

## *Bull-Mastiffs*

*(By Courtesy of The Bull-Mastiff Club of America)*



The known history of the Bull-Mastiff begins some 70 or 80 years ago in England. It is probable that the story of the breed is really centuries old but the proof of this point is difficult and takes much reference to ancient authors, and arguments pro and con on the difference between breeds as they existed over a hundred years ago.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century in England, the problem of keeping the large estates and game preserves free from the depredations of poachers was an acute one. Penalties were severe and yet poaching, being after all a form of gambling, seemed impossible to eradicate by mere laws. The result was that the gamekeeper's life was anything but a safe one. Poachers would often prefer to shoot it out with the keeper on the chance of escape than accept the heavy penalties which they would incur upon apprehension. It is not surprising, therefore, that the gamekeepers decided to enlist the aid of the greatest protector nature has given to man, the dog. It should be obvious that these men cared nothing for the looks of a dog as long as he served them well. Numerous breeds were therefore tried out for this purpose

. The mastiff was tried and it was found that, while he was sufficiently courageous and powerful, he was not fast or active enough and not sufficiently aggressive for this type of work. The bulldog was tried, and let it here be stated that the bulldog of these times and the bulldog that was used in the formation of this breed, was a very different animal from today's bench-show type.

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**He** was actually used to bait bulls, and he was big, strong and active. He was found by the gamekeepers, however, to be, perhaps, a trifle too ferocious and not big enough for their needs. These men wanted dogs that would remain silent at the approach of poachers, lest the position of the keeper be divulged and he be shot. They needed dogs that would attack on command, being utterly fearless. They wanted the poachers thrown and held, but not mauled. For these needs, they crossed the mastiff and the bulldog, and the dog they wanted and needed was produced.

From this utilitarian birth, then, the breed was founded. Inevitably, came the rivalry between keepers as to the quality of their dogs. Inevitably, also, came the breeding to and from the outstanding performers of their time--a true survival of the fittest. For many years, then, after the birth of the breed, its history was wholly an utilitarian one. The only contests in which Bull-Mastiffs engaged were against man, either on the moor or in demonstrations when they were muzzled and the man was allowed a club, restricted in size to certain measurements and weights. In these contests no man was ever able to hold his feet against a dog of proven worth. In those days, the Bull-Mastiff was known sometimes by his present name but more usually as the "Gamekeeper's Night-Dog."

During the early years of the existence of the breed, we find many interesting references to it by contemporary canine commentaries. One of these references is made in General William Hutchinson's book, "Dog Breaking," published in London in 1885. He says

"Bulldogs have good noses. I have known of the cross between them and the mastiff being taught to follow the scent of a man almost as truly as a bloodhound."

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In the year 1901, from "Sporting Life," we find the following commentary on a show of Keepers' NightDogs

"The chief interest was centered in the Keepers' Night-Dogs. This being the Old English Bull-Mastiff and in order to give the public some idea of the duties which they are taught to perform, Mr. W. Burton of Thorneywood fame, Nottingham, gave demonstrations, designed to show the measures taken by the aid of dogs for the suppression of poaching."

In 1900, the Westminster Gazette reports that Major Crowe of the War Office visited an exhibition of these dogs with a view to reporting on their possible usefulness as an aid to sentries.

In "The Field," August 20, 1901, we find the following

"Mr. Burton of Thorneywood Kennels brought to the show one Night-Dog (not for competition) and offered any person one pound, who could escape from it while securely muzzled. One of the spectators who had had experience with dogs volunteered and amused a large assembly of sportsmen and keepers who had gathered there. The man was given a long start and the muzzled dog slipped after him. The animal caught him immediately and knocked down his man the first spring. The latter bravely tried to hold his own, but was floored every time he got on his feet, ultimately being kept to the ground until the owner of the dog released him. The man had three rounds with the powerful canine, but was beaten each time and was unable to escape."

For this type of work, dogs of a dark brindle color were naturally preferred owing to their lack of visibility. It was inevitable, however, that as the breed gained in popularity and the true mastiff blood was used, a large number of light fawns should appear. With the gradual disappearance of poaching and the continued demand for Bull-Mastiffs as guards and watch-dogs, this latter color became highly popular.

From the mastiff was often

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inherited the black mask and densely colored ears which added to the striking appearance of these powerful animals.

Finally, owing to the increasing popularity of this breed, a number of pioneers started, on a scientific basis, to breed for a type conformation in an effort to set, once and for all, a goal which pure-bred dog breeders might seek. After much work and care, this type finally became sufficiently evolved for the English Kennel Club to grant recognition of the Bull-Mastiff as a pure-bred dog in 1924. At this time the Kennel Club differentiated between the Bull-Mastiff, cross-bred, and the Bull-Mastiff, pure-bred, the latter being, of necessity, the descendant of three generations of dogs which were neither pure mastiff nor pure bulldog. Classes were then given at a few shows for this breed and, inasmuch as their popularity increased rapidly, they were finally awarded Challenge Certificates in 1928.

