

History of “Freeware Agility Secretary Tool” (FAST) Software Development

In 1992 Jack Mathieson wanted to make the task of Agility trial secretaries easier and saw the need for Agility software that would construct catalogs and score the Agility events. During these early years USDAA was the only international style Agility sanctioning organization in the United States. As a computer programmer for a major corporation, Jack was well acquainted with the capabilities of FileMaker Pro and chose it for developing the Agility software. Jack’s decision to use FileMaker was a good one; FileMaker is a highly respected database program that is cross-platformed for use with either a PC or Apple operating system. As work continued on the development of the Agility software, Jack realized the importance of software that is user-friendly and made that one of the primary goals in the development of the software. To maximally assist the Agility clubs and lessen the expense of hosting trials, Jack decided that the software should remain in public domain.

In the early 1992 USDAA modules, Jack included the capability of doing computer scoring. However, when manual accumulator sheets subsequently were mandated for scoring by USDAA, Jack then removed the computer scoring from the USDAA program.

With the creation of NADAC, the next international style Agility venue to be created in the United States after USDAA, Jack wrote computer scoring into the software for the NADAC trials. Jack’s first efforts were to combine USDAA and NADAC into a single combined program. But, because of the differences in classes, it became obvious that it would be better to break the catalog and scoring part of the program into separate modules.

Over the years since 1992, separate modules have been developed for ASCA Stockdog trials and the Agility venues of USDAA, NADAC, ASCA, AKC, CKC, and CPE. Some of these modules are no longer available; modules are currently available for NADAC, ASCA Agility, ASCA Stockdog (weekend), and ASCA Stockdog Finals.

The NADAC module includes export of an Excel file of the computer scored data formatted as desired by the home office of the organization.

During the early years, FileMaker was a flat, rather than relational, database program. Meredith Bullock (who frequently served as an Agility trial secretary then) assisted Jack with ideas in the development and improvement of the Agility software. Later in the nineties, Jeff Fint, Teresa Fint, and Paul Kirk also served as Agility trial secretaries and gave suggestions regarding the development of the program as FileMaker evolved into a relational database. Paul Kirk has continued to the present to help Jack with testing the program and contributing ideas for its development. In the late nineties, Stan Eskridge began helping Jack with the USDAA module. In 2016 Denise Gosik was added to the NADAC development team; David Connet to the ASCA Agility team; and Julie Champion to the ASCA Stockdog team.

Early in the development of the software, the name “Freeware Agility Secretary Tool” (FAST) was selected to emphasize the public domain nature of the program. We consider it a compliment when other developers borrow our ideas in the development of their software.

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