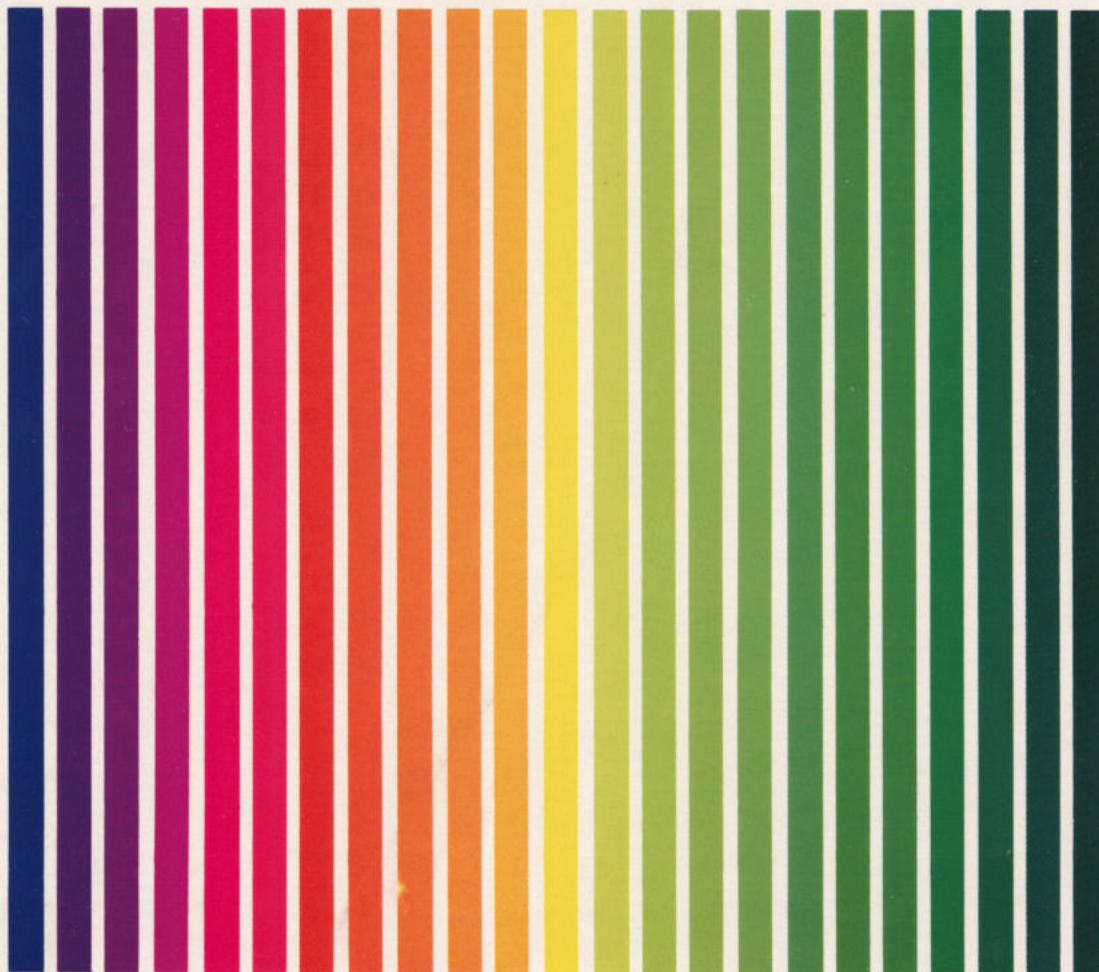


APX ATARI® PROGRAM EXCHANGE



Michael Kirtley

GOING TO THE DOGS

A handicapping program for dog races

Diskette: 24K (APX-20123)

User-Written Software for ATARI Home Computers

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GOING TO THE DOGS

by

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

GOING TO THE DOGS will aid you in projecting the outcome of a dog race by giving each dog a numerical score based on past performances. A dog race is a wild scrambling of eight dogs around an oval track in pursuit of a mechanical rabbit. It's common for these dogs to jostle each other as they enter the first turn in the track (known as the 1/8 call). Dogs involved in this jostling are usually thrown offstride which greatly reduces their chances of winning. The dog in front of the pack can't be bumped by the other dogs. This lead dog has a natural advantage over the other dogs. GOING TO THE DOGS tries to determine which dogs have the best chance of being first at the 1/8 call.

