

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

From *Dogs in Canada*, January 1989

THE DOBERMAN PINSCHER

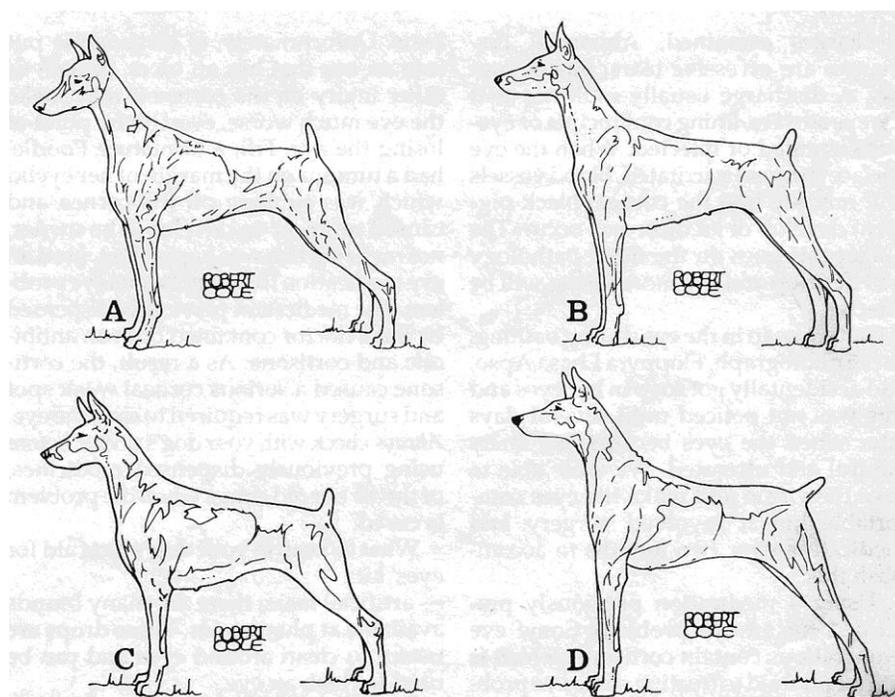
I have selected four real-life bitches that combiner to focus attention on a number of important aspects mentioned and not mentioned in the breed Standard for this noble working dog. This does not include colour, and as colour sometimes confuses, I have elaborated. Disqualifications have also received mention. Compare these four to your own ideal and position them first, second, third and fourth.

Five disqualifications – The first is shyness, the second is viciousness. The third is overshot more than $\frac{3}{16}$ of an inch, the fourth is undershot more than $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch, and the fifth is four or more missing teeth.

Colour – is fairly well fixed in Dobermans. The most prevalent body colours are black or puce brown with deep rich red tan markings, and the most likely colour to be faulty is in the fading or light colour of the markings – a minor fault on a good Doberman.

Steel blue body colour and conventional tan markings are rare but acceptable; here, it is not the hair colour but the eye colour (light yellow) that is usually at fault. Fawn body colour, called Isabella, is now acceptable. A small white spot on any colour is to be tolerated; a white spot larger than a 25 cent piece on an adult is a fault.

Height – is such that the Doberman can be held by the collar without the owner having to stoop. The ideal for a bitch is $25 \frac{1}{2}$ in.; $27 \frac{1}{2}$ in. for a male. Weights range between 60 and 80 lbs. When Dobermans are oversized it is coarseness and clumsiness that most often detract from the svelte elegance that sets this breed apart.



FIRST PLACE

My selection for first place, Bitch B, has a head of correct length, in that it fits the body. The planes of the head are parallel and the lengths of skull and muzzle are equal.

The stop down of flat skull to muzzle is only moderate and there is fill under the eye, but never so much as to produce an oriental slant. The small almond shaped eyes should be set in front of the brow, but not so close together as to produce a sharp, sinister or quizzical expression. In reds, blues and fawns, the iris is allowed to blend with that of the markings, but the darkest shade is preferable in every case. The lips are tight, the head dry. The nostrils are large, the nose blunt and the nose colour corresponds to coat colour.

