

# Goiffon family takes hobby to national stage

Ellie Goiffon, 11, will show her Australian Terrier "Beckham" at the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship in December

by Gary King  
Leader editor

SIREN - The Goiffon family of rural Siren will be filled with anticipation when the lights go up for the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship dog show in Long Beach, Calif., Dec. 4-5.

One of the junior handlers in the ring will be 11-year-old Ellie Goiffon and her dog, Grand Champion Ch. Just for Kicks' "Beckham" a two-and-a-half-year-old Australian Terrier that has achieved Grand Champion title under Ellie's guidance. "Beckham" is the 4th AKC Grand Champion Australian Terrier in the U.S.A.

"Thanks to hard work in the show ring and classroom, Ellie is one of the 134 junior handlers between 9 and 18 years of age who will contend for top honors and scholarship dollars at this exclusive, invitation-only event," reads a news release from the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship media office.

Ellie, the youngest of three daughters of Rich and Theresa Goiffon, began showing Australian Terriers two years ago at age 9, and her appearance at the national championship in December will represent a milestone in the Goiffon family's relatively young journey into the world of national dog shows.

The event will be broadcast on ABC Television on Jan. 13, 2011.

"Ellie had always watched the AKC dog shows on television and thought it would be fun to participate in them one day, too," noted her mother, Theresa, who has not only become a Web master for the family's hobby ([dunhamlakeaustralianterriers.com](http://dunhamlakeaustralianterriers.com)) but has gone from the behind-the-scenes mom to participating in showings in the ring.

Ellie's sister, Lydia, 16, is also a Junior Handler and also shows Australian Terriers but prefers to show her Australian Shepherd, "Jewel." Oldest sister, Nathalie, is 22 and in her senior year at Bethel University.

## Beginnings

Entering the world of showing dogs was a completely new experience for the Goiffon family.

"We always had companion dogs, but this was different - we needed to find a show dog," Theresa noted. "We spent over a year researching the right breed for us. It was also very difficult locating this fairly rare breed and once we did, the breeder located closest to us, wouldn't sell to anyone new, and certainly not a junior handler."

The Goiffons finally located a quality breeder outside of the area who was willing to provide them with their first Australian Terriers.

"After my daughter starting to have a bit of success,



Ellie and Grand Champion Ch. Benayr Just for Kicks' "Beckham," a two-and-a-half-year-old Australian Terrier, in the show ring. "Ellie is very dedicated and works with her dogs several times a week," notes her mother, Theresa. The junior handler competition is judged on the handler's ability to present the dog with skill and confidence. - Special photo

which was due to their hard work and our wonderful mentors, that breeder who wouldn't sell to us became so enraged she began harassing my family via e-mail threats for over a year," Theresa noted.

The woman used an alias - and even sent a slanderous letter to the Australian Terrier Club in South Australia - mentors to the Goiffons - until her identity was discovered via an IP address traced to her computer. She tried

to blame it all on a "hacker" but eventually stopped her harassment with the knowledge it could be met with a lawsuit.

It was a disheartening chapter in the Goiffon family's adventure but, as Theresa notes, it didn't discourage her daughters from continuing in their new found hobby.

And the family has been encouraged by those in the sport who have helped them along the way - including a judge at one of the shows.

In the May 2010 issue of AKC Gazette, Theresa related how their first show was difficult because "we had no clue what we were doing."

"We thought we just went around in a circle in the ring, so we went in our jeans and our T-shirts, thinking that's what we could do when we got there."

The judge that day was forgiving of their faux pas and awarded Ellie, who was 9 at the time, a winner's reserve ribbon and even coached the Goiffon girls for their next show.

He explained how to walk down the ring, how to stack their dogs and ... what to wear.

"Our second time we were more prepared and knew what we were doing," Theresa said.

## It's about fun

The Goiffons have owned a home on Dunham Lake for about nine years and moved here from the Twin Cities and built a new home across the lake from that home in 2007. Theresa's 95-year-old grandmother now lives in their original lake home. Her husband, Rich, works for Wells Fargo, out of their new home.

The family's foray into the sport has brought success and respect among from other handlers. Ellie holds the 2010 record for the #1 Junior Handler showing Australian Terriers and Lydia holds the 2010 record for #2 Junior Handler showing Australian Terriers in the country.

The AKC/Eukanuba show in December, at which Ellie and "Beckham" will take to the ring, is the largest prize money dog show in the world, with cash and prizes awarded totaling more than \$225,000.

Lydia and Ellie, who are home-schooled, hope to continue in the sport, Ellis aspiring to become a professional handler and Lydia hoping to branch out into more companion events.

But the Goiffons still consider it all more fun than work, something a mom can enjoy doing with her daughters, with rewards coming through the excitement of the shows, the rescuing and placing of lost or abandoned Australian Terriers, small-scale breeding of the dogs, updating the Web site (which gets 60,000 visits each year from people around the world curious about Australian Terriers) and giving back to local organizations and shelters.

It's simply a positive activity for any family, Theresa noted.

"It's fun and exciting and no different than if you have a kid who's involved in football or hockey," she said. "We're serious about it - but it's really just for fun - and that's why we enjoy it so much."



LEFT: Lydia, Theresa and Ellie Goiffon enjoy being with their dogs both in and out of the show ring.

RIGHT: A wagon full of Aussie puppies at Dunham Lake Australian Terriers. - Special photos from [dunhamlakeaustralianterriers.com](http://dunhamlakeaustralianterriers.com)



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