



# Flockstars

July 2015







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## **AN ALL-STAR LINE-UP PAIR WITH PROFESSIONAL DOGS TO COMPETE IN FLOCKSTARS...**

### **A BRAND NEW SHEEPDOG TRIALLING EXTRAVAGANZA FOR ITV**

From the heart of the great British countryside comes Flockstars, a brand new primetime knockout competition for ITV. Hosted by GABBY LOGAN, a cast of famous faces will be swapping red carpets for green fields and the all-new palace of rural show business, the Flockstars Showground. Brace yourself as “it’s time to release the sheep” (not to mention geese) and see which of the tweed-adorned talented stars will be able to adapt their skillset to master the most impressive of countryside sports.

Competing in an intense eight-week knockout, the Flockstars include national treasure and DJ for over 50 years **TONY BLACKBURN**; former Eternal singer, **KELLE BRYAN**; professional dancer and sequined star of Strictly, **BRENDAN COLE**; multi MOBO award-winning **FAZER aka RICHARD RAWSON**; Birds of a Feather star, **LESLEY JOSEPH**; TV presenter and former Scottish Widow, **AMANDA LAMB**; acclaimed actress and Coronation Street legend, **WENDI PETERS**; and ten-time Paralympic Gold medalist, **LEE PEARSON** who has been honoured with an MBE, OBE and CBE. The most essential element will be the Flockstar’s ability to tightly bond with their professional four-legged partners and guide flocks of hilariously unpredictable sheep and geese around the specially designed, and increasingly tricky, competition courses.

Trained and guided by three young, professional shepherd mentors from three corners of the British countryside, Welshman IOAN DOYLE, Scotland’s EMMA GRAY and England’s ED HAWKINS, our trainee triallers must fully embrace a new way of life as “come bye”, “lie down”, “away” and “walk on” become everything to succeeding, or crashing out of, the competition. Will this brush with nature become second nature to the Flockstars as they attempt to guide the animals around the complex course and walk away with the sparkling Flockstars Champion Shield?

## INTERVIEWS:

### GABBY LOGAN, PRESENTER

**Do you have any experience with dogs or farms?** We live in the country and have two dogs, four year old boxer Milo and a one year old labradoodle, Maggie, and my daughter has a horse and my husband's a farmer, so we're quite country. I've never done any sheep dog trialling! But I used to watch One Man And His Dog, and we're big fans of Countryfile in our house. My daughter is animal mad. So when the producers approached me about it, I thought, 'There are so many people in my world who would love this', and I had to do it.

**What do you think of the competitors?** I was really pleased when I saw the list. I was thinking, 'Is it going to come from that pool of people that we've seen on these kinds of shows before?', but it's not like that. A lot of fresh faces are in this show, people who have never done anything like this before. It's a diverse age group and it works really well.

**Have any of them surprised you?** They all have, with their hard work and commitment. They're putting all these hours in so they want to get it right. Tony's so lovely and sweet and funny. He is so polite with the dog, it's hilarious. He begs her, 'Please lie down', and she doesn't do it. Lee is no-nonsense and I think it's been an amazing experience for him. It took a while for him to bond with his dog, and he has his own challenges getting around the arena, but he's a top bloke. I knew Brendan from Strictly and for him I think it's been interesting being on the other side of the learning experience, not being the one who has all the knowledge. Lesley and Wendi are huge, theatrical characters, and Amanda is really competitive with herself. I can see Amanda doing this as a hobby. She really loves it, and she's got a lovely manner. For Kelle I think it's been a real voyage of discovery: she's a city girl and she's not done anything like this. She was scared of the sheep and the country and anything outside the M25 before this. Richard is so competitive. He starts off all, 'I'm amazing, I'm brilliant', then just before he goes on, his knees are shaking! It's a rapper doing sheep dog trials, you know?

**And what do you think of the shepherds?** That's quite fortunate, isn't it, that we have such dishy shepherds! Ioan is like a Poldark, he's dark and handsome, and Ed is blond and gorgeous. Emma is fit as a fiddle and it shows. They're really different personalities and they really compliment each other.

