

Manfred Lerner - A Real Dog Man (part 3.)

Written by rt

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There are no translations available.

article by Lisa Schuler (Ascomannis kennel)

(Part three of a three part series, first published in Dog Sport Magazine in the Nov. '98 issue, part two in the Dec. '98 issue, and part three in the Jan. '99 issue.)

Following is part 3 , the final part to my interview series with Manfred Lerner of v. Bayern Dobermann kennels who has generously shared his time with us. Having trained military patrol dogs for the German Air Force since 1977 (approximately 600 dogs), and having been involved with Dobes for even longer, Manfred is well-situated to offer us a uniquely rich, and personal perspective on his breed of choice, the Dobermann.

Manfred deeply loves dogs and dog training, and is serious about his goals and their realization. But, on the subject of people involved in dogs, and people in general, he takes a lighter tone. Unable to keep silent about the German tail-docking ban - an issue close to his heart - Manfred cannot help but poke fun at the politicians whose hunting dogs can still have their tails docked by law.

I am reminded of a small sign that hangs above his clubhouse door that reads something like: "If every day you work hard to teach your dog to walk on water, and then one day, after much work, he does so, do not be surprised or upset when other people say that he does this, only because he is afraid of being in the water."

Manfred was grinning when he showed me the sign. Certainly the mark of someone who has spent a long time "with the wind at his front", but has never strayed from his dream....

Uran and Kiro v. Bayern

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PART 3

DSM: How has the ZTP test changed over the years? Do you feel that it is conducted in the manner that

Vogel planned for it to be? [Ottmar Vogel is a DV/SV/ADRK Working Judge and acclaimed helper who has titled 9 different breeds to SchH3 countless times. He bred Dobermanns under the kennel name "v. Wilden Markgraf" for many years - in 1983 Hektor v. Wilden Markgraf was DV Meister with 100/97/97. (Incidentally, "Hektor" was trained in Manfred Lerner's SchH club). Vogel has given the Dobermann many gifts over the years: his revamping of the ZTP or "fitness for breeding test"; his establishment of the Körung; his writing of "Zucht

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und Sport mit dem Dobermann" - the only comprehensive book available on working and breeding the Dobermann; and lastly, the bloodline chart which traces the breed's major producers from 1948-1981. Vogel continues to breed GSDs and Rotties today, and to judge actively throughout the world.]

LERNER: Before 1975, the ZTP was just a judgment about the structure of the Dobermann, plus a test of his protection drive, but without any bitework. Since 1975, the test of the dogs' character became more important. The Dobermann had to convince the judges about his capacities in self-confidence, temperament, workability, courage, obedience, drive and bitework. This "new ZTP" was worked out by Ottmar Vogel. It is his contribution to the improvement of the breed. Since the judges had to focus on the character of the Dobermann, the breed has been improved year by year. [Dobermanns have 2 chances to pass this test, and may attempt it after the age of 14 months old. They must have either a hip score of HD-1 or HD-2, and must have all their dentition. Only blacks and browns are allowed, and failure at 2 ZtP's results in a breeding ban for life in Germany.]

The goal of Vogel's Körung, was to point out the top animals in beauty and character of all Dobermanns. But the Körung itself is no guarantee for the quality of the dogs. [Dogs attending the Körung must have minimum BH, SchH1, AD, ZTP, HD score, at least 2 show ratings of SG or better, under 2 different judges. In previous years, ratings were recorded as Koerklasse I or II. Now, the ratings are: IA for best conformation, best temperament; IB for best conformation, second-best temperament; IIA for second-best conformation, best temperament; IIB for second-best conformation, second-best temperament. The title itself is recorded as "angekoert IA (ZVA) ", for example. The DV continues to designate whether the title has been earned for 2 years, or for life (ZVA).

The title has to be reattempted at the end of two years, in order to earn the "for life" designation].

