



World's cutest anti-terrorism agents

SNIFFER DOGS AND THEIR HANDLERS ARE QUIETLY — AND ADORABLY — PROTECTING

By SHI YINGYING

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SHENZHEN — When Yu Na walks her four-year-old English Springer through the Universiade's venues, many people come over to stop and pat Little Darling's black-and-white coat.

Though they think they are just playing with a cute dog, they are actually being checked by the police to make sure no forbidden objects are being brought into the site.

"It all started in 2003, when my work unit was looking for volunteers to be the first bunch of policewomen to partner working dogs. They only wanted six girls for the Olympics' security check," said 29-year-old Beijinger Yu, one of the first policewomen to work with a sniffer dog in China.

"I've adored dogs since I was little. But I couldn't have one in my place because everybody in the family was too busy to take care of it," she said. "I remember the day before applying for the internal transfer, I asked my mom, 'can we have a dog please, at home?' She said 'no' without any hesitation, then I told her, 'I will have one at work'."

After one year of training at Nanjing's police dog base on how to guide her dog to search for drugs and explosives, Yu later worked at the Beijing Olympics and Guangzhou Asian Games as a security officer with her "partner".

However, for Yu's colleague, Gui Lin, who is thin and short, it's a bit tough to handle large dogs.

"We used to work with much bigger dogs at school such as German Shepherds or Belgian Malinois," said Gui, a 24-year-old woman who just graduated from the China Criminal Police College in Shenyang. "But you have to admit that girls are at a disadvantage when training a large dog that weighs the same as me — 50 kilograms."

Luckily, Gui can work with the relatively smaller Springer after work. "Many people are afraid of

big dogs, especially when we take them out to work in a public space such as the plaza — people scream sometimes," said Gui. "The English Springer has better affinity for people, and the original idea was to check you out when you're playing with it. It's hard to find someone who doesn't like an English Springer, and you wouldn't even pay attention (when it checks you out)."

Apart from avoiding the bigger breed, all policemen and policewomen who are working with patrol dogs at the Shenzhen Universiade are dressed like volunteers.

"We don't want to make anybody nervous," said Yu.

Rather than jumping or barking, a sniffer dog draws back to sit or lie down once it finds an explosive. "The reason for that is easy. You wouldn't want it to explode," said Liu Qing, deputy director of the Kunming Police Dog Base's Public Security Department. "It's also a test for the dogs as they will get excited once they find something, but then they get to hold up and keep cool."

When talking about how to pick a puppy that has potential to become a police dog, Liu, who's also Gui's teacher at the college, has a lot to say.

"You take these two- to three-month-old puppies somewhere they don't know, for example, the outskirts of Shenzhen, and observe them," said Liu. "Those that look up to search what's around them, they're the ones that choose eyesight as their preferred method of observation. Those who first start to sniff on the ground, they're in."

Early training starts right after picking the potential puppies, but the trainers aren't too harsh on them, according to Liu.

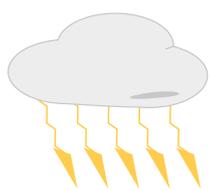
"We begin the early training in the form of playing with them. Usually we attach different smells to their toys to help them remember. The serious training starts with six- to seven-month-old puppies and lasts for about one year," he said.



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Yu Na plays with her English Springer, a friendly police dog patrolling the Shenzhen Universiade.

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