

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

From *Dogs in Canada*, July 1989

THE GREAT DANE

Based solely on soundness, two of these four fawn Great Danes are decidedly superior to the other two. Compare the two sound dogs – one more closely represents typical – which?

FIRST AND SECOND

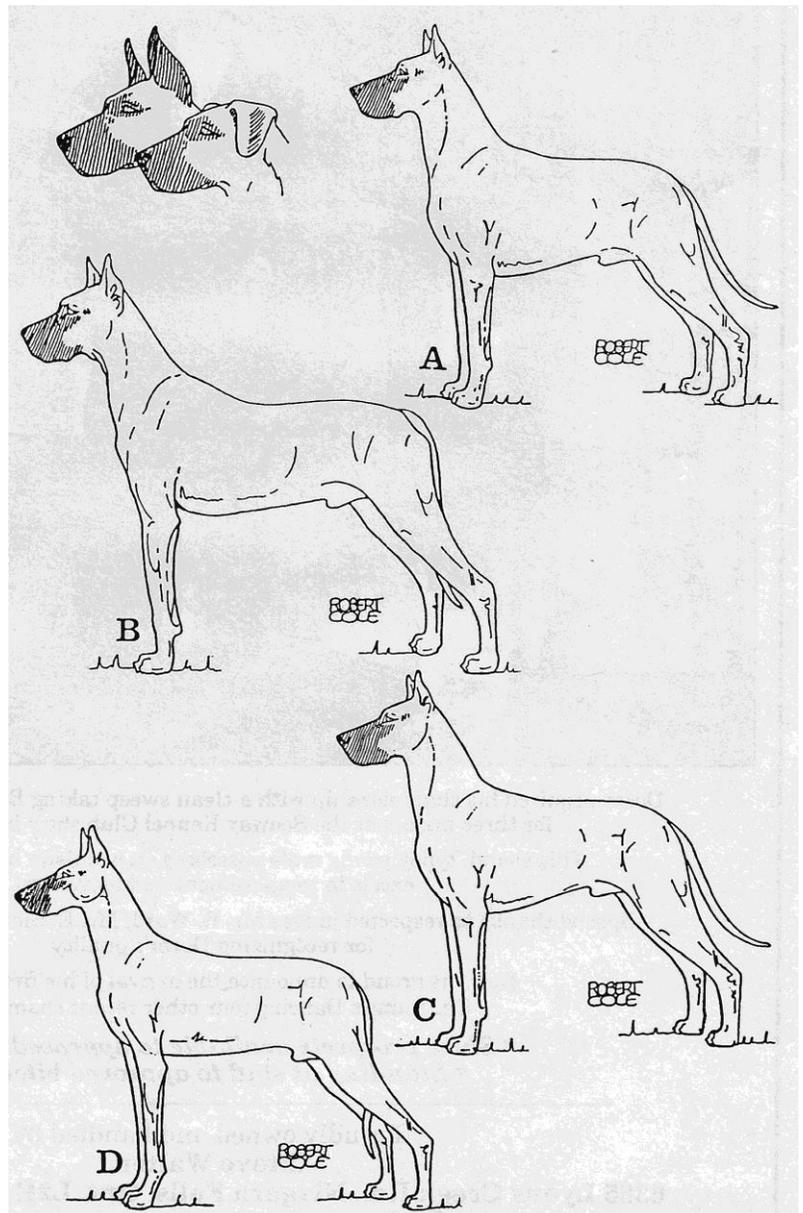
Two of these four examples have been especially selected to enable you to make a type choice between two sound, very similar Danes, the focus being on an important type feature not fully explained in the Standard.

The feature is a combination of strength and elegance produced by a particular balance of parts. Because of this feature, or in spite of it, one of these two sounder males will have more appeal than the other. The question is ... is the male that has more appeal for you the more typical of the two? Do you prefer Dog A or Dog C?

Both have the required strength combined with elegance that the Standard demands, but they have it in different degrees. One dog tends to be more powerful, the other more elegant. I can appreciate the appeal each has but, in my opinion, Dog C is the more typical, having a better balanced combination of Dane strength and elegance than Dog A.