**How would you describe the tone of the show?** The sporting part of it is quite serious and done in a competitive way. There are some tight photo finishes! But there is also some real comedy when things go wrong. What I really love about it is that there are no judges. Nobody's being told what they're doing wrong. And that's good because not only is it nicer for them, but also because judges can slow up a programme. This show whizzes along because there's no long-winded discourse with somebody afterwards analysing every corner and every move. It's a nice move away from that. I think we're the first of this sort of show who have done that.

**They say never work with children or animals. What's been your experience of working with animals on this show?** It's been brilliant. They're better behaved than a lot of humans! And we haven't had any dog poo moments yet. I used to do this chat show on Channel 5 where we brought on micro pigs one day and they pooped all over the set. I was expecting a few incidents here but the dogs are too respectful, they wouldn't do it in front of the cameras.



**LESLEY JOSEPH and GYP**

**Probably the closest LESLEY JOSEPH has been to animals so far in her career is wearing leopard skin as Dorian on 'Birds of a Feather'! She teams up with Gyp, an easy-going, four year old tricolour born in Derbyshire, who will do anything for a doggie treat.**

**What was your experience with dogs and countryside previously to this show?** I had a dog ages ago, but I've mainly had cats. I do borrow my daughter's pug a lot. I was brought up in the country opposite a farm, though I've lived in the city since, so I consider myself half country and half city. I couldn't exist without either in my life. I think people assume I'm not at home in a pair of wellies because they get me muddled up with Dorian but I'm not like that at all!

**Why did you want to take part in this show?** I get asked to do these sorts of shows all the time. But the thing about this one is that it was spending time in an idyllic farm in Kent in the spring, which is absolute heaven to me. Plus it's learning a skill. It was really extraordinary challenge, and quite a privilege. And it's a family show that you can watch with everyone from your 90 year old grandma to your four year old daughter, and that is lovely. It's an informative show in which you can learn a bit about dog behaviour and a bit about the countryside.

**How well did you bond with your dog?** Gyp is a very feisty dog. Collies are like machines, they're incredible. Gyp just loves to work and loves to herd sheep. It was quite hard to keep her calm in front of an audience.. There were steadier dogs that found it easier to work in that environment. But there's something very simplistic and lovely about the bond between a dog and a person, and she's a lovely dog.

**How did you get on with training?** I have enjoyed it very much. There was a lot of high drama! There was one finish where there was about 4000s of a second difference between the times. Four or five people could easily win, I think, but it all depends on the animal on the day. Even professionals have a bad day sometimes, so it's been exciting. But it'll be entertaining and funny to watch too. You just have to look at the fact that two dogs have won Britain's Got Talent to see how much the British people love dogs.

**What will you take away from your experience?** There's so much horror in this world, that it is lovely just to spend time in this simplistic environment. It takes you away from your day to day life which can be very stressful. Everybody has loved it. We have stayed up drinking and eating together which was lovely. There were no divas among us. I hate the word 'celebrity'. These are just people who are known for doing their jobs and they are a great bunch.



## **BRENDAN COLE and HOGGY**

**More used to a Cha Cha Cha than a Baa Baa Baa, professional ballroom dancer and star of 'Strictly Come Dancing' BRENDAN COLE teams up with Hoggy, an enthusiastic, energetic and loveable two year old bitch (who is named Hoggy as she was born on Hogmanay on a farm in Scotland).**

**Why did you want to take part in the show?** It was a very different thing to do, and certainly not normally something you'd see me doing. It was an opportunity for people to see me outside of a dance floor. I've always been into animals. I had a dog growing up, a little bull terrier crossed with a fox terrier. We had cats too.

**How have you found the training?** I was a bit too animated at the beginning. My personality is bold: I'm certainly not a wallflower. So that was a bit of a challenge, just to calm it down. It is exciting - your adrenalin is running, your heartbeat is racing, so I've had to learn to breathe and be calm and give very clear commands even though your body is telling you to go, go, go. Within my real job, there are moments where you have to be small and demure, so I do know how to do it.

