign up process as a barrier to entering events.

Reduce paperwork for clubs and competitors

Transcribing paper entries into digital systems, printing forms, and mailing documents is costly and time consuming for both clubs and competitors.

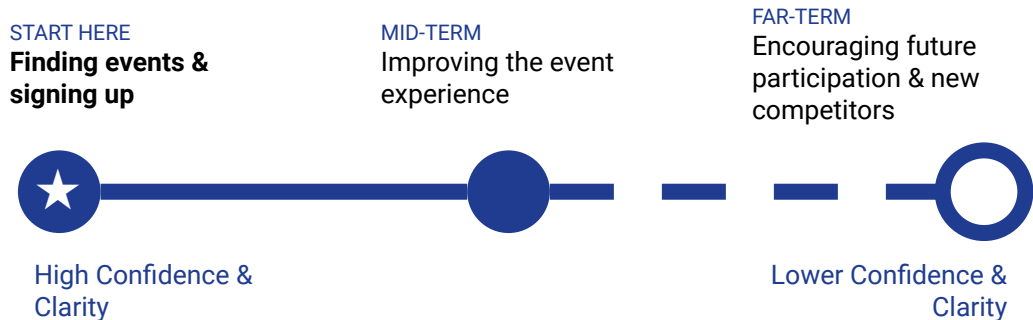
58% of survey respondents still mail in paper entry forms.

Why start here?

Focusing on sign up and finding events is a great way to address some of the biggest user barriers to entering events. This is a high value, narrow feature set that directly relates to our vision statement and goals.

Although there is a lot of potential to address existing pain points with this app, it is important that we listen to and address feedback as we develop this product. Starting with a narrow focus will allow us to iterate smartly and ensure we are solving the right problems in the right way.

Outcomes Roadmap



Help new and existing competitors find and sign up for events that match their interests and skill.

OUTCOMES

- Make it easy to plan for and attend events.
- Make sign up easier than paper forms.
- Reduce paperwork for clubs & competitors.

RISKS

- Unknown complexity integrating with existing legacy systems.
- Helping breed clubs to adopt the digital system.
- Building awareness of the app.

SUCCESS METRICS

- Signing up for an event should take less than 60 seconds.
- Increase the average number of events a competitor attends 12 months post launch.
- Reduce time spent processing entries.
- Reduce mailing costs for breed clubs.

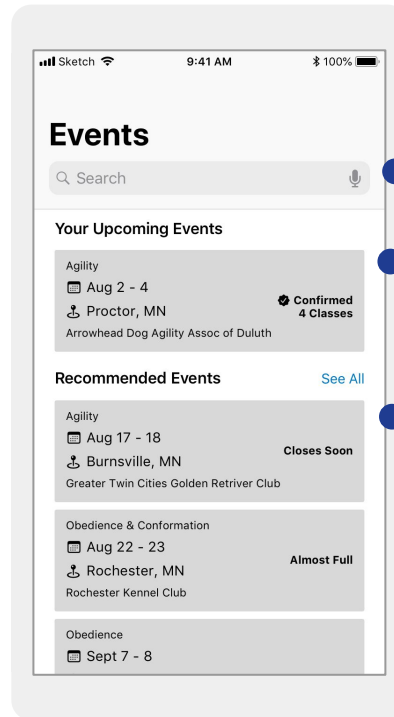
Make it easy to plan for and attend events

FEATURE IDEAS

Show upcoming events tailored to your location, competition history, and goals.

Use push notifications to remind people of upcoming shows or to confirm their entry.

Make judging schedules and event information easy to access.



Search for any event

Upcoming events you have entered

Event recommendations based on your dog breeds, past events, and location

Make sign up easier than paper forms

FEATURE IDEAS

Autofill information about you and your dog already available in your AKC profile.

Clarify what information is needed to make sign up easier for new competitors.

No need to mail an entry form with a check. Integrate with Apple/Android pay and take online payments.

ENTRY FEES	
First Run of the Day	\$36.00
2x, \$18.00	
Additional Runs	\$24.00
2x, \$12.00	
Processing Fee	\$1.00
Total	\$61.00

Autofill information about a dog from the AKC database - user just needs to select what classes to enter

Autofill handler information from AKC profile

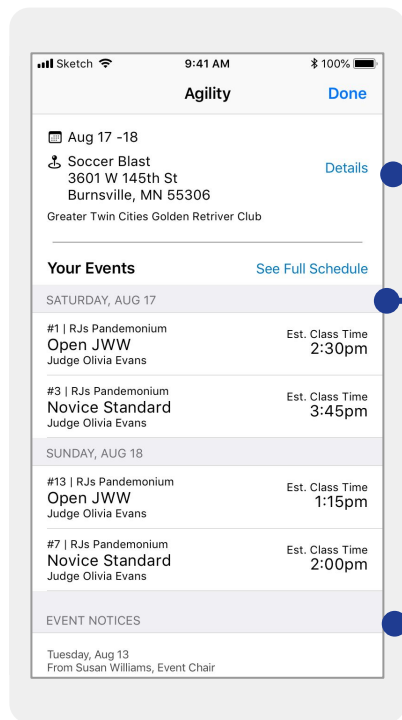
Reduce paperwork for clubs and competitors

FEATURE IDEAS

Reduce the amount of mailers that need to be sent to competitors.