DSM: I have heard that judges now do not feel comfortable passing a dog that acts aggressive on the

ZTP tie-out/isolation test, rather than being friendly with the judge. Do you think an aggressive response in this ZTP isolation test should still be allowed, so long as the dog shows readiness to bite confidently, rather than being cowardly and "fear biting."

LERNER: We have to distinguish between pretended aggression, and aggression which comes out of the proper "personal prestige" drive. A responsible judge recognizes whether the dog is aggressive because of his drive, or because of his fear, and he will make the right decision.

DSM: Do you feel that judges take liberties with the dogs in some of these tests - where the dog should not have to tolerate some things judges do? I'm thinking of Quint here.....

LERNER: There are judges who during the ZTP are sometimes moving outside the regulations of the ZTP procedure. In one such case, I had taken a dog to the ZTP who was strong and aggressive. The judge hit the dog hard with his book, and the dog bit him for this. [Interviewer: "ten points for the dog!"] Quint failed the ZTP and was declared unbreedable in Germany because of this. Later, Quint did the Czech Körung with top scores, being one of only a few dogs to pass that day. In 1990, the same judge who declared Quint unbreedable, gave his foreign-bred daughter the title, "DV- Youth- Champion."

DSM: Vogel speaks of how he feels that his interest in GSDs and Rottweilers kept him from "wearing rose-colored Dobermann glasses" Many breeders become completely centered on their breed, and can't see when their dogs are no longer comparing favorably to other working breeds. Do you think that your career in training dogs for the Air Force - and interest in many different breeds - has kept you more focused on what overall good working character is?

LERNER: I have to answer "yes." I am sure that I know much about the character of any dog. I am not just focusing on the Dobermann. I would never say that there is just one dog breed in the world who is good. Many people do though. I like any dog who has the value to be trained. One of the numerous examples is "Sammy", the son of a Riesenschnauzer and a Boxer. I chose this dog, raised and trained him, and then gave him to a Police Officer in Augsburg. He is now a very successful cadaver dog for the Police.

DSM: I understand that you bred American Staff. Terriers. When did you begin working and breeding with Staffs? I remember seeing the photo of your bitch "Amber Rose." Where did you get her from?

LERNER: I have always been interested in dogs with very high drive. So, I was interested in American Staffs. After having searched more than two years, I found Amber Rose in Austria. She was seven weeks old when I brought her home. I raised her and trained her in SchH. At any dog show that I presented her, she was shown free, without leash. She won 22 events, and finally became world youth champion and world champion.

DSM: I understand that there is a breed ban against Am Staffs and/or Pitbulls in Bavaria. When did that come into effect? What motivated this action by the government - were there any incidents of dog bites that caused this, or was it just a political decision made by non-dog people?

LERNER: There is a breed ban against Am Staffs and/or Pitbulls and similar breeds in Bavaria since October, 1992. This law was made because some people who owned such dogs were responsible for very awful incidents (dog killing children and adults seriously hurt). This made the public want a breed-ban and interdiction against owning such dogs.

DSM: Are any other breeds expected to be breed banned - there was talk that the Dobermann was next to be banned in Bavaria?

LERNER: In Bavaria, any dog can be declared a "Kampfhund" (dangerous dog) because of his individual character, in terms of incidents. Every breed is concerned: Dobermanns, GSD's, or a cross- breed.

DSM: What is happening with the law against tail docking in Germany? I heard that certain breed organizations are trying to appeal the decision in court?

LERNER: Since June 1, 1998 it is prohibited to cut tails of any breed. The only exception are the hunting dogs of the politicians! There are no prospects that this law will be repealed in the future.

DSM: Are some Dobermann breeders still docking tails?

LERNER: Tail docking is prohibited by law now. Those who still do, run the risk of having legal problems.

DSM: Are you ready to have to own a Dobermann with a tail and floppy ears, Manfred?

LERNER: We have Klarissa..... (young daughter of Anton v. Bayern, SchH2, FH x Dequina v. Haus Weissenberger, SchH3, IPO3)

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Shakira v. Bayern, Shakira v. Bayern, Vasko v. Bayern, Jano v. Bayern



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