Among the early speed dogs, the program decides which one has the greatest staying power. If the prior history of the lead dog doesn't indicate an ability to hold the lead to the finish, the program tries to determine which dogs have the best chance to catch the lead dog.

GOING TO THE DOGS creates a separate data diskette on which you keep the race history of each dog. In analyzing each race, the program uses the stored information to rank the dogs according to their relative strenths and weaknesses.

REQUIRED ACCESSORIES

- 24K RAM
- ATARI 810 Disk Drive
- ATARI BASIC Language Cartridge
- One dog racing form

OPTIONAL ACCESSORIES

- An ATARI Printer or equivalent printer

GETTING STARTED

LOADING GOING TO THE DOGS INTO COMPUTER MEMORY

1. Insert the ATARI BASIC Language cartridge into the cartridge slot of your computer.
2. Have your computer turned OFF.
3. Turn on your disk drive.
4. When the BUSY light goes out, open the disk drive door and insert the GOING TO THE DOGS diskette with the label in the lower right-hand corner nearest to you. (Use disk drive one if you have more than one drive.)
5. Turn on your computer and your TV set. The program will load into computer memory and start automatically.

THE FIRST DISPLAY SCREEN

After the program loads into computer memory, the title, copyright, and author's message will briefly appear accompanied by a little tune. Then the Main Menu appears as follows.

MAIN MENU

ANALYZE RACE

ENTER DATA

MAKE DATA DISK

INSTRUCTION

WHICH?

Press the first letter of your choice, A, E, M, or I. The computer responds by starting the disk drive and loading the appropriate section of GOING TO THE DOGS into computer memory.

If you've never used this program, you will need to make a data diskette formatted using DOS II. Since your GOING TO THE DOGS program diskette has been copy protected, you will need to use DOS from another unprotected diskette. Also, since the files to be written on this diskette will take up almost all the sectors, it should be completely blank with 707 free sectors.

MAKING THE DATA DISKETTE

Press "M" on the Main Menu to create a data diskette. A red screen appears to give you a general overview of what the program involves. After reading the message, press any key to view the message

1 OR 2 DRIVE

Depending on the number of disk drives you're using, type a "1" or a "2". A message appears asking you to place the blank DOS II diskette into the appropriate drive. Press the RETURN key and a screen display will inform you that the computer is in the act of creating 714 records. This process will take eight to nine minutes.

After the program creates the record, you will hear a short reveille. The next screen display asks if you want to return to the main menu. Press "Y" and the program reminds you to make sure the program diskette is in disk drive 1. If you're using one drive then you must replace the data diskette with the program diskette and then press RETURN. If you're using two drives, press RETURN since the program disk should still be in disk drive 1.

SPECIAL TERMS

You need special knowledge of dog races or handicapping to use GOING TO THE DOGS. It will be helpful for the novice to review some terms before using the program.

The dogs race on an oval track. The relative positions of the dogs is given at various points in their course around the track. The points at which position calls are made have specific names. GOING TO THE DOGS uses abbreviated versions of these position calls when entering data. The following is a list of terms with the abbreviated version alongside.

TERM	ABBREVIATION
grade	GRD
distance	DIS
post position	P.P
off call	OFF
1/8 call	1/8
stretch	STR
finish	FIN

The term "post position" refers to the dog's starting box number. Post positions are numbered from one to eight starting on the inside of the track.

The term "grade" refers to a method of ranking dogs with similar ability. Methods of grading varies among different tracks, but always includes a high or good grade (usually "A") and a low or poor grade with intermediate levels (usually "D"). Dogs that have never officially raced are usually graded "M".