**How well have you bonded with your dog?** She's called Hoggy, short for Hogmanay. She's a similar age to my daughter so I've currently got two x two and a half-year-olds in my life who are both quite demanding! Hoggie's young and very happy. She's beautiful, probably the prettiest dog here, which is nice. Working with a supermodel dog is a bonus. She's just really keen to do well, which is nice.

**How does this show compare to your day job?** This is definitely easier than training someone to dance! It's nice being on the other side and being the one learning how to do a new skill. I've really enjoyed that element of it. I like competing; it's what I do. Everyone cares a great deal. I know it's just a bit of light entertainment, but we've all invested a lot of time in this so it means a lot to us.

**What's been your funniest moment?** My funniest moment was watching Tony when one sheep went one way, another sheep went the other way, and he lost his dog. He is hilarious.





## AMANDA LAMB and MIDGE

**Property presenter AMANDA LAMB spent years looking for the perfect 'Place in the Sun', but how will she fare in a muddy field? She joins forces with three year old bitch Midge, a softie of a sheepdog who is highly responsive during trialling – and loves attention on and off the field.**

**What's your experience with animals previous to this show?** We had a poodle from the age of five until when I left home. But since then I've been in London so it hasn't been fair to have a dog. I take my kids to little city farms and stuff like that but that's about it. So my experience of farming was literally zero, but it's totally and utterly consumed me. I've loved every second.

**How have you found the training?** I didn't think I was going to be any good at it to be honest, because there's a lot of coordination and quick thinking needed, neither of which are things I excel at! But I stuck with it and I genuinely love it. When I'm not on the farm, I find myself thinking about the farm and the dogs and the sheep.

**What have you learned from taking part on the show?** This is such an ancient tradition that's been passed down from generation to generation. You talk to the shepherds and it's just in their blood. Nowadays there are so many easier ways to command sheep. You could probably use drones or machinery, but the fact they're still using those old fashioned techniques, I find it fascinating. And I love that we live in a country that still has those traditions. And when you watch it, I think it's quite a sexy sport. It doesn't hurt that they are quite easy on the eye!

**How well did you bond with your dog?** Midge is the Guinness World Record holder for being the most expensive dog. All the dogs have different strengths. My dog is very good at agility and short, sharp commands. So she'll stop suddenly and be able to turn on a sixpence. But she's not aggressive enough and lacks confidence with the sheep. So if you get a sheep that stands up for itself, Mitch will back off, whereas some of the other dogs will keep going for it until it shifts.

**What will you take away from this experience?** I've already said to the shepherds that I want to go and watch them in the Sheepdog Trials - it would be nice to see it done properly without having to take part myself! And I have already thought that I want to spend more time in the country. It's made me realise how special this country is and how beautiful. We spend all of our lives rushing around and going from one appointment to another. But this show has made me realise I should appreciate this country and enjoy it more.



**LEE PEARSON and SKYE**

**LEE PEARSON CBE** is a Paralympic legend having represented Team GB in Sydney, Athens, Beijing and London picking up an incredible ten gold medals in the process. But will he have the 'shear' determination to win big at Flockstars as he teams up with Skye, an affectionate, quick-thinking and speedy two year old bitch bred in Scotland.

**You're obviously experienced with horses: what about other animals?** We've always had a family dog. I now have a small holding in Stoke with a German Shepherd, and two miniature pinschers. I also have seven horses plus black swans, ducks, goats, and a pig.

**How well did you bond with your dog?** When I first met her, I was invisible. She had bonded with Emma. So I took her home and she spent four weeks at mine. We really bonded and now I don't want to leave her behind! We're inseparable now. At the end of the day when she goes back to her kennel, they have to drag her away from me. The shepherds say they've never seen a relationship like it. I don't even have to have her on a lead, she just follows me around.

**Did you put in any extra practice while she was living with you?** Yes, I bought some runner ducks and practised with her at home. I got a bit of jip for that from the others. I only practised a few times, but it was good homework. Skye's very fast and eager and it's quite hard to stop her and get her to go slow, which is one of the important things to learn.