Give breed clubs tools to make entry confirmation and event planning easier.

Submit entries to a unified web dashboard or send entries via email (depending on system capabilities).



Show key details about the event

Make the judging schedule available and show estimated run times

Allow event volunteers and coordinators to share important information about the event

Future Feature Ideas

Near term

Far term

These are ideas for our backlog roughly organized by value, impact, and feasibility.

Display title requirements and visually track progress for each of your dogs.

Create a tablet app to help volunteers organize events, communicate, and track scores.

Give your dogs a public profile that displays titles and awards.

Help people find mentors in their breed or sport.

Use push notifications to alert competitors of newly posted events, entry confirmation, or event updates.

Update estimated run times and event schedules by using tablets/other tools to track the event in real time.

Recommend breed appropriate sports to new dog owners.

Offer discounts to competitors who volunteer at events or sign up for another club event.

Create a web experience for breed clubs to track participation and competitor feedback.

Push scores and event results to competitors in the app.

Help people find local training groups or clubs relevant to their goals.

Explore IoT options to automatically track competitors and dogs in the ring at events for scheduling.

Set your interests and goals for each dogs to get more accurate event recommendations.

Process events faster to help the AKC award new titles in days instead of weeks.

Help people find beginner or 'just for fun' events to introduce them to new activities.

Integrate with fitness trackers.

Product Development is a Journey

Once we have learned enough about the business, the users, and the technology to feel confident about our strategy, the next step would be a 'sprint zero' effort. This would be focused on building a backlog, object maps, and refining our first frame of work.

The product development process should be a cycle of discovery, planning, and delivery. Starting from a focused frame with clear success measures helps us stay focused in a phase of work and have clear next steps to restart the cycle in discovery.

I expect a product like this to evolve as people use our products and offer feedback. There are many tools - analytics, app reviews, contextual research - that can help us move smartly and agilely. This strategy is a starting point to help us move in a direction, learn, and change.

Appendix

RESEARCH

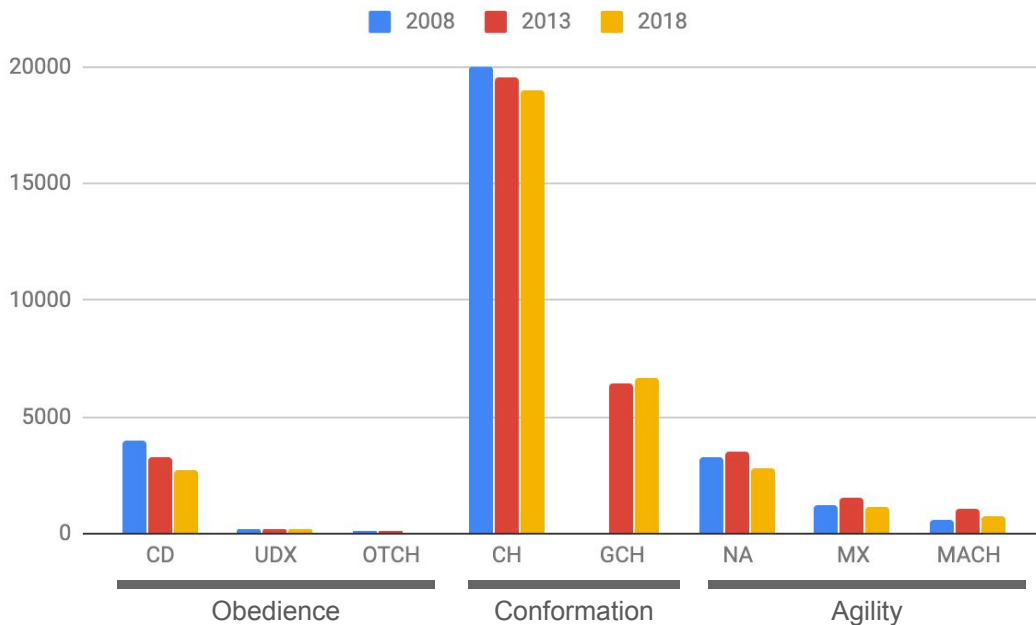
Assessing stats

The AKC has event stats from previous years available. I sampled data from the largest events -- Agility, Conformation, and Obedience -- to understand changes in entries and titling over the years.