ENTER DATA

Before entering data you will need a racing form from a dog track in your area. This form contains the names and records of all the dogs racing that day. Each dog's record contains the position calls of its most recent races. This is the information which you will enter into GOING TO THE DOGS. If you plan on keeping records for more than one race track, it's recommended that you keep each track on a separate data diskette.

Press the letter "E" from the main menu and a new screen will display with the following message

HOW MANY DRIVES (1-2)

Type "1" or "2" depending on the number of drives you will use with this program. By using two disk drives you can save the bother of exchanging the program and data diskettes. However, GOING TO THE DOGS runs perfectly with one disk drive.

If you press "1", the following message displays

DATA DISK IN D1 (Y)

If you press "2" the following message displays

DATA DISK IN D2 (Y)

ENTER DOG NAMES

After inserting the data diskette into the proper drive, press "Y" to let the program know you're ready to continue. Next, the message

ENTER DOG NAME

displays. type in the name of the dog for which you want to add data. Be careful to spell the name correctly and include punctuation and spaces where necessary. The program will use this name when naming a new record or looking for a previously saved record. As an example, the program will not recognize following three dog names as the same dog.

A.J. DOOLEY
A.J.DOOLEY (missing space)
AJ DOOLEY (missing periods)

GOING TO THE DOGS only handles dog names that begin with a capital letter. If you have a dog name that begins with a numerical character or symbol, you will have to rename the dog. One solution would be to place the invalid character at the end of the name.

After typing the dog's name, press the RETURN key. The name will appear in the box at the top of your screen. The program will then go to the data diskette and look for a record for that dog name. If you've previously stored data for that dog, it will now appear on the screen. At this point you can enter additional race data for this dog. If this dog name is new to the data diskette, then the following prompt appears.

CREATE NEW RECORD (Y/N)

You can now confirm that this is the first time you've entered this dog name. If you think you've previously entered this dog, check the spelling of the dog's name and make sure you have the correct data diskette. Press "N" and you'll return to the "ENTER DOG NAME" message.

If you've already saved a large number of dog records on this data diskette, you may get the following message

DISK IS FULL wait

This prompt will flash for a few seconds and then the message

Continue or Main Menu

appears. Due to the structure of the program, this message will usually mean that the program can't accept anymore dogs with the same first letter as the dog you just tried to enter.

If the dog you've just entered is in fact a new entry, press "Y" in response to CREATE NEW RECORD (Y/N) and the following prompt displays.

ENTER DATA (1-8, DB-S, ESC)

This message tells you that the program is ready to accept race data for that particular dog. You'll notice a blinking cursor below GRD. The line the cursor is on is called the data entry line. All race data will appear on this line. As you complete each row of data, the line will scroll down and the cursor will stay on the data entry line.

Below the box, you see seven labeled columns. These are, from left to right, GRD (grade), DIS (distance), P.P. (post position), OFF (off call), 1/8 (1/8 call), STR (stretch call), and FIN (finish). These refer to the relative positions of the dogs on the track during a race.

All entries appear as a number between one and eight inclusive. If you're going to add more than one race for the same dog, always enter the oldest race first.

GRADE

The cursor blinking under GRD lets you know that the program expects you to enter a grade number. Grade designations vary from state to state. Some states use numbered grade while others use various systems of lettered grades. Due to lack of uniformity in grade designations, GOING TO THE DOGS uses a number from one to eight as the grades. The highest grade (usually "A" or "1") will be assigned "1" and the following grades will be assigned successive numbers as in this example.

A=1, BB=2, B=3, C=4, D=5, M=6

This example uses only six of the eight numerical designations. This is fine and poses no problem as long as you are consistent in the use of this system for all dogs.

If you wish, GOING TO THE DOGS offers an optional method of assigning grade numbers that requires a bit more interpretation on the part of the user. You may assign two numbers to one or two of the highest grades as in this example.

A=1-2, BB=3-4, B=5, C=6, D=7, M=8

You can divide grade "A" into one group of very good A level dogs (A+) and another group of marginal A level dogs (A-). This format brings a subjective element into the program.

What ever method you use, write it down and keep it with the program. The most important aspect of assigning grade numbers is consistency.

After entering the grade number, the cursor will move automatically to DIS.

