

Meet . . .

Owner-Handler

Linda Tkach

1) Number of years showing dogs. Five years total, but not consecutively in Conformation shows. For two years I learned and competed in Rally with my bitch and was invited to compete at the National last October where she is now 3rd in the Nation. I just returned to Conformation last year with a new harlequin puppy.

2) Your kennel name & how you got it. I don't have one yet.

3) Where you live. My husband and I and two Great Danes, Delilah and Ryder, live in a one story home with 2.5 acres in Valley Center, California which is in Northern San Diego County.

4) Where do you travel to show? We love to travel so this last year alone we've taken the dogs and competed both in Rally and Conformation all over California, to Pennsylvania for the National and also Arizona and just lately Utah.

5) How many shows do you attend in a year? At least 26 plus this year.

6) Have you ever hired and/or used professional handlers and for what purpose? Yes, I used a professional for a few shows just until I practiced with a new puppy last year. Now I exclusively handle myself.

7) What made you decide to owner-handle your Great Danes? I always loved being in the ring with my dogs and I think since I can practice every day that helps both dog and myself have a closer relationship. Beside it's much more rewarding when I win handling myself.

8) What are the biggest challenges of owner-handling your dogs? I find I make many mistakes along the way but with all the helpful friendly people that give me guidance and encouragement at each show I learn more and more how to perfect my technique.

9) What do owner-handlers need to consider if they want to be competitive in the ring? Patience, patience, and the determination to improve.

10) 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. Sometimes I do only because I feel I could do better next time. So I practice and practice and watch and learn how others handle in the ring.

11) Do you feel there is any stigma against owner-handlers in Great Danes and if yes please explain. No. Not at all.

12) What tips would you give a new owner-handler to help them step up their game? Study other handlers both professionals and amateurs in the ring. Attend matches, practice in handling classes to get your dog used to the ring with other dogs, and take them to shows. It's all about enjoying the connection you have with your dog inside and outside the show ring.

13) What is the most valuable advice you ever received about handling your own dogs from a professional handler? Stay calm, do your best that day and have fun.



14) What is the most helpful technique you ever learned just by watching professional handlers? How to communicate what you want your dog to do. Try different ways how to present your dog.

15) What are some common mistakes you see owner-handlers committing in the ring? Not taking their time when stacking and not being aware of what their dog is doing. It happens to me sometimes too.

16) What have been some of your show ring successes as an owner-handler? When both my dog and I are in connection with each other and work as a team.

17) What are some of the most rewarding things about owner-handling for you? When I enter a ring and try my best with my dog to present him to the best of his ability. It's a great feeling when that happens whether we win or lose. It's even more exciting when we win.

18) Most professional handlers began as owner-handlers. What keeps you from taking that same route? I'm not sure what will happen in the future I might like to be a breeder next.

19) Who is your favorite judge and why? I really don't know many judges so far. But I do like the judges that let you take time in the ring to present your dog and when they also study each dog before making their decision.

20) 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? Reese Witherspoon. I think she would act like me perfectly.