Ladies In Pursuit Of the Holy Grail

In only a handful of sports are ladies capable of competing on an equal footing with their male counterparts. Of these sports, a significant number involve handling animals, eliminating the strength differential as a limiting factor to the possible success of a woman. In recent years in dog sports, agility, tracking, fly ball and more, an increasing number of ladies are succeeding in the top levels of competition across the world.

One area where woman are still struggling to bring an end to the male domination of the sport, is Sheepdog Trialling. In Western Australia few women have won Open Yard Trials and even fewer have won Open Utility trials but so far NO woman has yet won an official Open Arena Trial!

Jenny Parsons and Karyn Buller are the only woman in WA to have won Open Utility Trials; both winning the WA State Utility Trial with Sherwood Adios in 1995 and Badgingarra Barney in 2013.

Jenny Parsons with Sherwood Adios, the late Denise Scudds with Badgingarra Angie (three wins), and Jenny Nolan with Nolan’s Roy, are the only ladies to have won Open Yard Trials in WA.

On a few occasions there have been some close calls for Open Arena Trials.

- Sam Weaver with Daheim Queana, Marianne Rogers with Bellview Bernie and Glenice Webb with Davids Nina (two wins) have all won at unofficial trials.
- Carolyn Christie with Glenview Loftie won the Arena Trial at the Royal show in 1998 but this was also a non-point scoring trial.
- Jean Hydleman with Belmor George came second at Ballidu in 2008.
- Jenny Nolan has twice won an Open Trial in another state; at Nhill South Australia in 2005 with Nolans Ashley and in 2012 with Nolans Jackie.

The sport is growing in popularity, with younger farmers and even some city dwellers being attracted to this most addictive of sports. When the sport started it was rare to see women competing but by 2016 over one third of competitors were women.

Currently eight Arena Trials are held each year on the Western Australia calendar. You can bet your boots all the competing ladies are hoping that
one day, somewhere, one of them will be the first lady to win an official Open Arena Sheepdog Trial in Western Australia!