The neck tapers from the head down smoothly into the shoulders. There is a slight crest and the neck is dry and carried proudly. The high withers compliment flat, well laid back shoulders. A degree of forechest is obvious in front of the point of shoulder and the chest extends downward to the elbow. The forelegs are straight with ample bone, the pasterns almost perpendicular, the cat feet well padded.

The topline is strong throughout with very little arch to the short loin or slope to the croup. From above, the hips are equal in breadth to rib cage at the shoulders. In profile, there is good tuck up, the upper thighs are broad, the same length as second thigh, angulated at stifle and hock and balanced with front. The rear pasterns set vertical; when they sickle (not illustrated) the angle brings the foot forward (known as saber hocks in the breed), a serious fault.

SECOND PLACE

A sound, strong example, Bitch C displays a degree of neck crest usually only found on males. As for her head, the ears are set well up on top of the skull and are trimmed to a long point and carried erect. On the debit side, the loose flews detract from the muzzle's neatness. Her particular overall balance has appeal for a number of people but is quite different from my first place choice.

She has the same length and depth of body as my first place winners and about the same length of neck and depth of body yet she lacks the same degree of elegance – why? The reason lies in that she is the height of a paw shorter of leg than my first place winner.

Length of leg from elbow to ground, the elbow level with the bottom of the deepest part of the chest, should be approximately as long as the body is deep. “Approximate” on my first place bitch is slightly longer. Approximately here is the same length as the body is deep. I was tempted to make the legs dramatically shorter than body depth but did not do so because there are people who, as is their right, prefer this particular balance to that of my first place choice.

THIRD PLACE

Feminine, sleek, good hindquarters, correct length of neck and amount of bone. Ears are nicely set high on head and neatly cropped to a point and carried erect. Chest is deep and well developed, projecting forward of the point of shoulder. Shoulder blades are long, flat and laid back. Withers are high and distinct.

On the debit side, Bitch A's muzzle is weak and the stop too pronounced. Her topline is also weak and her loin is long. Her pipestopper tail detracts from an otherwise good croup. For some reason, her front pasterns are weak and slope to a greater degree than desirable on a Doberman.

FOURTH PLACE

Bitch D has an average head but little behind the head of equal quality. This girl's faults contribute more to this discussion than her virtues but, before focusing on individual parts, one must first assess her as a whole to see if, despite individual shortcomings, she still presents a pleasing picture.

In my opinion, the result is a sum of poor parts and the picture does not please. The presence of loose skin at the neck is immediately obvious and this wetness can be found on other parts of the body, but this was not a major concern. I was more concerned with four particular departures, one on each corner of the dog.

Compare the degree of forechest on this example to the well defined forechest on my first place bitch. The forechests are the same – it is the degree of exposure that differs. This girl's steep forequarters have been forced forward, covering the forechest. The lack of forechest is the result, not the cause, but without it true Doberman balance is not possible.

The cause of imbalance begins with this girl's steep shoulders (note the skin wrinkles above the blades) and continues down through the steep upper arm. Notice the position of the elbow. The elbow is not below the chest – the chest is raised above the elbow by the steep shoulder blade and upper arm – this girl's chest is not shallow.

The position of the forearm in front of the elbow on this particular example is also pushed forward and I would hazard to guess that it weakly positions away from the body. Continuing down, the pasterns lack give.

The croup is more than 'slightly' rounded, the tail sets low, the buttocks lack extension. There is lack of angulation and stifle and hock, partly because the hind legs have been stretched rearward to lower the rear. The end result has not improved balance.

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From *Dogs in Canada*, April 1993

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Select the best four of these eight Doberman Pinschers and place them in order of merit based on type, soundness and balance – or exercise your options and place all eight.

One of these Dobes is superior, one is quality, four are average, and two are below average. There is a good likelihood you will experience more difficulty placing, in order of merit, the four real-life Dobes rated average than you will placing first and second.