From that time forward, the story of the breed has been one of continued success and growing popularity. It has filled the need which dog owners and dog lovers have long felt, being a superlative guardian with an amazingly even disposition. In time the breed became known in many countries, having been exported from England to Siam, India, the Federated Malay States, Africa, and America. The short coat has proved convenient in warm climates, and yet they can live in the open in the harshest kind of weather. Their utilitarian background has proved to be a blessing to breeders for, through the survival of the fittest, they thrive upon a minimum of care and afford little worry to their owners.

In October, 1933, the American Kennel Club granted recognition to the Bull-Mastiff. Since that time, the breed has made numerous friends in this country, and is

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forging ahead, strictly on its merits, as a splendid watchdog of even disposition and as the possessor of an enormous amount of affection for children and grown-ups alike.

### DESCRIPTION AND STANDARD OF POINTS

(As Adopted, 1935 by The Bull-Mastiff Club of America and Approved by The American Kennel Club)

*General Appearance* of the Bull-Mastiff is that of a symmetrical animal, showing great strength, powerfully built but active. He is fearless, yet docile, and has endurance and alertness. He is 60% Mastiff and 40% Bulldog.

*Size*.-Dogs should be 25 to 27 inches at shoulder, and about 115 pounds in weight. Bitches, 24 to 26 inches at shoulder, and about 100 pounds in weight.

*Head-Skul.*-Large and square with fair wrinkle, and in circumference may measure almost the height of the dog; it should be broad with cheeks well developed. Forehead flat.

*Muzzle*.-Should not be more than 3 1/2 inches long, deep and broad. *Nose*, black, with nostrils large and broad. Flews not too pendulous, stop moderate, mouth preferably level, or may be slightly undershot. Canine teeth large and set wide. A dark mask is preferable.

*Eyes*.-Dark and of medium size, set apart, the width of the muzzle with furrow between.

*Ears*.-Should be V-shaped and carried close to cheek or folded back, set on wide and high, level with occiput and cheek, giving a square appearance to the skull. They should be denser in color than the body, and of medium size.

*Body-Neck*.-Should be slightly arched, of moderate length, very muscular, and almost equal in circumference to skull.

*Chest*. Wide and deep, with ribs well sprung, well set down between forelegs. Girth may be up to a third more than dog's height.

*Fore Quarters*.-Shoulders should be muscular and slightly sloping.

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Forelegs straight, well boned and set wide apart, elbows

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square. Pasterns straight, feet medium, with round toes well arched, pads hard.

*Back.-Short, giving compact carriage.*

*Loins.-Wide and muscular, slightly arched, with fair depth of flank.*

*Hindlegs-Broad and muscular, with well-developed second thigh denoting power, but not cumbersome. Hocks bent, cowhocks or splay feet are most undesirable.*

*Tail.-Set high up, strong at root and tapering, reaching to the hocks. Straight Or curved, but never carried hound-fashion.*

*Coat.-Short and dense, giving good weather protection.*

*Color.-Any shade of fawn or brindle.*

A scale of points is not given, for in the last analysis, a dog is judged on his breed characteristics, and his soundness which is so essential in working breeds. Great harm can be done by breeding for certain characteristics, because of heavy point score, to the detriment of soundness. This, we wish to avoid.

Due to the relatively recent origin of this breed as a pure-bred type, it was thought well to explain in detail certain aims of the breeders of Bull-Mastiffs with which the standard should not be burdened.

Relative to the mouth, it is unreasonable to expect nothing but level mouths in a breed whose blood is made up of bulldogs and mastiffs. It is the desire of Bull-Mastiff breeders to produce, in time and by selective breeding, dogs with level mouths. This, however, must be considered as secondary in importance to the production of sound dogs. The same is true of the dark mask and denseness of color of ears. The aim should be to produce sound dogs and then, by selective breeding, breed for black masks and ears. As to the size, there are dogs with ears which are "sloppy," and there are those who show too much of the bulldog ear. Here we want the happy medium and here, again, it is a refinement which must come after soundness and general type conformation. There is also the question of white tips, which has been debated at some length in the English canine press.

It is maintained by some that this is from the bulldog, and by others that it is bull-terrier blood, which certain unscrupulous breeders have used. Whatever it comes from, it should be eliminated as it has no part in the color

scheme of our breed. White on the head or body is not tolerated. As to the size of the breed, the reason for the creation of the Bull-Mastiff was the desire for a dog smaller than the old English mastiff and more active, but one still big enough to throw and hold a man. Therefore, a dog of 100 pounds who is sound and active is greatly to be preferred to a dog of 125 pounds who looks like a weedy mastiff. It is only in the case that these two animals are equal in all other respects, that the larger may be preferred. Again, if we see a dog weighing 140 or 150 pounds, even though sound and active, we then approach too much the mastiff and the breed is losing identity.

To sum up, let us say that we want sound, active dogs, capable of protecting life and property, of throwing and holding a man. We want dogs conforming to breed-type, and refinements will increase in importance in direct proportion to the attainment of the primary ideals.