

The Neapolitan Mastiff Club were proud to Present:
'Respect the Forefathers' & 'Back to the Roots' Seminar with Christofer Habig.



Not really having the time to sit & listen to Christofer's discourse on the day, I was not able to digest his words until post-event when, watching the footage recorded at both Seminar & Show, I realised that Christofer's sentiment echoed with relevance throughout the entire day. His verbal critiques and comments, whilst assessing our exhibits, echoed the same sentiment, the same train-of-thought, Christofer later went on to express in his very thought provoking lecture.



Christofer spoke passionately & eloquently about the Mastino & Mastino enthusiasts he had met during the 70's & 80's. The rapport he had forged with our forefathers and how, as his mentors - had made him tick Mastino - and enabled him to understand that the Mastino IS a breed-apart and how, in order to appreciate the dynamics of the breed, you have to dig-yourself-into the specifics. The Mastino has elements in a unique combination, things which do not normally go together, but they do go together with the Mastino.



Discussing the essence of the breed, referring to the Italian Breed Standard of 1971, Christofer noted as an example: The Neapolitan Mastiff is a guard dog, defence dog par excellence. So guard dog and defence dog, it doesn't mention sleepy, it doesn't mention laid-back, it doesn't mention phlegmatic. The breed has a presence, has an alertness, has an awareness, powerful, massive, strong, of coarse and at the same time majestic appearance - coarse, robust, courageous, these are key words to remember and one should not wash all these things out when translating the Standard, nobody should change the breed, leave the essence there.



Christofer highlighted the way in which enthusiasts had been seduced by excess and moved away from what the Breed Standard, the DNA of the breed, was asking for. This was not a matter of taste or of preference, it was simply not what the Standard was asking for - wrinkles all over the body, who said the breed should have that? Not the Breed Standard, it is not, has never been the DNA of the breed to have wrinkle everywhere, this is not what the Standard asks for, it simply does not exist in the Standard, this is fantasy, nobody has ever wanted this, the forefathers of the breed did not ask for this type of dog it's simply wrong.



Many things we do with good intentions, when we are among experts no problem! but other people see it and then use it in the wrong way and say Oh! we are supposed to breed for loose skin. No! we don't breed for loose skin, we breed for good Neapolitans and they have loose skin compared to a tighter skin. Let's become more radical, establish the new confidence, put ourselves ahead of the game - there is just one authentic philosophy behind the breed and it is not our business to reinvent it. Let us commit ourselves to a new normal - Let us rediscover and revalue the one and only Mastino dream.



Although having been quoted in 1999 as saying that - "the British don't understand the Mastino" - Christofer rescinded that statement which he amended to a massive compliment - "In Britain I think you are the leading Nation in the World and I hope you continue to claim the leadership" - In order to honour the Mastino, you must first love the Mastino, and I saw today that you do.

The above overview of Christofer's discourse, is a mere snippet of the many Mastino subjects covered throughout the Respect the Forefathers & Back to the Roots Seminar. DVD's - Available from: The Neapolitan Mastiff Club Secretary. April 2013. (Written by Denise Bucknall May 2013)