

Meet . . .

Owner-Handler

Gary Romerosa

1) Tell us your whole name.

Not many people know this, but my given name is Gaylord. That's right, just like the character in the movie 'Meet The Parents'! Most people know me as Gary Romerosa.

2) Number of years showing dogs.

Almost six years.

3) Your kennel name and how you got it.

We don't really have a kennel name, but instead have included Rome and Roses on our dogs registered names, which is a play on words from my last name. If I ever become brave enough to be a breeder in the future, I do want something that would identify the kennel name with harlequins and mantles.

4) Where you live.

We currently reside in Lemoore, CA (yes, nobody knows where it is). We always tell people it's centrally located between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

5) Where do you travel to show?

We mostly stay in California, but have travelled to Arizona and Nevada to show. Even when we are not showing, we like to go and watch shows and have been to the National twice (AZ and Pennsylvania) thus far. We already have plans to go to Ohio this year and South Carolina in 2015.

6) How many shows do you attend in a year?

On average, I'd say between 12-14 show weekends.

7) Have you ever hired and/or used professional handlers and for what purpose?

Yes. When we first started showing and didn't really know anything about showing, we used a couple of professional handlers. We hired professionals because A. I didn't know how to handle dogs. B. I was pretty terrible at it and C. I am a nervous wreck in it.

8) What made you decide to owner-handle your Great Danes?

People started telling me, including the last professional handler that we had, that I can do it and that I 'look good handling'. The cost of having a professional handler also weighed in a lot, plus doing ringside handoffs meant we always had to follow where our handler was going to be at no matter how far it was from home (remember, we're 'centrally located'). It may not show on the outside, but I'm also a very competitive and driven person and handling my own dog is another way of channeling my competitive juices.

9) What are the greatest advantages of owner-handling your dogs?

I think the bond that I naturally have with my own dog is the greatest advantage. Also, no one knows my dog better than I do. I know what makes my dog tick and know all his strengths and limitations. To a certain degree when we're out in the ring, I feel like my dog also knows my own strengths and limitations.

10) What are the biggest challenges of owner-handling your dogs?



For one, no one really knows me from Adam. I also don't have the years of experience of honing my handling skills like seasoned professionals and even some owner-handlers have.

11) What do owner-handlers need to consider if they want to be competitive in the ring?

Everything! First, you need to have a solid foundation by having a well-bred dog that is not only conformationally correct, but is also temperamentally sound that can hold its own right from the start. The time spent training, grooming, conditioning and feeding your dog is a BIG part in molding a dog that can compete day in and day out. A friend also told me that to compete with the big guns, you have to look, act and dress the part.

12) 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.

Hmmm... That's a tough one. I am not sure. I really want to believe that every time my dog did not win, it's because the other dog truly was the better dog and it's not because I am an owner-handler going against known professionals.

13) Do you feel there is any stigma against owner-handlers in Great Danes and if yes please explain.

I don't think it's a stigma, but more of not having earned our stripes yet, especially those of us who are new to owner-handling.

14) What tips would you give a new owner-handler to help them step up their game?

Practice, practice, practice. You can never be too prepared. Always welcome good advice, but more importantly, put them into practice. Watch how great handlers work with their dogs in and out of the ring. If you have the opportunity, take lessons from handlers you admire.

15) What is the most valuable advice you ever received about handling your own dogs from a professional handler?

In a nutshell? How to enhance and not detract from your own dog's appearance.

16) What is the most helpful technique you ever learned just by watching professional handlers?

How to free stack.

17) What are some common mistakes you see owner-handlers committing in the ring?

Being too busy in the ring with excessive movements and setting the right pace when gaitting the dog.

18) What have been some of your show ring successes as an owner-handler?

Earning all points on my dog! And an unexpected major Reserve against stiff competition. Being asked to handle other dogs, even other breeds, I think speaks volumes to the progress I have made as an owner-handler. It's very rewarding to be approached by complete strangers wanting me to handle their dogs after seeing me handle my own dog.

19) What are some of the most rewarding things about owner-handling for you?

There's nothing more rewarding than winning with a dog that is with me 24/7 knowing that we both worked hard to accomplish what we did!

20) Most professional handlers began as owner-handlers. What keeps you from taking that same route?

I think mainly the amount of time traveling and the time spent away from home. I also feel like I have a long ways to go before I feel comfortable enough to justify getting paid for handling other people's dogs.

21) Who is your favorite judge and why?

Oh man! That is one tough question! I don't think I have been in the game long enough to have a favorite judge, yet. I have never shown to any of them personally, but I loved watching Gina Jaeblo and Jack Watts judge.

22) Bonus Question! (Please answer!) If the mockumentary movie "Best in Show" made a sequel with you as one of the characters, what famous actor/actress would play YOU?

It's got to be Ken Jeong from the Hangover movies! I think he will be a riot playing me!