I looked at the rates of novice titles, high achiever titles, and champion level titles for the 3 most popular AKC events. I chose these titles to better understand trends in people getting started in a sport, sticking with a sport, and perfecting the sport.

Data from [AKC Annual Statistics](#)

Earned Titles Over Time



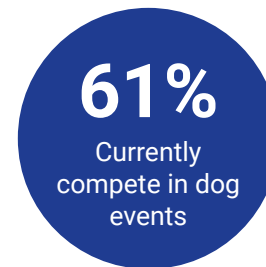
RESEARCH

User survey

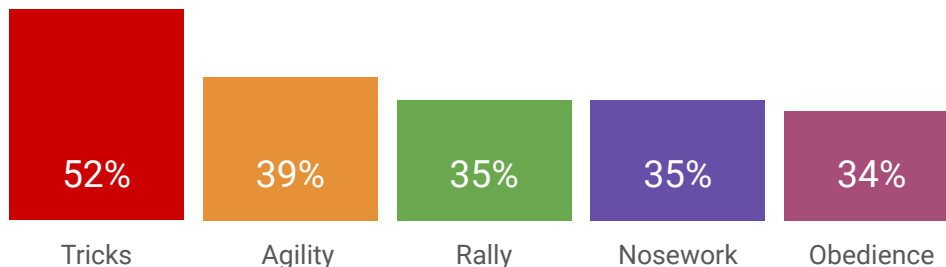
I conducted a 22 question survey to gain feedback from experienced competitors, new competitors, and pet owners. Although this was a small sample of what I may typically do for a more robust strategy phase, this survey helped illuminate common user goals and pain points.

Additional Suggested Research:

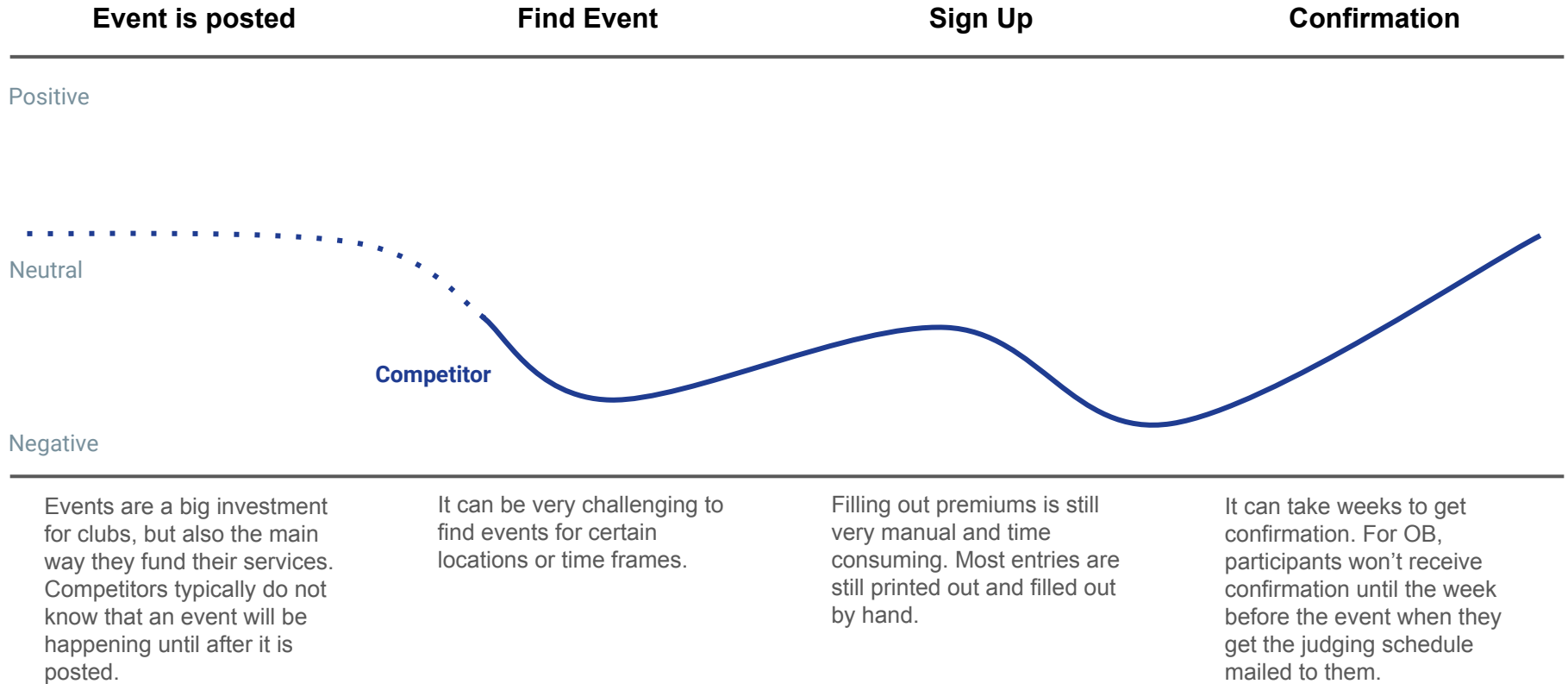
- Contextual Inquiry at Events
- Interview/Shadow Volunteers
- Interview/Shadow Event Planning



