

Story and photos

By Leanne Miller

Bellarouge Dogue de Bordeaux  
Sydney, Australia

Photos courtesy  
of Bellarouge Australia



*Tyrannus Skyejacked by Emberez*

## French Connection

■ This annual show brings together the best Dogues the world has to offer

I certainly hope this magazine is international, because I am a New Zealander, living in Australia, writing for an American publication about a French dog show!

I don't think it will get much more diverse than that.

Held this year on September 12 and 13, the French Clubmatch is hosted by the Societe des Amateurs de Dogues de Bordeaux (SADB). The location varies each year, but always remains in the breed's homeland of France.

You are probably asking yourself why people would endure some 24 hours of flights and additional road travel just to watch a dog show. With between 200 and 300 entries and a panel of breed-specialist judges, this is the pinnacle of the show calendar for the breed. It is the largest gathering of Dogues de Bordeaux in the world, attracting enthusiasts from almost every

continent. Placement in the Ring D'Honneur is a great achievement, but winning Best in Show is the crowning glory.

Access to top-quality bloodlines was limited for many years due to the remoteness of Australia, hindered by quarantine rules that make it a lengthy process to import from many European countries and the U.S. Luckily for Australia, there have been kennels that have persevered, but to ensure the quality of imported dogs, you really need to travel overseas and view many examples of the breed in the flesh.

The kennels of Moloscyg and Ataraxia have been regular attendees at the French Clubmatch over many years, but 2007 saw the biggest Australian contingent yet with Amedange, Bellarouge (myself) and Bronzantiq joining the journey.



*Prof. Raymond Triquet*

Since then, I have attended each year. So I now have three French Clubmatches under my belt and such a better understanding of the breed.

The 2009 French Clubmatch was held in the town of Rambervilliers. An additional attraction

this year was the all-breed show a few hours away at Metz, incorporating a Dogue de Bordeaux specialty judged by fellow Australians Dr. Chris and Yvette Girling of Moloscyg Kennels. Two shows for the price of one.

Sixty-nine Dogues were entered at Metz, the largest breed entry by far, and just over 250 entered at the French Clubmatch (from 20 different countries, including three from the U.S.). A Dogue lover's dream. Not to mention the honor of meeting Prof. Raymond Triquet, long referred to as the "father of the breed."



*Eross van de Paterhoek*

The format for the Clubmatch starts with Saturday being registration and the preliminary judging of the puppy and junior classes. These young classes are judged and a short list of deserving dogues is selected to return to the Ring D'Honneur for final placings on Sunday. TAN temperament testing also commences on Saturday and runs through Sunday. (On the show grounds away from the conformation rings, an area is set up containing a number of obstacles and tasks to test the dogs' reactions to unfamiliar objects and certain circumstances. A pass in TAN testing is one of the prerequisites for the title of French Champion.)

Sunday is the big day. What I find most difficult is alternating between all the classes, as five rings are judged simultaneously. You have the best intentions to spend equal time at every ring, not an easy task. I personally use the catalogue and gravitate toward those Dogues related to my own bloodlines, to better

understand the pedigrees I have. I also peruse the Debutant, Junior and Intermediate classes for upcoming quality. Luckily, the best of every class enters the Ring D'Honneur near the end of the day for final placements.

Surveying all the Dogues in the rings, some of their heritages were clear to see. There was no mistaking a son of Brandoux Toezz (long considered to have one of the most correct head types for the breed) in the Open Dog ring, or the type for which De Legeane Kennel is known for.

This year I noticed a few differences from the previous year, but still many of the usual weaknesses remained – out in elbow, lack of real chin, concave chests.

There were fewer of the very bulk, massive-boned, more Mastino type of Dogue. However there remained some overly large males and females in the Open Classes with too much mass and bulk, along with youngsters who looked far beyond their real ages. Raymond Triquet had earlier issued a directive regarding the breed standard, stressing that the Dogue is a mid-sized mastiff variety, still maintaining athleticism, and to avoid breeding for excess. For me, 2009 demonstrated less of the excessiveness that I had seen in the previous year, but it was still clearly evident in some.

I noticed a slight improvement in rear angulation, a few more young and adolescent Dogues with good angulation. For those who were also balanced with the correct front angulation, this carried through to improved toplines and better movement.

The placement of black masks was evident this year. Brothers Poseidon and Payk, bred by Kennel Z'Orisku, achieved first and second places respectively in their Debutant Male class. Black-masked Andorra Hause



*De Alfaree Kennel from Italy*





*Duke-Udson De La Demeure Combreenne*

dem Ketosch won the Senior Bitch Class, and her Kennel Hause dem Ketosch won the Progeny Group class, with all the offspring being out of Andorra.

The winner of the Puppy Male class in 2008, Duke-Udson De La Demeure Combreenne, returned this year to also win the Junior Male class at 16.5 months old. On the previous

day, he also won Best Junior at Metz. He received a glowing critique from judges at both Metz and the French Clubmatch regarding his correct head shape, good front and rear angulation, excellent movement ... and the list continued. I see a good future for this nicely structured young male, and I am sure that his owners at De Mont Rebellis agree.



*Jacques Vom Butjadinger Land*

It was wonderful to see some American Dogues also place well. Mount Sinai Crusader St Amand placed Second in the Intermediate Male class. Northland's Eowin placed first in the Puppy Female Class. Northland's Finn was also graded Excellent in the Open Male Class.

Best Male and Club Champion went to Jacques vom Butjadinger Land, son of Ginger vom Butjadinger Land and Signore Kwan de la Seigneurie des Chartons, owned by Arndt Bressemer from Germany.

Early on, I had the pleasure of personally meeting the female who would go on to win Best in Show. She had already won Best in Show at the Dutch Clubmatch a few weeks earlier, and I could see why. She was, of course, Tyrannus Skyejacked by Emberez ("Skye"), owned by owned by Becky Swainston and Nik Burnikell from the UK, and a daughter of Rhodonite Renais at Tyrannus and Moby de Legeane. Although a substantial girl for her young age of 19 months, she exhibited ideal characteristics for a Dogue without being overdone. I most admired her true "sour mug" expression while still being feminine. This could mainly be attributed to

her strongly visible underjaw, nicely low set eyes and trapezoid head but no excessiveness. She was well bodied but still retaining a pleasant underline, of nice proportions, deep and wide without being too short in leg, with a correct topline, good rear angulation and nice movement.



*Tyrannus Skyejacked by Emberez with her owner Nik Burnikell, and judges (from left) Sylviane Tompousky (president of the Société des Amateurs de Dogues de Bordeaux), Violaine Pressiat, Bas Bosch, Boris Chapiro and Ludovic Denis*

The judge of the female class, Mr. Bas Bosch, had very few words to say about Skye, but those words said it all: "Superb bitch. Breathtaking quality. Far too nice to spend any more words on her."

Each year, my experience at the French Clubmatch exceeds the previous year. This year I very much enjoyed my conversations with Mr. Bas Bosch, a true gentleman and breed enthusiast, who I had met earlier in 2008 when he agreed to carry out a Dogue breed lecture while on a judging appointment in Australia. But the real thrill is to see the volume of Dogues on show in their homeland and have the opportunity to speak to their owners and breeders.

## About the Author



Leanne and her husband live with their Dogues in the Blue Mountains, outside Sydney, Australia. They became involved in the breed about seven years ago. They have shown a number of their Dogues to their Australian Champion title, imported five Dogues from the UK and Europe, and are active in breed welfare and rescue, producing a Dogue De Bordeaux calendar for the past five years to raise funds for Dogues in need. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■