A Moment With
Breeder Judge Jason Hoke

Please tell us how you got started in Danes? Do you have any other breeds?

My first Great Danes were a brother and sister from Kirsten Khatabb. They were Ch. Kimet's Gentleman Jim and Ch. Kismet's Starlit Symphony. Both were brindles. They were line bred on Mountdania Kennels.

What colors do you breed or own? What is your kennel name?

My mother Susan and I bred dogs under the kennel name Jamara. We bred fawns and brindles.

Were there any dogs, Past or present that you admired or thought represented what you wanted to breed or own?

I think some dogs that I personally saw that I loved were Ch. BWM Rachel, Ch Somwins Shimatoree of Don-Lu, Ch Rojon's Rumor Has It, and I never saw her, but, Ch. Brierdane's Indian Amber appealed to me as well.

What was the name of your 1st Champion? Did you owner handle or use professionals?

Our first Champion was Ch. Kismet's Gentleman Jim (Gent) a Mountdania Maestro son. We primarily showed our own dogs and on occasion used handlers.

When did you start judging?

I was licensed for 8 breeds in December of 2010. Pointers, Great Danes, Cavaliers, Cresteds, Maltese, Pekes, Poms, Yorkies as well as Junior Showmanship.

Do you currently exhibit or breed?

I no longer breed Great Danes. My last Great Dane I showed was HOF, MBIS, BISS Ch. Jamara's High Voltage. He was a great fawn dog owned by Nancy Bosley. I was a professional handler for years and won Best in Shows with dogs from all 7 groups. I now have whippets at home which I love as well, but my heart always goes to the Great Dane.
What advice would you give owner handlers just getting started in the ring?

Since I started as an owner handler I think the biggest suggestion is first to study the breed. Learn the Trends and Lines. Then while you are in the ring and outside, observe all the dogs. Be objective and try to see where your dog falls in the mix. Be fair when thinking about your own dog. Know it’s strong points and it’s weaknesses as well. Always try to accentuate the positive of your dog. Listen to others for tips as well. Most people will try to give you constructive advice. Mentors in the breed are invaluable from a breeding and a handling standpoint. Practice handling and go to handling classes. I used to go to classes 2 times a week for years. It’s a great training tool for your dog as well as yourself.

What do you think about the new Grand Champion Title. Will you give SD and SB points?

I think it is a great award. It allows people to show their champions in Breed and feel a sense of accomplishment even if they do not win on the day. Think of how many times in the past people had to compete against the top Dane and never get an award even if they had a beautiful dog. This allows that recognition.

What do you think about the idea of reserve Best In Show?

Reserve Best in Show falls along the same lines as the select. For many who show dogs and have never won a BIS this award will be a great encouragement.

What do you think needs the most improvement in our breed?

I think a few things I have noticed lately are the lack of stops. This is a defining feature of the breed and the head’s beauty is lost without it. Top lines are a little shaky right now and could use some work as well.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in Danes over the years? What about mix color breeding? Do you think the blues and blacks are better now since a lot more mix color breeding has occurred?

The biggest change in the breed is the loss of the big kennels. We have to remember that some of the Kennels which were considered the great lines through the years were able to breed extensively and keep and raise many dogs. While there are still some true lines left I think that it is harder to fine the lines that are defined by their "type".

As far as mixed color breeding I have no problem with it. Just as in any breeding you must do your research and know what the pluses and minuses are with each one and be responsible.

I think that Blacks and especially Blues have come a long way in the breed. Its exciting to see these colors make such great strides in improvement. The quality today reminds me of a wonderful bitch Ch. Sterlings Blue Lapine, who was a wonderful blue when I was young and had the pleasure of seeing many times.
Do you co own dogs? What do you think about co-owning?

I think co-owning is important, whether it be a new person in the breed you co-own with or a long time co-breeder. There are pitfalls but the vast majority of co-ownerships work out to the advantage of all involved.

What are your thoughts on “Showing” a dog while you are judging? Do you think there are conflicts of interest?

This question comes up quite a bit. I think what people need to realize is that judges take their job very seriously and try not to let other factors affect their decisions. So I do not see a conflict with it at all.

What about advertising? Do you see a lot of it as a judge? Is it hard not to be influenced by it?

Obviously advertising is a big factor in today's sport. I was a professional handler for years and my clients advertised extensively. However, I think when it comes down to it, the great dogs will win no matter what. It is also a great way for breeders to see dogs from other lines in different areas of the country that they may never have the chance to see in person.

The question always comes up in breeder circles. Do you want to see the photos of the dogs you put up? OK to send Thank you cards or gifts??

I love to receive pictures of the dogs I put up. Its a great reminder and tool to reflect back upon as time goes on. You are always learning in the sport of dogs and as time goes on your priorities may change. Its all about learning each day. As far as gifts, that is not allowed by the A.K.C. I would return any gift sent by an exhibitor. Thank you cards are certainly acceptable as I know when I showed, some wins were so wonderful that I wanted to say thank you for recognizing the quality of the dogs.

Thank you Mr. Hoke for taking time out to do this interview with us.