**Do you think you have any advantage over the others because your profession involves working with animals?** I work with an animal but it's just me on a horse, working in partnership with that horse. It's completely different. This is about me communicating with one animal to move another set of animals. There are so many elements to it. I think the sports psychology helps a little bit because I do get nervous but I know how to harness those nerves and use them to my advantage.

**What's been your funniest moment?** I was struggling a bit in one round so I decided to get ahead of the sheep, give them a peek of my J-Lo bum, and see if they'd just follow me like the Pied Piper- and they did! I think the crutches actually helped: the sheep were thinking 'Yeah, mate we'll follow you. You've got four legs so you might be a sheep'. I went over the obstacles myself and they followed me, followed by the dog. It was like some kind of mad conga. It was a bit unorthodox but there were no rules against it.



## WENDI PETERS and BILL

**As Cilla Battersby-Brown WENDI PETERS** shared many a scene on Coronation Street alongside Great Dane 'Schmeichel'. But how will she fare with a considerably smaller sidekick – this time in the form of Bill, a trusty, steady, nine year old from Suffolk.

**Why did you want to take part?** I was interested to learn a new skill, and this seemed like a particular challenge. I did Masterchef and I like cooking so that was something I was used to. The same with the Sewing Bee, I did a bit of sewing at school. But I don't often go into my garden rounding up sheep! And what bliss to spend six weeks in the fresh air on a farm, with animals, with a great bunch of people.

**Do you have any experience with dogs?** Growing up, my family always had springer spaniels. We've got two at the moment: a springer spaniel and a spoodle, which is a springer crossed with a poodle. My husband was brought up on a dairy farm but I've no connection to farm life myself, at all. Which is partly why I thought this would be interesting. I'm perfectly at home in a pair of wellies. I was happy to get stuck in and learn all about it.

**How did you get along with the training?** I really didn't know what to expect. I remember as a child watching One Man And His Dog, and it's a real skill. Once I'd mastered the basic signals, in a big field, it was easy to do the big wide turns. But once we moved to the indoor arena and had obstacles thrown in there, it became trickier and I've found it quite frustrating at times. But it's been fun and I think I have got the hang of it, more or less.

**How did you get along with your dog?** Bill is the oldest dog, he's nine. He's experienced, but he's had nine years of Ed's voice and Ed by his side. So turning him around to listen to me was quite hard work. Even now, if I'm in a room and Ed walks in, he turns straight to Ed. They have that bond. He's not used to a ladies' voice so I had to lower mine and be a bit gruff and that helped.

**What was your worst moment?** I was supposed to be herding a group of sheep over a little bridge but they were the stupidest of stupid sheep and they just wouldn't budge. So I ended up stuck on the bridge, hemmed in by sheep who wouldn't get out of my way. It was a farce. It will be hilarious TV. I thought, 'If I'm going to fail, I may as well fail in style'. I'm quite a competitive person and it was just so out of control. It was brilliant and I had no choice but to laugh.





## **RICHARD RAWSON and JACK**

**FAZER from N-DUBZ aka RICHARD RAWSON** had eight top 40 hits alongside bandmates Tulisa and Dappy. But what kind of success will come his way teaming up with Jack, a talented three year-old tricolour collie from Ireland.

**Why did you want to do this show?** I just wanted to do something different from normal: my life consists of studios and promo. I've got a Staffordshire bull terrier and a French bulldog. I've had dogs my whole life. But I've never worked with a working dog and I wanted to see the difference between a working dog and a pet.

**How well did you bond with your dog?** I've had a fantastic bond with Jack. This dog is so well trained, it's unbelievable. You can be two acres away from this dog and the second you tell him to come here, he'll run over. If I tried that with my dog, he'd act like he didn't even hear me! It's amazing to see that and experience it.