The better combination of strength and elegance (both dogs are the same height) is due primarily to leg length. Dog C's foreleg is longer than its body is deep and Dog A's foreleg is the same length as depth of body. The Dane Standard does not cover leg length.

Having both of these sound Danes measure 34 in. tall aids toward a fuller appreciation of the influence a long foreleg has on elegance. Both being sound, their elbows are level with the deepest part of the brisket. The only difference between the two is the ratio of leg length to body depth and weight.



As for weight, the more typical example weighs 135 lbs., the more powerful 145 lbs. Corresponding minimum weights for minimum heights are not given in the Canadian Standard whereas the British Standard suggests 120 lbs. for dogs, 100 lbs. for bitches and 30 in. and 28 in. minimum (at eight months) respectively. The Canadian minimum height is 2 in. more than the British and American. The recently revised Canadian Standard now calls for adult male and female Danes (over 12 months) to be not less than 32 in. and 30 in. respectively, but preferably 2 in. taller.

Squareness is equally important to Great Dane type as length of leg. Both of these sound examples are 34 in. in height and measure 34 in. from breast bone to buttock. With squareness and correct length of leg comes moderate angulation. Overangulation is as serious a fault as underangulation.

DOG C

This Dane, then, is my choice for first place. His muzzle is broad, the skull proportionally narrow so that the whole head, when viewed from above and in front, has the appearance of equal breadth throughout. In profile, the muzzle is equal or slightly longer than skull and the two planes are parallel. The black nose is large, the lips hang squarely in front, forming a right angle with the upper line of foreface. The almond-shaped eyes are dark, the bite scissors.

The forelegs are perfectly straight with big flat bone. The front pasterns slope only very slightly. The body is very deep with the brisket reaching to elbow, the ribs are well sprung, the belly well drawn up with a slight strong arch over the loin. Hindquarters are well developed with moderate angulation. The feet are cat-like, the nails are as dark as possible. The tail should start fairly high and reach to, or below, the hocks.

THIRD PLACE

Dog B lacks unity. The parts are all there but they do not come together in a pleasing whole. The head has two discernible faults, the neck two, the forequarters four, and the body three. The fact that the hindquarters are superior to the forequarters only adds to the disunity.

The muzzle is too short, the cropped ears are too low. The neck has loose skin and lacks arch. The shoulder blades are steep, forcing the body to rise above the elbow. The bones of the forearm are not straight and the pasterns lack the very slight slope that positions the foot under the direct support. Both the ribcage and loin are too long, there is not enough tuck up and more forechest should be exposed.

FOURTH PLACE

The term used in the breed to describe Dog D is 'whippety'. I am not enthusiastic about this term but it does describe a light bone departure from Great Dane type. However, there is much ore at fault, the most noticeable flaw being lack of body depth, followed by too light a neck. The head is snipy, the cheeks are bulgy and there is not enough stop.

There are two more faults: one body fault and one foreleg fault. The body is faulted in that the belly is not well drawn up in a pleasing curve. As to the front legs, it is the degree that the pasterns slope – they should slope only very slightly forward. This much slope – even if the shoulders were perfect – is wrong for the Great Dane.

EARS

The ears can be natural or cropped. If the ears are natural, they should be triangular, medium-size, set high on the skull and folded forward close to the cheek, the top of the fold about level with the skull. If the ears are cropped, they should be high set, not too far apart, well pointed but always in proportion to the shape of the head, and carried uniformly erect.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

- Adult dogs under 32 in., adult bitches under 30 in.
- White Danes without any black marks (albinos)
- Merles, a solid mouse-grey colour or a mouse-grey base with black or white or both colour spots, or white base with mouse-grey spots

- Brindle, fawn and blue Danes with white forehead line, white collars, high white stockings and white bellies * (see author's note)
- Danes with predominantly blue, grey, yellow or also brindle spots
- Docked tails
- Split noses

* **Author's note:** Black with white markings is no longer considered a disqualification in this country. Called a Boston or Black-mantled Dane, this black and white dog has a black mantle extending over the body, white blaze on the head or white muzzle or both, white chest, white on part or whole of forelegs and the hindlegs below the hock, part or whole white collar, white-tipped tail, dark eyes and nose. Acceptable but less desirable absence of full collar.