Readers in Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa may initially be disturbed by the cropped ears, as, initially, Canadian judges are when they judge in no-crop countries; however, there is more to type than ears.

What to look for

From this vantage point, look for a body that appears square. I have drawn all examples about the ideal 70 cm height (27 ½”) to keep it simple. Look for a length of head, neck and legs in proportion to length and depth of body to compliment this square appearance. Think in terms of a 'medium' dog, compactly built, having good angulation front and rear, muscular and powerful, capable of speed and endurance.

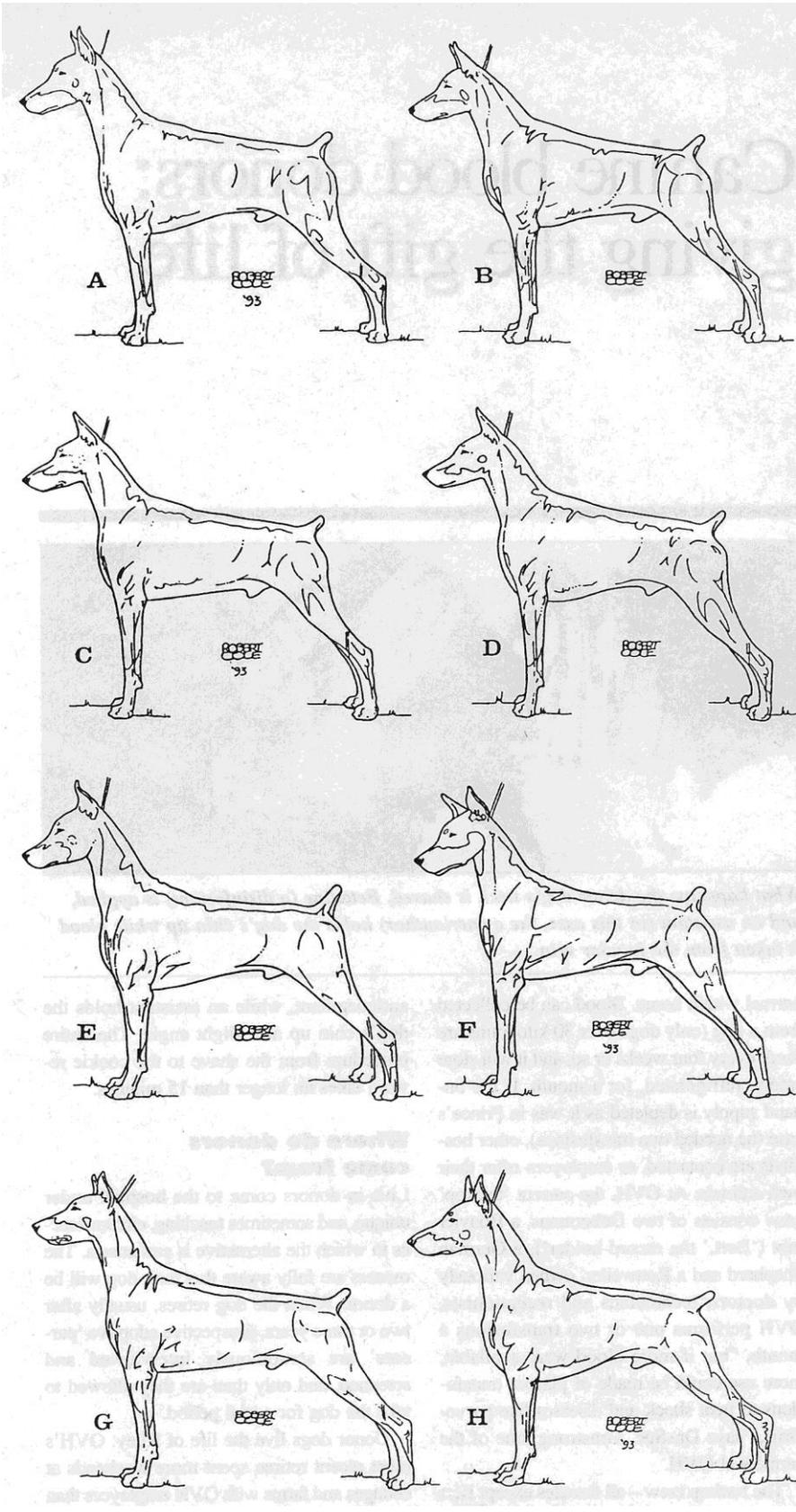
The head is long and dry, resembling a blunt wedge in profile (and from the front). The muzzle is at least as long as the skull; the top lines of the muzzle and the skull are parallel. Stop is slight – more than a Collie but less than a Great Dane. The muzzle should not slant back too suddenly from under the nose to the lower jaw, but neither should it be square. The eyes are dark, almond shaped, slightly squinted when looking at a distant point or even a close up stranger; the look is one of quiet confidence.