**What have you learned from the experience?** It's amazing to learn about the heritage of the British countryside. We've met farmers who provide meat to the major supermarkets and it's been really interesting to see the love and passion that goes into it all. I thought these shepherds would be this boring old man in a fishing hat. But my trainer Ioan's 25, I think, and he's brilliant. I have to take on a Welsh accent because the dog's used to hearing a Welsh accent. If I say in my Welsh accent, 'Yo, come by, dog', he doesn't listen to me.

**What's been your funniest moment?** Trying to shear a sheep. That was random for me. It's not easy. They are big, they're muscly, and they absolutely stink. I think that was the most surreal moment I've ever had in my life, holding that sheep and shearing it.

**What do you think your fans will make of your performance on the show?** They know we don't take ourselves too seriously. Anyone who saw our TV show, Being N-Dubz, they know we do some crazy things. Dappy did a fishing show the other day. We're all doing different things and having fun at the moment.



## KELLE BRYAN and MAX

**KELLE BRYAN** sold over 10 million records and had 15 Top 20 hits in the UK with R&B girl band Eternal including the chart-topper 'Stay'. But can she get her two year old dog Max to do the same?! Let alone respond to the classic sheepdog trial commands of 'Come By' and 'Away'?!

**How have you got on with the training?** It was tough at first. I have a massive fear of sheep! I've never been keen on them. Ed made me get in a pen with the sheep on the first day to get me over the fear. It was horrible. It was a big step for me. To be honest, I trot around in heels most of the time, so fields and wellies are really not my thing.

**What's your relationship like with your dog?** Max walked straight up to me and sat on my feet on the very first day. It was great and our bond was instant. But what's been challenging is working Max. Saying to him, 'Yes, I'm your best friend, but I'm also your shepherd and you have to listen to me'. I wanted to keep my dog but Ed said, 'It's a working dog - he won't want to come and sit on your sofa and be petted'. Max is happy when he's working. It brings him to life.

**How have you found the actual competition element?** The thing about this is that it's not really about shepherding. It's about you, and who you are. There's no hiding. There's no fancy lights and costumes, there's no second take. It's you and your dog, and you're out there, and you just have one attempt at it. I've really learned that I'm more fearless than I thought I was. I've been scared but I've made myself do it anyway and I'm proud of myself.

**What have you learned from the experience?** It's changed my perception of British farming. The industry is actually incredible. It's an essential part of our system but we underpay them. Ed doesn't get paid what a footballer gets paid. It's cheaper to buy milk than it is to buy water.

**Did you enjoy working with Ed and the other shepherds?** Getting up at 6am every day is a lot easier when you've got those two to look at! It's a fantastic position to be in because you get to spend all day going, 'So, Ed, tell me about those shoulders. How am I meant to be standing, again? Can you just put your hands on me and show me?' He's great and he looks amazing and he used to play rugby. Happy days! They're both really fit and lovely. Shame they both have really pretty girlfriends.



## TONY BLACKBURN and BESS

**Legendary DJ TONY BLACKBURN teams up with Bess, a strong-willed, six year old bitch from Suffolk who often thinks she knows best! Will this dynamic duo be the 'Pick of the Pops' of the sheepdog trialling world?**

**Why did you want to take part in the show?** I love animals, and it's something different. That's why I did I'm A Celebrity - something different, a new experience. I've had a lot of exercise and got to know some animals which has been fabulous.

**How well did you bond with your dog?** When I first saw her, I offered her a biscuit but she refused it. And the next day she was running around me, trying to tie me up with the lead. It took a couple of days for us to bond. She was quite bonded to loan. But he encouraged me to take her off by myself, and now when she sees me she gets very excited and is licking me all the time. That's a problem, though. Bess gets too excited when she works for me and she doesn't herd as well.

**How have you found the training?** Hard. I've treated Bess like a pet, and she thinks she knows better than I do, so she brings the sheep to me which is not necessarily what I want her to do. She gets too excited in front of the audience. She's an absolute show off! She adores me, and I adore her. We look into each other's eyes. It's absolute love.

**Have you tried any underhand tactics to win?** I'm a vegetarian. I'm the only person here who doesn't want to eat the cast! And I did think being vegetarian, the sheep would be nice to me. I did whisper to one of them, 'Guys, for God's sake, I'm on your side'. But it made no difference.