DISTANCE

The blinking cursor now appears under DIS. GOING TO THE DOGS handles only two race distances, short and long. A short distance is a sprint race, usually about 1650 feet. Most races are of this type. The long distance races includes a variety of longer distance races and marathons. Use a "1" for the short races and a "2" for the long races. It's possible to enter a number larger than "2" for the long races, since the program just looks for a number greater than one.

ENTER RACE DATA

Copy the next five entries (P.P, OFF, 1/8, STR, and FIN) from the racing form. After each entry the cursor will jump automatically to the next position. The numbers in your racing form will probably have superscripts that signify the distance in lengths between dogs. No provision has been made in GOING TO THE DOGS to allow for distance separating dogs.

After entering the seventh number (FIN) the entire row will scroll down and the cursor will return to its position under GRD waiting for the entry of the next race. You will enter all race data from the same data entry line and the races will continue to scroll down. You can save only eleven races. Therefore, when the twelvth race scrolls down, the first entered race is replaced at the bottom of the screen by the next oldest race. The entered data will fall into the same order as that in the racing form. This feature will facilitate locating the last race when updating the preexisting records.

Upon completion of the entry of each race, this prompt will reappear.

ENTER DATA (1-8, DB-S, ESC)

DB-S acts as a reminder that you can press the DELETE BACK S key to correct entries. ESC reminds you that you can press the ESC key when you finish entering data. All other entries, other than the numbers one through eight, will cause the ATARI Home Computer to make its buzzing sound. Throughout this program, if you hear the buzzer, it is a signal to you that something isn't right. An invalid entry will cause no damage.

SAVE DATA

Once you complete the data on a particular dog, press the ESC key to signal the program that you want to proceed to the next step. The following prompt will display.

WANT TO SAVE DATA (Y/N)

Press "Y" or any key other than "N" and the program will save the data.

DELETE RECORD

If you press "N" in response to WANT TO SAVE DATA (Y/N), you'll receive the prompt

DELETE THIS DOG (Y/N)

Press "Y" and you'll delete this dog and its data from the data diskette.

The intended use of the DELETE RECORD option is to remove a few inactive records after receiving a "DISK IS FULL" message. Do not use the use DELETE RECORD on records that you haven't saved on the data diskette. Doing so will result in much slower operation as the diskette reaches capacity.

After saving or deleting a record, you will see the following prompt.

Continue or Main Menu

The "C" of Continue and the "M" of Main blink as an indication of the letters to press as your response. If you want to return to the Main Menu, press "M" and the following prompt appears,

PROGRAM DISK IN D1 (Y)

After placing the program diskette in D1, press "Y" to return to the Main Menu.

CORRECTIONS

If you make a mistake while entering numbers, press the DELETE BACK S key. The cursor will back up to the last entry and erase it. You can then type in the correct number. Be careful not to bury mistakes because the only provision for correcting them is to back up through the data using DELETE BACK S until you find the incorrect entry. You will then have to reenter all the erased data.

ANALYZE THE RACE

Press "A" from the Main Menu and you will see an orange screen with the prompt

HOW MANY DRIVES (1-2)

Respond with a "1" or "2" and you will receive the instruction to insert the data diskette into the appropriate disk drive and press the "Y" key. Next, the message

ENTER RACE DISTANCE (S/L)

displays. This prompt requests an "S" for a short race or an "L" for a long race. The word "short" or "long" will appear in the race distance window.

Next, you see the message

ENTER RACE GRADE (1-8)

in the prompt window. In the same way that you entered a grading system on the dogs, it's important to use a consistent system of assigning grade numbers to the races.

ENTER DOGS

After entering the grade number of the race you wish to analyze, a new prompt will appear as follows:

ENTER DOG NAME

The number "1" will appear in the bottom window under "POST POS." and a question mark will appear under "NAME OF DOG". You're now ready to enter the name of the dog running in post position one. Upon entering the dog's name and pressing the RETURN key, the program will go to the data diskette and retrieve the information on that dog. Next, post position two appears and, again, you will be prompted to enter a dog's name. This process will continue until you've entered eight dogs.

