

Extreme Vertical - Super Vertical - X-treme Vertical - Fetch It

It ALL Started here. . . by Tom Dropik

Tucker and I got our start in Dock Jumping just like everyone else. We saw some jumping dogs on TV and said to ourselves "Hey, We can do that". The inaugural year for the ESPN Great Outdoor Games was July of 2000. Tucker and I watched that event. After that we contacted the folks at ESPN asking what it would take for us to compete in that event. They explained to us we needed to compete at one of 3 qualifiers and finish in the top 3. In April of 2001 Tucker and I traveled to Little Rock, AR and competed in the 2001 Sporting Dog Challenge which included Agility, Retriever Trials, and Yes, Dock Jumping dogs. Tucker jumped a best jump of 18' 1" and qualified for the 2001 ESPN Great Outdoor Games which would take place in Lake Placid, NY in July of 2001. After getting the invite to the Games we knew we had to jump farther than 18' to be competitive on National TV.

As Tucker and I started training to help produce bigger jumps I eventually learned that Tucker was performing to get the Toy and no matter how hard he jumped he would get it. That meant that Tucker could jump 18' and still get the toy. Then I then thought if I could somehow suspend it out of the water and make Tucker jump for it and if he didn't jump hard enough for it he would get it.

I purchased a 20' aluminum roof rake from Home Depot. From there I hung a coat hanger off the end of the pole and attached 2 strings from it with spring loaded clips on the ends of the strings. I was able to attach a toy to the strings and suspend the toy out over the water.



It's as easy as ... 1: On command, Tucker leaps from a Prior Lake dock toward a canvas "bird" attached to the end of an 18-foot aluminum snow rake held by Tucker's owner, Tom Dropnik. Star Tribune photo by Jeff Wheeler

When dogs fly

Figure 1: photo by the Minneapolis Startribune for a Story written by Jerry Zgoda in May of 2001.

Tucker and I continued to train using the device. We found a way to attach the device to the dock so I wouldn't have to hold it allowing me to simulate and actual Dock Jumping run.



After competing in the 2001 ESPN Great Outdoor Games Tucker and I traveled extensively building the sport of Dock Jumping and educating ourselves on what it takes to produce those Big Jumps.



We packed our Training Device up and took it with us to Venues across the country and in to Canada. We began attaching to the docks at the venues and extended the toy out 18' to 20' from the dock as a way to practice when we realized how that spectators were responding to it. They loved the fact that the toy was suspended out over the water and Tucker was able to Snatch it off the device.



In 2005 one of the Dock Jumping organizations approached me suggesting we turn this training technique in to an actual sport. DockDogs, the largest Dock Jumping organization in the world, and I worked it out and the Very First Extreme Vertical competition happened at the 2005 Dockdogs Western Regional Championships in Redmond, WA.



ESPN loved the sport so much they decided to make it a sport at the 2005 ESPN Great Outdoor Games and called it “The Launch”. Dockdogs continued to host this sport at the remaining regionals that year and the top 3 dogs from each regional went on to compete in “The Launch” at the 2005 ESPN Great Outdoor Games in Orlando, FL.



Extreme Vertical is now the Crowd Favorite and Dockdogs event across the world. Other organizations loved what they saw and decided to make it part of their events. The Super Retriever Series call it “**Super Vertical**”, Extreme Air Dogs call it “**X-treme Vertical**”, and Ultimate Air dogs call it “**Fetch It**”. All of these disciplines derived from a Training Technique that Tucker and I worked at so hard to perfect. It warms my heart knowing that so many folks out there are now able to enjoy what Tucker enjoyed SO Much. . . ☺