**Who have you got on well with out of the other celebrities?** I want Lee to win. He's such a lovely guy. When I first met him, I offered to help and he said, 'Don't pamper me'. I said, 'You're actually very lucky, because I've got a disabled sister who can't walk at all'. And from that moment on we were good friends. He's incredible.





## **FLOCKSTARS: THE MENTORS**

### **Ed Hawkins, 28**

#### **Shepherd, English National Sheepdog Trialer**

Ed is a highly sought-after shepherd who also breeds and trains pedigree sheepdog pups from his top trial dogs, as well as training older sheepdogs on request. Ed has successfully competed in sheepdog trials at national level and is currently first reserve on the England national team. He is also an expert in training beginners in duck and goose herding.

### **Emma Gray, 28**

#### **Shepherd, Champion Sheepdog Trialer**

Emma runs her own sheep farm in Northumberland, the youngest person ever to run a National Trust farm in the UK. As well as breeding lambs, she also trains and breeds sheepdogs for a living. She is a champion sheepdog trialler and well respected in that community, having become the first woman to win the Northumberland Sheepdog Trials League in history at the age of 27. Her first book 'One Girl & Her Dogs' was published in April 2012.

### **Ioan Doyle, 25**

#### **Shepherd, Sheep Farmer and Competitive Rock Climber**

Ioan is our resident sheep expert, his knowledge of all things sheep-related is second-to-none amongst our shepherd mentors. A hill sheep farmer and contract shearer throughout the Welsh mountains, he has his own farm in a remote location in Snowdonia.

# FLOCKSTARS PI: EPISODE ONE

*embargoed until 00.01am on Tuesday 21st July 2015*

Hosted by Gabby Logan, Flockstars is the bid to find Britain's best celebrity sheepdog trialler testing skill, technique and discipline in front of a studio audience. Eight famous faces are paired with a professional sheepdog and head to the countryside in this new TV series which will see them compete head to head for the sparkling Flockstars' Shield.

In the first episode of the knockout competition, two Flockstars, along with their four legged friends, will be trying their best to guide sheep around the Flockstars trialling course in the quickest time.

The first team to take on the challenge are professional Border Collie Hoggy and Strictly Come Dancing's Brendan Cole, mentored by professional shepherd Emma. They will be going head to head with Midge and TV Presenter Amanda Lamb, mentored by shepherd Ed, with the remaining six Flockstars watching nervously from the sidelines of the showground.

Brendan's training gets off to a rocky start after surprising the sheep with his dance moves. With too much energy, he overexcites the dog and in turn the sheep. His training session turns to chaos. Brendan says: *'I've got to really change my personality to try and control the dog.'*

Once he relaxes, Brendan starts to make real progress with Hoggy. But his trials don't go smoothly and he nervously enters the first round of the course, having never succeeded at any of the main obstacles.

Outside in the cold and rain, the glamorous Amanda Lamb finds it hard to adapt to her new outdoor lifestyle. Amanda asks her mentor Ed, *"Do they have shepherding in the Maldives? Do you think we could switch location."*

Trying to get her flock into the pen during training proves a tough hurdle to overcome and getting them over the bridge on the course is something Amanda finds impossible to crack. Midge and Amanda barely complete the course in time and are not confident going into the first round against Brendon and Hoggy.

The first round of the competition takes place in the Flockstars arena. Amanda and Brendan will send their dogs on an outrun to fetch their flock, bring them cleanly behind the starting post, guide them over a stone bridge and around topiary corner. The clock stops when all the flock are inside the pen and the gate is closed. Unless of course the flock decide they would rather try and escape by jumping over the barriers of the showground!

Used to intense competitions, Brendan makes his feelings quite clear about winning versus taking part, *"Most people don't like to admit they want to win. I'm not that person. I like winning, knowing that I've given my all and coming out victorious is pretty much how I live."*

But will he do enough to beat Amanda who says, *"Flockstars has taken over my life. I literally count sheep to go to sleep. I'm obsessed!"*

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