The neck is fairly long, carried with considerable nobility, well-muscled, dry, and has a well-defined crest. One of these examples has a short neck, which is not obvious because he is not otherwise cloddy – an exception to the usual.

The topline slopes slightly from withers to croup, according to the British standard. My Canadian and 1982 American standard describe the topline as straight – which could mean 'slopes slightly'. The forechest protrudes visibly and the deep brisket is level with the elbow. The belly is fairly well tucked up, and the loin is well muscled and hard. The shoulder blade and upper arm are well angulated and appear the same length. Legs are straight from elbow to wrist, with a slight slope to the front pastern. Feet are tight and cat-like.

Good rear angulation is balanced with the front, the pelvis sets at about 30 degrees, and the croup is well filled out. The docked tail is carried only slightly above the horizontal.

These are things to look for. Relate these virtues to each of the eight dogs, then weigh these virtues against faults and come up with an order of merit.



FIRST AND SECOND

My first place dog is the only one that is not a real life Dobe. Rather than use a better but different Dobe to represent superior, I took my second place dog and improved upon him. By comparing first place Dog D to second place, real life Dog C, you can, feature by feature, see what I believe distinguishes a superior Dobe (one that would win in the very best competition) from a quality Dobe (one that would win in less than strong competition).

To produce superior, first place Dog D, I smoothed out Dog C's roman muzzle, removed the bump over his eyes, graduated his stop, smoothed out his topline, gave his upper arm more slope rearward, and deepened his brisket slightly, providing more upsweep towards his loin. In the rear, I gave Dog D more angulation at stifle, reduced the height of his hocks and positioned his rear pasterns more vertically. These are the finishing touches that, in my opinion, distinguish superior Dog D from quality, real life Dog C. (Adding the thumbprint on the cheek was a minor touch).

THIRD AND FOURTH

My selection for third place is between average Dog A and average Dog B. I prefer Dog A because of his overall balance and good hindquarters. I forgave his block head and slightly straight front.

Fourth place Dog B has a good body, but his head and short neck do not match his body very well.

FIFTH AND SIXTH

Fifth place Dog G was in close contention for fourth place. I forgave his coarse head, lack of neck arch, long rangy body (the loin is long), and stretched out hind legs in favour of his alert balance – but not enough to place him in front of Dog B.

Sixth place went to Dog H. There is little I like about his head, and his underjaw appears weak. His front legs also look short, and his forechest seems pigeon. His hind legs are definitely overangulated, and his feet are not ideal. The arch over his loin is disturbing.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH

Neither of these below average examples has a great deal going for him. In fact, Dog E and F serve better to illustrate faults than virtues. If they were the only Dobs entered in this class, you might ask yourself if either was worthy of championship points.

Their heads do not appeal – one is snipey and the other blunt – nor do their toplines. Dog E has better shoulders and more forechest, but his front pasterns are soft. Dog F is steep in shoulder and upper arm, and the whole forequarter assembly is pushed too far forward on his body. However, his hindquarters are fair. I gave Dog E seventh place, and Dog F eight.

The author thanks fellow Judge and Doberman Pinscher breeder Fred Heal.