

# The Ideal Rottweiler? Part 2

## Facts & Breeding Obstacles

By FCI Judge Gerard O'Shea (Sweden) Co-writer: Lotta Syvertsen



justask@telia.com

www.gerardoshea.com

For as long as I can remember, I have been interested in the Rottweiler and, of course, like so many, there was the whole physical appearance that appealed to me first. That big head, strong bone and powerful body was so impressive to me, especially as a boy. It was "tough dogs" who tantalized my boyhood fantasies!



*It is all for show really...*

As time went on, and I began to understand the breed from a more educated, or philosophical, point of view, I realized that there was so much more than just the impression of power and exaggeration of bulging head. I suppose it is a little bit like the young boy who goes to the car show with his father. His father announces that young Steven should help him pick out the new family car. With a whole range of high tech cars and station wagons purposely designed for the modern family, young Steven is totally convinced that the new family car should be a monster truck! With those enormously big wheels, over-exaggerated hood, flashing lights and the roar of that engine... What other car could possibly compete?! But I suppose in retrospect we should consider that Steven is only ten years of age... And in time, will grow to understand that the monster truck is an image rather than anything of real functional value.



*Great strength, agility and endurance...*

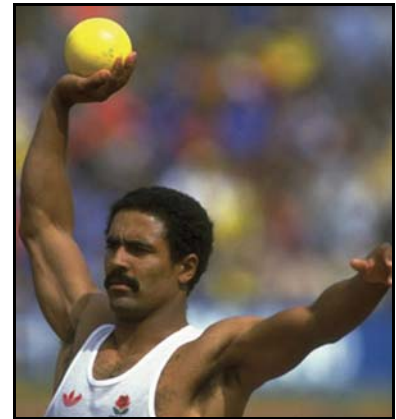
Over time, when regarding the Rottweiler, I have come to realize that I was very much like that young boy Steven.

But, I have also learned to see that in our breed, the Rottweiler, there is a great deal of adults who have never quite grown up in this regard; they are still looking for the monster truck in the Rottweiler.

Before you jump to any conclusions, I do not want you to believe I am not looking for power. But the thing with the Rottweiler is that the impression of great strength on its own is not enough. It is finding a combination, which is clearly described in the standard on the physical impression of the breed; "Great strength, endurance and agility".

### The decathlon of the dog world

One time, when asked during one of my seminars what type of athlete I could compare the Rottweiler to, I threw the question back to the audience. Not that I did not want to answer it, as I have thought of this parallel many times before. I was quite surprised though to find that most of the people who were in



*The legendary decathlon, Daley Thompson*

attendance emphasized heavily on athletes of great strength. There was everything from Arnold Schwarzenegger, Hulk Hogan, power lifters, shot put, sprinters with bodies like Ben Johnson etc., that they could see the ideal Rottweiler in. But, for me, having spent much time thinking of it, the athlete is, of course, the decathlon. When you think of the decathlon, he or she is an athlete of formidable strength; but, never so heavy or cumbersome as to not have endurance and agility. The decathlon like the Rottweiler, is not the strongest but very strong. The decathlon, like the Rottweiler, is not the fastest, but very fast. The decathlon, like the Rottweiler, is not the most enduring or agile, but for an athlete of such size is remarkably enduring and agile when in correct balance and condition. There is one area in which the decathlon and the Rottweiler are most similar, and that is to have a mentality that makes him highly competitive in many different fields. Having a lot of experience with other breeds (not just Rottweilers), I have long since come to the conclusion that the Rottweiler is the most difficult breed to achieve excellence in. As I mentioned in Part 1 of this article; true excellence is achieved by concentrating on five main elements regarding the complete Rottweiler. In no particular order; health, mentality, working ability, anatomy, breed characteristics (breed specific details, more commonly referred to as type). If I may, I would like to begin with the word "type".



*Moves with unrestricted power and purpose...  
Photo by Muanis*

### What is type?

Type a word constantly used by breeders and judges alike in more or less every breed. Of course, when I say the word type it is an abbreviation for "typical" related to what is described in the standard. Over the years, this word has been misused and broken up into many different personal concepts. One will often hear the following statements:

- my type
- his type
- their type
- working type
- show type
- European type
- American type
- all-breed type
- specialist type
- English type

And, quite recently, people can also be heard to say;

- East European type.

Then, of course, you will hear people saying there is "only one type", but, because we describe the word type with regular misuse of this word, one type will be interpreted differently from person to person. In reality, when describing what is typical, or not typical, I believe we should refer to the breed characteristics or breed specific details.

Within any breed there will always be a variation, but, as long as they remain within the confines of what is described in the standard, a variation is not only correct but necessary.

### Why is it so difficult to breed the complete Rottweiler?

Unlike so many other breeds, we have set ourselves a standard that is incredibly difficult to achieve. Let us first look at the basic Rottweiler. The Rottweiler is a molosser-breed. This, to a large degree, takes him many steps away from the basic dog. Now, what do I mean by the "basic dog"? The basic dog is a middle sized, middle boned, middle substance dog of rectangular form and moderate angles, having a head which is more or less 50/50 in proportion with moderate width and slight stop (fox-like head), and comes in a whole variation of colours, coats, tails, ears, and eye-colours. He is basically the original domesticated village dog. Being a molosser, the Rottweiler should have more than average bone strength, substance and muscle form. His head will be a far cry from the average village dog. To maintain these typical molosser characteristics, we always have to strive against what will be naturally produced by nature, and this is why we get so much variation in form and size.