If you enter the name of a dog that doesn't exist on the data diskette, you will receive the following message.

DOG NOT FOUND (HIT ANY KEY).

If you think that you previously entered this dog, check your spelling and make sure that you have the correct data diskette. Once you find the problem, press any key and the program lets you reenter that post position.

VACANT POST POSITION

Occasionally a race has an empty post position. When that happens, type "+" and press the RETURN key in response to the prompt, ENTER DOG NAME, for the empty post position.

RACE RESULTS

After entering all eight post positions, you'll see a new screen display. The postpositions for all dogs will be on the far left side and the corresponding dog names will be in the center of the screen. After a short delay, a point rating for each dog appears on the right side of the screen. The program ranks the dogs from first to last and list the ranking on the far right.

The lower the rating the better the dog's chances for winning. The differences between scores will give you some idea of the relative strength of the dogs involved. Sometimes, one dog will stand alone with the lowest rating. In that case the program is picking that dog as a strong favorite. At other times two or more dogs will be closely rated. When this happens, you should consider all these dogs as serious contenders.

PRINTED RESULTS

After the projected race results display on the screen, you will receive this message

HARD COPY (Y-N)

If you have a printer and want a printed copy of the screen, make sure the printer is turned on and connected properly. Then press the "Y" key. Once the program completes the printing (or after you press "N" in response to the HARD COPY (Y-N) prompt) the following message appears

CONTINUE OR MAIN MENU

Press "C" to analyze another race or "M" to return to the Main Menu.

A FEW PROGRAM NOTES

HOW IT WORKS

This program uses alphabetical files to store dog data. The file used for a particular dog is determined by the first letter of that dog's name. These files have varying capacities (i.e. "Z" file will hold a few records while the "S" file will hold a relatively large number). These file capacities were determined after a statistical study of first letters in several hundred actual dog names.

This system was selected because it resulted in the fastest access of dog records under most circumstances. It is possible that you could come across an unusually large number of dogs whose names begin with a rare letter such as "Z". Provisions have been made in GOING TO TH DOGS for this possibility by providing two overflow files which will take dog records after the letter file is full. The drawback for having dogs in the overflow files is that they will be accessed more slowly since the program will not look in the overflow files until after it has checked every record in the letter file.

RECOMMENDED USE

I want to stress that I don't guarantee that you will win with GOING TO THE DOGS. I have worked hard to make the dog rating algorithm yield a reasonably accurate reflection of a dog's actual chances. The race analysis from this program will be better as the program has more prior races from which to draw information. But excellent handicapping coupled with an improper betting strategy will lose money. If you plan on using the results of this program at the track, I recommend that you first play several races on paper in order to establish a successful strategy.

May your dogs always be fleet of foot and free of fleas.

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We're interested in your experiences with APX programs and documentation, both favorable and unfavorable. Many of our authors are eager to improve their programs if they know what you want. And, of course, we want to know about any bugs that slipped by us, so that the author can fix them. We also want to know whether our

instructions are meeting your needs. You are our best source for suggesting improvements! Please help us by taking a moment to fill in this review sheet. Fold the sheet in thirds and seal it so that the address on the bottom of the back becomes the envelope front. Thank you for helping us!

1. Name and APX number of program.

2. If you have problems using the program, please describe them here.

3. What do you especially like about this program?

4. What do you think the program's weaknesses are?

5. How can the catalog description be more accurate or comprehensive?

6. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being "poor" and 10 being "excellent", please rate the following aspects of this program:

- _____ Easy to use
- _____ User-oriented (e.g., menus, prompts, clear language)
- _____ Enjoyable
- _____ Self-instructive
- _____ Useful (non-game programs)
- _____ Imaginative graphics and sound

7. Describe any technical errors you found in the user instructions (please give page numbers).

8. What did you especially like about the user instructions?

9. What revisions or additions would improve these instructions?

10. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 representing "poor" and 10 representing "excellent", how would you rate the user instructions and why?

11. Other comments about the program or user instructions:

From

STAMP

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[seal here]