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Place four of these six Great Dane bitches in order of merit and identify the 16 visible faults that prohibited the remaining two fawns from placing (they have eight faults each).

TYPICAL

She stands over 71 centimeters (30 inches). Females under this minimum must be disqualified in Canada and the U.S.A., as are large males under 76 centimeters (32 inches). She possesses the somewhat longer than square proportions allowed in the Canadian and American standards. She appears less massive throughout than a male, with a smaller frame and lighter bone. There is an impression of femininity.

Her head comes close to the delicately formed ideal for a bitch. The skull and muzzle are straight and parallel to one another, and divided equally by a strongly pronounced stop (the British standard prefers greater length of muzzle than skull.) Her dark, almond shaped eyes produce a lively, intelligent expression. Seen from above, the skull has parallel sides and the bridge of the nose is as broad as possible. Her ears are high set, her nose is black and she has a complete scissors bite.

Her long, muscular neck is well arched, dry and flows smoothly into high withers. Her shoulder blade and upper arm are well angled, the elbow level with the brisket one half the distance from withers to ground (American standard). The forearms are straight, and there is a slight forward slope to the front pastern. The forechest is well developed and the tuck up well defined.

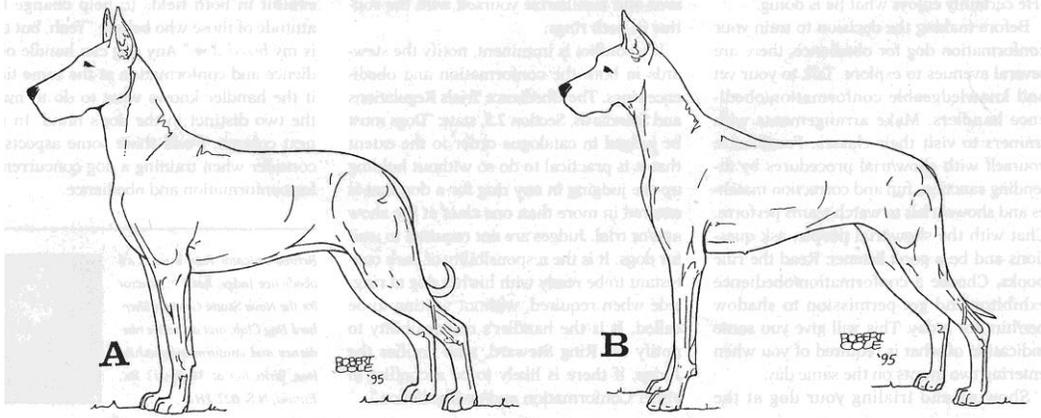
Her hindquarters are broad, muscular and well angulated. The croup is broad and slightly sloping. The tail sets high and smoothly into the croup, but is not quite level with the back. It is broad at the base and tapers uniformly down to the hock joint. The feet are cat-like, the toes well arched and compact.

FIFTH AND SIXTH

The two Danes I did not place are Bitch D with eight visible faults, and Bitch F, with eight equally discernible faults. These two Danes serve to illustrate the effect of 16 different departures on type and structure. Can you identify at least a dozen?

BITCH D

Her ears set on high. However: 1) the skull is rounded or domed; 2) the neck is weak and swan-like; 3) the withers are almost nonexistent; 4) the croup has too great a slope; 5) the tail sets low; 6) there is too much angulation at stifle and hock; 7) the body is long for the length of leg; and 8) the front pasterns slope forward at too great an angle.



BITCH F

The planes of her head are parallel. However: 1) the muzzle is short; 2) the ears are large, low and heavy; 3) the neck lacks arch; 4) the abrupt breadth at the junction of the neck and withers indicates steep shoulder blades; 5) the tail is set on too high; 6) the steep upper arm has moved forward on the body and has raised the body up above the elbow; 7) the front pastern lacks slight slope; and 8) the steep hindleg lacks angulation at stifle and hock.

FIRST TO FOURTH

The four remaining bitches – A, B, C and E – provide a judging scenario in which less obvious faults play a major role in the placement decisions. Each has virtues, and it is conceivable that Bitch A, B or C could place first, leaving Bitch E to place fourth. Rank them first through fourth.