Most popular sports



Competitor Journey



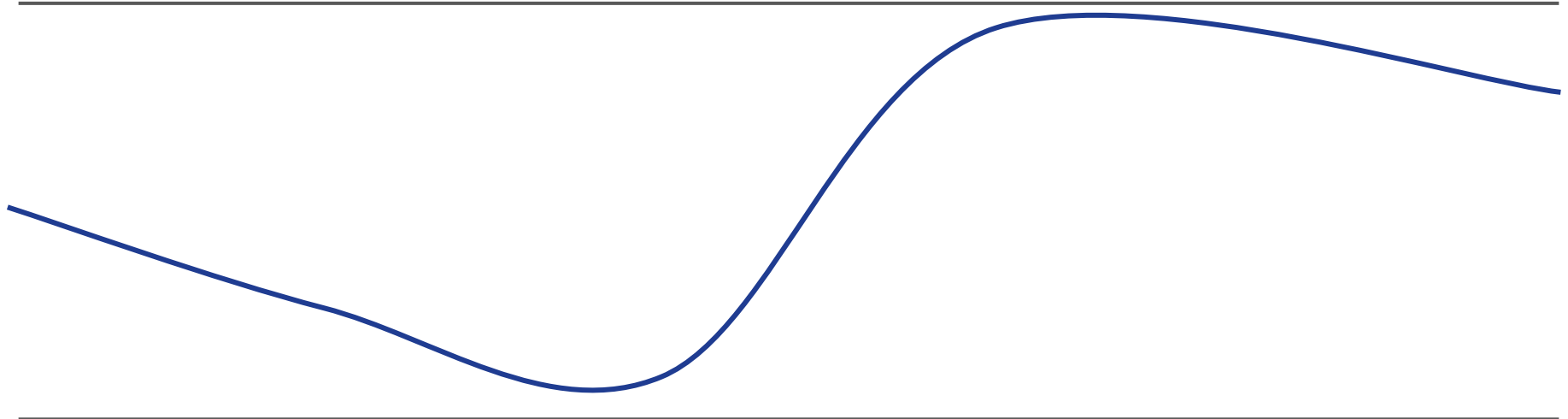
Competitor Journey

Travel & Setup

When do I run?

The Run

How did you do?



Some participants need to drive hours to get to an event that can start as early as 7 or 8am.

Some events offer rough schedules, but others don't. It can be hard to know when you will actually show.

A lot of nerves lead up to this moment. Most participants only spend a few minutes actually in the ring.

Did your team qualify? If you didn't, what do you need to work on? This can be a high pay off or a high stress moment.

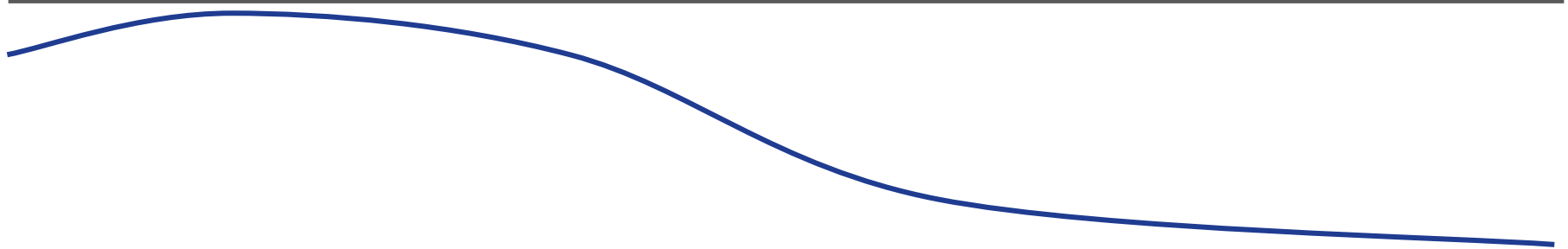
Competitor Journey

Scoring

Reflection

Returning Home

Future Planning



If you qualified or placed, you will get a ribbon. New titles are a big deal! You may get some feedback as part of the scoring process.

What do I need to work on for next time? Am I sharing my win?

Packing up and heading home takes time and effort after a long day.

You may be competing the next day, month, or year. It is on the competitor to plan their next run.

Thank you

Lacey Kobriger

LaceyKobriger@gmail.com

LaceyKobriger.com

mobileux.net

