

# Breeder Profile

by Steve Cox

## When and why did you first get interested in Mastini?

Ever Since I was young boy I have had an interest for a big dog, like a mastiff type, and one day I met it.... This is the story:

Today with the great successes of my breeding, I remember the year 1972 when a casual meeting and...a big fear helped me to realize my dream.

But this is what happened.

When I was a boy I cultivated the passion to have a big dog, perhaps giant, like the dog you meet in a dream, It all started while I worked as a driver for the Coin stores. I had to do an errand in one of the laboratories scattered in Italy: precisely in Turin in Course Giulio Cesare. We arrived a little bit in advance, but despite this, I sounded the horn of the truck to warn the storekeepers and get the help to unload the goods, but that morning they didn't come immediately. While I opened the doors of the truck I saw a big animal that drew near. I jumped above the truck and held onto the handle with all my strength, but I felt the dog grab one of my trouser legs which tore off. I stayed above the truck without part of my trousers, with a great fear, I had to look at the animal that observed me, and he was sitting under the truck with the shreds of cloth in his mouth. After a little bit of time I recovered and asked to the owners which type of dog was it? Laughing they answered me, it was a Neapolitan Mastiff .

**BILL ARRIVES.** My dream to have a big dog came true: the owners had a couple of Mastino and the female was nursing puppies of 35/ 40 days old. The same evening, when I finished the job, they gave me a pair of new jeans and a ...pup male. When we arrived at home I did him all the sanitary visits puppy training began, he has no documents of genealogical tree, so I enrolled him to the L.I.R. and the C.T. The name of my pup was Bill and after a year I bought him a female. After a few months they had their first puppies and I booked the joining with the



**This Editions breeder profile is an Interview with one of Northern Italy's most famous breed and show kennels, "Del Gheno" I had the pleasure in visiting Giuliano and his family in December 2005, they made me most welcome and their work with Mastino over the past three decades is a credit to them.**

champion more in fashion to that time with the purpose to have more and more of the selected dogs and fix a new genealogy of the breed.

**THE BREEDING.** On 1978 I got married and with my wife decided to build a real breeding overcoming problems of each kind: bureaucratic, financial..... Today, after an along walk of 28 years with the Neapolitan Mastiff, I feel satisfied of all the sacrifices and that continuous still to behaviour, for love of the race, for the guardianship and safeguard of the breeding "Del Gheno" .

**MY JEWELS.** "Barone" who worked on 1985 in a film by "Ermanno Olmi": "Lunga vita alla signora", winning the lion of silver as best protagonist and then "Astra", "Zeus", "Erodes", "Giulio", "Dracula", "Duke", "Debora", "Dalia", "Vanessa", "Ercole", "Sara", "Atena", "Artù", "Fiamma", all champion dogs. Any of these has been sold to foreign countries where they continue their success maintaining the good name of the breeding Del Gheno.

## What health testing do you carry out?

First of all I do all the necessary selection of healthy dogs, and I believe this is the first thing to do if you really want to BREED dogs, and not only make money with them. This means that you breed only healthy dogs, to have only healthy dogs in the future.

The second step before the breeding is the x-rays. Moreover, when you have healthy dogs, (and this after many generations of breeding, considering that a genetic defect can come out since if this was on a dog of 7 generations behind), then you can choose your breeding with the goal of have a certain type of result, like a prototype, which is a big number of definite features, brought from many different dogs.

Of course, when a pup has to be sold, usually at the age of 10 weeks, it leaves the kennel with all the vaccinations done for its age, as well as wormed, micro chipped, and with a pet passport if necessary. The pup will also have a final health test from the vet who will sign a health certificate for the shipping.

Besides, after health care, you need to give to the dogs the right diet and training, and it has to be personalized.

## Describe your best time with your Mastini

I've had a huge number of great events with my mastini, from the WINS to the shows winning competitors that years ago were undefeatable, to the moment when my dogs have been used



for the cinema, from the moment it has been made a new book on Neapolitan mastiff with all subjects from our kennel,

to the most recent event hosting a famous Japanese TV station for a documentary on the breed.

And of course the huge number of prizes and titles won all over the world, titles like world champions, European champions, Italian champions, atimana champions, enci champions, social champions, as well as generations of reproductive champions. Another great moment is when the clients all over the world call you or send you an email saying they are happy with the dog because it is growing very well and is a part of the family now, or when they say me they have won a show the day before... these are nice satisfactions.

## Describe your worst time with Mastini

The worst moment is without any doubts when you loose a mastino, especially a mastino which has made part of the story of the kennel. Then, there is another bad moment, that makes you angry and let you ask yourself "why am I doing all this?" and it is when in an important show, you take the second place only because the owner of the other dog has to win, and your dog is much better, and all the crowd is with you.... But I think you can not clean the world from the corruption...



## Do you have an "ideal" dog - either living or dead that you would like to try and "recreate" in your own breeding?



I have many dogs that I would like in my kennel forever, maybe I will clone them ha ha... and some of them are Dalia del gheno, Ercole del gheno, Fiamma del gheno (the last Italian champion), and of course also Artu del gheno...

## What features make this your ideal?

The main features of these dogs are that they are very typical for the breed, they are very healthy for the breed (for example for our main stud Ch Artu del gheno, on the website people can see a x-ray exam for hip dysplasia, and the vet said he has never seen and also thought to find a Neapolitan mastiff with any percentage of dysplasia like Artu.



They also have the feature to walk and run for miles... because they are not fat and their legs are very strong, because they have been trained and muscled with a special treadmill 3 times a week.

Another great feature that characterise our kennel all over the world is the head, very harmonious and well designed in every single wrinkle. Also the colour, dark grey with dark nails (and experts of the breed know what this means)

## Where do you see yourself and your Mastino in ten years?



In ten years I hope to have better Mastini than now, and I will be maybe the most historical breeder in the world. I would like to continue to go to big show rings, and I know that if I can't go, there would be someone else with a Del gheno dog.

[www.delgheno.com](http://www.delgheno.com)

For me it was a pleasure visiting the Del Gheno Kennels, the kennels are beautiful and spotlessly clean, and every dog was in first class condition absolutely no expense spared. Giuliano and Anna Rosa showed a lot of interest in our Mastini in the U.K.

I spent a couple of hours showing them some photos and web sites of some of the dogs in England and they seemed quite surprised at how our dogs have improved and come on, mainly due to the introduction of new imports over the past ten years.

I would like to think that maybe they would consider judging our dogs over here in the future.

**Steve Cox**