### The molosser formed working dog

Being a molosser, the Rottweiler is perhaps the only molosser formed dog who still actively works to the standards more commonly achieved by herding breeds (ie German Shepherds, Belgian Shepherds, Dutch Shepherds). Practically all the other breeds of extreme molosser form have lost most of their original working ability due to exaggeration and the lack of culture to sustain working ability. In order for the Rottweiler to remain true to his working ability; but, at the same time maintaining size, substance and bone as to be considered typical of the breed, quality conformation is a must! Many of the heavier molosser breeds have lost their ability to move with true balance, and understandable so, as to achieve this requires a high level of judgement and expertise from everyone concerned.

Then, we have the teeth and bite. Simply because - again - being molosser form, you will find that many molossers lack quality of teeth, not to mention correct correlation. The Rottweiler is perhaps the only molosser dog of flat skull, pronounced stop and relatively short broad muzzle that requires the same standard of bite and quality of teeth which is required in other more common working breeds. To achieve and sustain this, the head described by the standard is important to maintain, as too much exaggeration will be detrimental to this essential working quality. And it is after all important that we do not forget that the Rottweiler is a working dog.

### Conformation

When it comes to conformation, to sustain correct body type and still have the physical performance and movement described by the standard, the Rottweiler requires a very high standard of quality balanced conformation. Again, when we consider that the Rottweiler is a working molosser, he should never get quality of movement through lightness and long, flat elasticized muscles. I have had, on occasion when judging, had to penalize Rottweilers who move very well but do not necessarily move typical. A phrase I find describes this untypical movement very well is that the dog is moving over his legs with a lot of elasticity and high flashy head carriage. Although this is often admired in the all breed ring, it is untypical for the Rottweiler and more akin to generic show movement. If the Rottweiler is to be built with the correct proportions and body mass, the movement should come through powerful and well-made quarters. One should get the impression that a good Rottweiler moves with unrestricted power through his body. This movement may not actually be very flashy, but is very effective and typical. Most of the movement required in the Rottweiler comes from large, well developed muscles close to the body. Given the fact that he is above average weight and of molosser form, conformation of quality and balance is essential. For this, to be achieved in a larger breed, requires a high standard of judging and breeding alike.

Note that many of the molosser breeds who were once active working dogs, because of exaggeration of size, bone and mass, without the due consideration of balance (which is essential in a bigger package) many molosser breeds have lost quality of movement.

### Mentality

To drive and control such a heavy working breed requires great will and stamina from the dog. But, at the same time, unlike some extreme working dogs, should have the ability to preserve energy and concentration in a calmer fashion when needed. In other words - the ideal Rottweiler's

temperament should be able to adjust himself in an every day social situation but be capable of switching the full work mode at a moments notice. When you consider the demands of an ever less tolerance society, breeding the ideal Rottweiler's temperament is a task onto itself.

### Health issues

Our current health program is mainly based on hips and elbows. Not to mention the fact that we have many other fringe health issues that can pop up from time to time. What



*Calm in the right hands...*

### A uniform breed

Then, of course, we have another large task we have to conform to and that is that the Rottweiler is a uniform breed. I can once remember the conversation with an old German Shepherd friend who could not understand why we made so much fuss over what he referred to as "cosmetic details". I went on to explain that unlike the German Shepherd, the Rottweiler is a uniform breed, and the uniformity is essential for us to maintain in order for the breed to sustain a high level of consistency. How would our Rottweiler look if we were to drop these details? Allowing a variation of colours and markings, allowing light eyes? And, although some people would say it is not so important, the issue of mouth and nose pigment is, of course, important because our breed pants a lot, and lacking pigment in mouth or eyes distinctly alters the impression we get when we look at the head.



*A beautiful head piece according to the Standard  
Photo by Muanis*

is difficult I suppose, is that most of the health issues are of a recessive nature. Basically, that means that we never really get rid of them but of course do our best to control them. One of the major problems with any recessive health issue is that it is very difficult to sustain consistent suitable levels if only the odd dog is to be tested. In many Scandinavian countries, it has become a culture partly pushed through insurance, that many dogs, and litters, will be health tested. And, then, of course, it is what we do with the information... We should never allow any one issue to dominate the whole breeding program. So, you see, breeding is like a relationship. You have to give and take and, sometimes, you have to take a slight calculated risk; otherwise, nothing develops.

### The road most traveled

I understand that there will be some breeders who will only focus on one or two of the five headings to the ideal Rottweiler. For example, only breeding for sporting, sporting, sporting, or only breeding for showing, showing, showing. Or, it might be health, health, health. And you will find when you look at kennels who only aim in one direction that they often achieve this direction but are blind to the fact that they have sacrificed the complete Rottweiler on the way.

Breeding a uniform molosser of black and tan colours, and ideal cosmetics, with correct substance, bone and proportions along with the ability to effectively work in any field, live and produce high health criteria, to move and perform beyond the standards of any other modern molosser. To have such carriage and pondus as to perform at any show level, to be brave and courageous when called upon, to be tranquil and gentle when needed. This, I guess, is a high road to travel, but it is the high road that gives you the view and it is a road worth travelling.

### Editor's Note:

***Gerard is judging males at 2010 American Rottweiler Club's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual National Sieger Show.***

*Sunday, April 25, 2010 - Greeley, Colorado, USA*

*Meet & Greet the Judges:*

*Gerard O'Shea & Bianka Miksic Kasun*

*Saturday, April 24, 2010*