

Meet . . .

Owner-Handler

Annette Larareo

1) Number of years showing dogs. In 2001, Mark and I decided to add another Dane to our Family. When speaking with her breeders, I discussed the desire that I might be interested in showing. Skye, a natural blue, was the special girl that introduced me to the show world. I was clueless!!! Not aware that color and ears made a difference. She was handled and shown to her Championship by her breeder. I only entered the ring when I had to cover someone and always with a petrified look on my face. Today, it's different after practice and winning, I feel more confident in the ring. Still every time, I learn something new or try to determine how I can represent myself and who I am showing better.

2) Your kennel name & how you got it. Don't have one. It's not about that for me.

3) Where you live. Williamsburg, Massachusetts. (Western MA)

4) Where do you travel to show? Most shows I attend are in MA and some in NY, CT with very few in RI and VT. I will also travel to NJ or PA, if the judging panel is worth the time and travel expense.

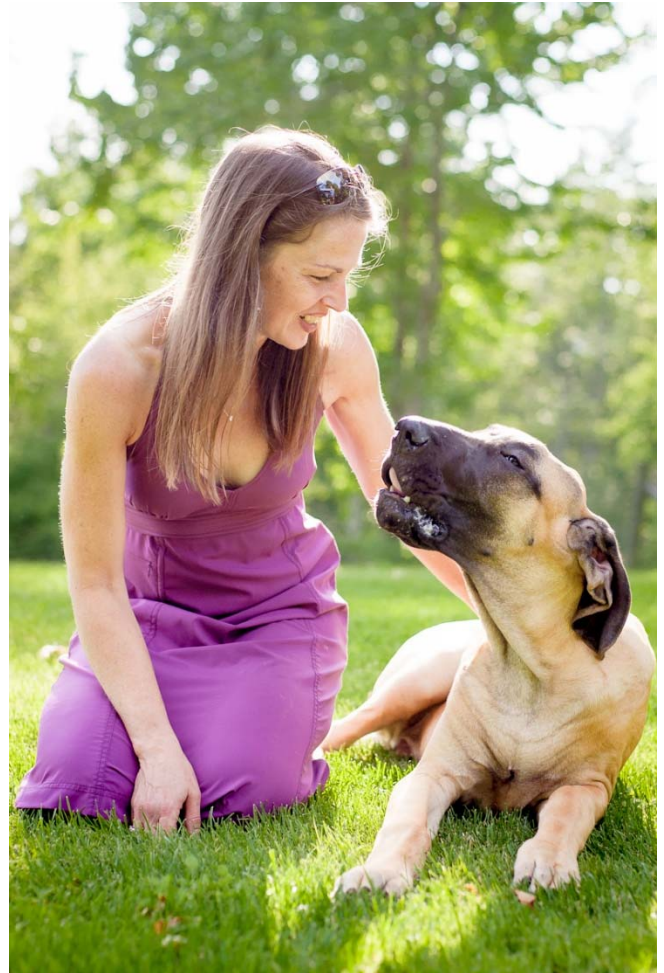
5) How many shows do you attend in a year? Depends on who I am showing, the judges and my work schedule. Honestly, I don't count or ever thought to count.

6) Have you ever hired and/or used professional handlers and for what purpose? Yes. When I was first handling, I was showing a big, square boy that paced. We were not winning in the ring, often I wasn't able to get him to move properly. So I hired a professional handler, who singled him out and then for other reasons I pulled him from showing. He never finished but was such a wonderful boy to live with.

7) What made you decide to owner-handle your Great Danes? My life changed and I needed a hobby to take me away from work. My Danes are part of the family and I found them much happier in the ring with me. Something we enjoy together.

8) What are the greatest advantages of owner-handling your dogs? Our schedule is based on my time off and/or desire to show. Recently, we were enter in shows and we pulled because it was going to be a warm weekend in Maine. We all love Ogunquit beach and headed to Maine instead.

9) What are the biggest challenges of owner-handling your dogs? I don't have the advantage of who I am showing looking for someone outside the ring (and standing taller as they search). I am their someone. Often, that 'up' attitude or edge can be helpful for professional handlers. The flip side, they are happier and more relaxed in the ring with me...so it's worth it.



10) What do owner-handlers need to consider if they want to be competitive in the ring? Dress professionally, groom your dog, relax and enjoy yourself. Remember, your relationship, pride and love for who your showing is a huge advantage over the competition.

11) Do you feel your dog has ever been over-looked in the ring by the judge because you are an owner-handler and if yes please describe. Never really sure. Sometimes, I do feel professional handlers may have an advantage because of their familiar faces.

12) Do you feel there is any stigma against owner-handlers in Great Danes and if yes please explain. No.

13) What tips would you give a new owner-handler to help them step up their game? Smile, try to have fun and enjoy yourself. Too many new owner-handlers look like a deer in headlights.

14) What is the most valuable advice you ever received about handling your own dogs from a professional handler? Not sure they have ever given me advice. I will take that as a compliment, that they consider me competition.

15) What is the most helpful technique you ever learned just by watching professional handlers? Get to your show early, be organized, allow yourself and dog time to settle, listen to the judge, watch the classes prior - to know ring procedure, never stop showing.

16) What are some common mistakes you see owner-handlers committing in the ring? Not communicating with who they are showing, it's team work and you need to let them know what you would like...stand, stay, let's go around...whatever, you use when you train. You don't have to be silent in the ring...tell them they are doing a good job.

17) What have been some of your show ring successes as an owner-handler? Not sure a specific moment comes to mind for me. Maybe the most obvious, my first finished Champion or when I finished the first Natural ear black owner-handled and from Bred-By Exhibitor, but those seem obvious. I think what I really try to succeed at is to always walk away with something positive from my show experience. When I win, it's easy to determine the good. When I lose, I try to figure out what I can improve, or what the judge might have liked about us, or what I might have learned. I always try to remind myself that we are doing it because we are enjoying it. Be positive to yourself and others.

18) What are some of the most rewarding things about owner-handling for you? We both enjoy the game and I am proud to be on the end of the leash. I love who I am showing and I believe in us.

19) Most professional handlers began as owner-handlers. What keeps you from taking that same route? I don't need another job and it wouldn't be the same game for me.

20) Who is your favorite judge and why? Currently, I don't have one. I just want judges to be pleasant, give everyone a fair look, find the most correct dog and smile back.