

*Critique of the*

*Heart of Minnesota Great Dane Specialty*

*By Ralph Graff*

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On August 24<sup>th</sup> I was privileged to judge Great Danes at the Heart of Minnesota Great Dane Specialty. As a breeder from 1970 to 2007, a frequent Show Chairman since 1989 and a Great Dane Judge since 1990, when I judge Great Danes, I carry a sincere concern for the quality of the breed.

Over this period I have observed cyclical changes in the breed, not always for the best: head is everything, straight fronts are OK because they give additional height, movement is not important, etc. As a result, Great Danes were not always competitive in Group competition. I believe this has changed over the last several years. More of our Specials are competitive in the Group and blatant conformational faults are not as common. It is my opinion that the entry at the Heart of Minnesota Great Dane Specialty exemplified these statements. The quantity and overall quality of the entry were good. I did not see a preponderance of straight fronts, roachy top lines or hocky rears. The animals performed well, in spite of the oppressive heat. I had multiple worthy animals to choose from in the individual and winners classes and, in particular, in the breed competition. I should note that my BOB winner was BOB in the three shows in which he appeared, was pulled in the August 25<sup>th</sup> All Breed show and took a group 1 in the August 26<sup>th</sup> All Breed show.

I was equally impressed with the Heart of Minnesota Great Dane Club. The Show was run effectively, the post show dinner was well attended and there was an immense raffle. Often, the Judge is isolated to avoid the appearance of impropriety. I must thank Diane and Sid Levin for the care they gave me.

In summary, my weekend in Lake Elmo Minnesota was very enjoyable, a good entry in number and quality, an enthusiastic Great Dane Club and wonderful hosts and hostesses.