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Greyhound Adoption League of Texas

In home training/evaluation "Phoebe"
By, Mary Waugh Swindell

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Phoebe

Phoebe is a young dog with a lot of potential to bond and work with a new family. She plays well with other dogs, both large and small, and very much enjoys having playmates who are willing to give her a good chase or wrestle for 10 or 15 minutes outside. When she was off-leash with our other dogs, she enjoyed walking the property with them, sniffing and exploring, but stayed close to our pack and came readily when she was called. She was not interested in running off, or simply running for running's sake. She was interested in watching the other dogs play ball, but did not have any desire to chase the ball or to chase the dogs playing ball. Phoebe has a moderate amount of prey drive, mainly seen when she spies a squirrel or other prey animal, but she does not generalize this to chase anything that moves. She was moderately interested in chasing livestock, but when intercepted and verbally corrected with a strong NO she yielded and went back to the house vs following the stock.

In general, Phoebe is respectful of mild corrections, and really works to change her behavior to stay in your good graces. She does pull on a buckle/martingale collar (as is typical for dogs her age) but when put on a pinch collar she quickly modified her behavior and solicited a lot of eye contact to confirm that she was back on the right track. Phoebe likes to be correct, she likes the feedback you provide her (both love and treats) and she likes your approval. She makes and solicits a lot of eye contact and really strives to have approval from her human pack.

Phoebe relates well to males, females and children, and will work for anyone. She sits well and is working on her stay command. She is also learning not to jump and with gentle reminders of "off" and "sit" she can sit nicely for greeting new people. She likes to be petted and she loves to eat treats!

In the house Phoebe plays nicely with the other dogs, and settles down quickly to lie on

a dog bed or chew a bone. She would like to be invited on the sofa but was not permitted here. After a leash correction for getting on the sofa she settled down onto a dog bed instead. She sleeps well through the night and is very good about going to her crate when asked, and she is quiet in the crate. She did well “holding it” in the house, and going to the door or ringing bells to go out. It will take her some time to adjust to her new family’s routine, but she has the concept in hand of being housebroken, it would be a matter of teaching her the new family’s routine and schedule.

Since she is a young dog who has been through several different environments in her short life, Phoebe still needs experience with new situations and new dogs to develop confidence and a laid back attitude. Of the leash she greets new dogs well, but is a little cautious/unsure. When she is on leash she does not have the option to leave, and that can make dogs more apprehensive. If a dog with boisterous body language rushes on her too fast, she may growl out of nervousness and insecurity. We worked with Phoebe around various nice dogs while she was on leash and they were off leash to try and create more exposure for her, and to show her that she has nothing to worry about.

If she is taken to meet and greets whoever is handling her needs to be savvy as to when she is feeling overwhelmed, and give her space to pack away, or physically intercept a boisterous dog straining on leash to get at her when she feels trapped. She would do better meeting off leash in a yard or at a quieter location.

This apprehension can be seen when Phoebe is in a crate and another dog comes sniffing or poking around by her crate. Phoebe is “trapped” in the crate, and might growl the other dog off. So we corrected the growling and spent time rewarding her when the other dogs came by her crate.

So we spent time loading Phoebe in the car and taking her to meet other dogs, and having other people and their dogs treat her in the crate as they went by if she behaved well. Then when she was quiet and relaxed she got to come out and meet nice dogs on leash and be rewarded. These continued experiences will help Phoebe learn through repetition and develop a relaxed confident attitude both on leash and off leash.

We worked with Phoebe on both obedience and agility. She is very willing to be guided by treats over obstacles, and even when she was not sure what to do and felt confined and under pressure (physically) by a person, she did not snap or growl. She enjoyed both working obstacles and practicing simple obedience commands such as sit, down and heel. For Phoebe, it’s not the subject of the work, but the chance to interact one on one with a person that she enjoys.

Phoebe would do well in a variety of environments. She could do well with a single person or a family, though since she is a large dog and learning not to jump, children over kindergarten age might be recommended so that they too could tell her “off” and “sit”. She plays well with other dogs, and sometimes barks when she is left alone (no people or dogs in the vicinity) so she might not be immediately well suited as an only dog; thought with time and training I’m sure she could adjust to that environment. She

plays well with big and small dogs, dogs and bitches, so a resident dog who likes to have a bit of a romp would be an excellent companion for her. She could do fine as an apartment/townhouse dog if there was a resident dog for company and if there was an opportunity for her to play nearby so that she could stretch her legs in a good, short run morning and night and get plenty of exercise.

She is not as pushy, drivey and attention demanding as many of the working breeds (Dobermans, Shepherds, etc.) so her mixed heritage gives her a nice dose of attention and working ability, without making her a dog that is going to need constant entertainment. She is happy to sleep on a dog bed on in her crate of her own accord for most of the day and all of the night, with periodic playtimes and walks. She would be fine to go to a home where the family works/goes to school all day as long as she had a chance to run and play or go for walks to burn off some steam in the morning and evenings. She is not a dog who needs hours of ball playing a day to keep them quiet and sane in the house, unlike some of the working dogs we have here.

All in all, Phoebe is a lovely dog with the potential to be a fine companion for a family with moderate activity. She would make a good walking, running companion, an excellent dog to take on a day hike, and a fine companion for another dog who likes to play. Taking her to class or to an organized activity where she could continue to build her confidence around other dogs and people will only help her to grow in confidence and blossom.

Thank you for letting us have the chance to work with her!