BITCH C

My first place in this class was an all-breed Best in Show and Best in Specialty winner. However, she did not appear then exactly as I have drawn her – I have given her uncropped ears. They are correctly high set, medium in size and of moderate thickness, folded close to the cheek, and the topline of the fold is level with the top of the skull. I do not know what a Dane specialist would do but, as a nonspecialist, and having judged in noncrop countries, if she was the best, her natural ear would not deter me from putting her up.

BITCH E

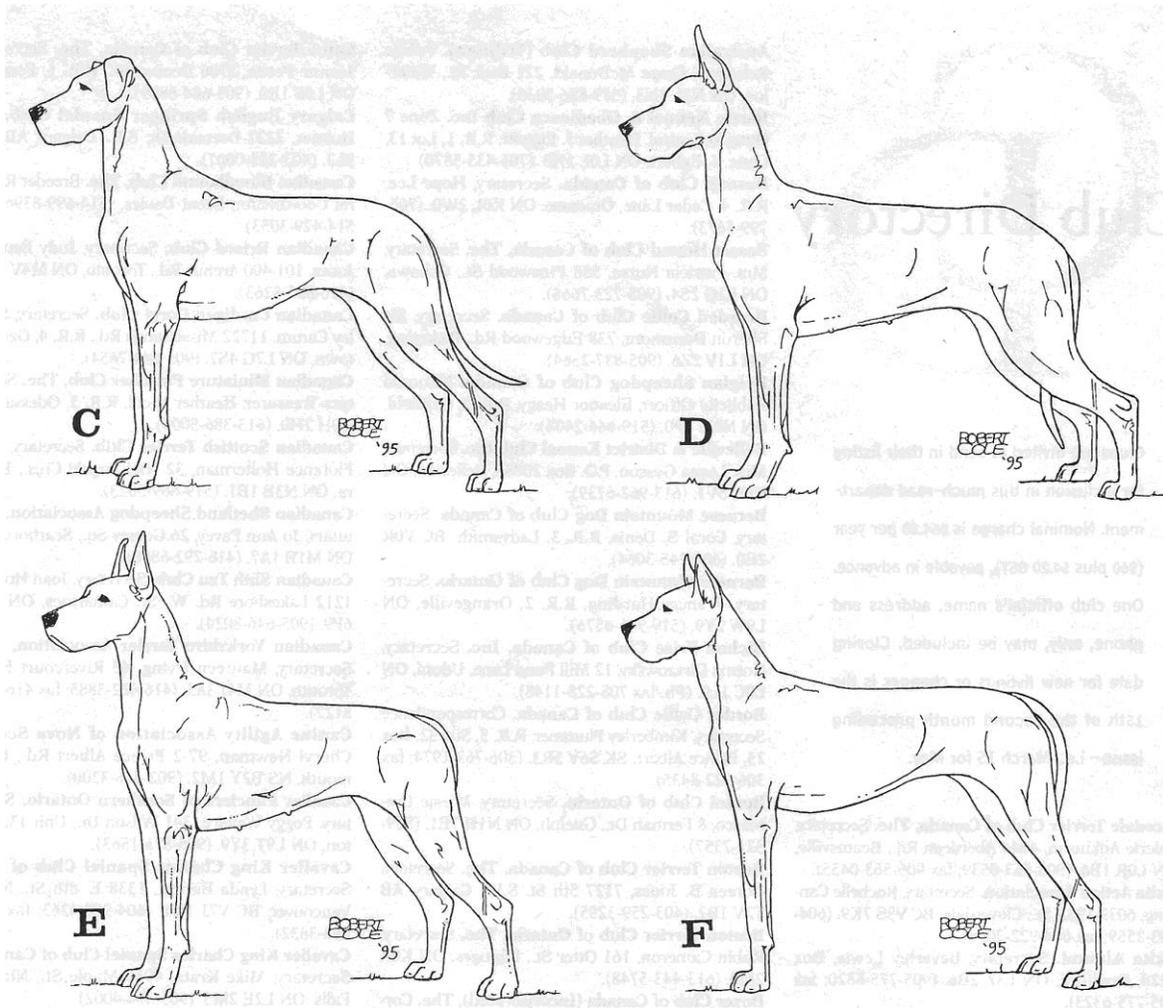
My second place is equally feminine, sound, balanced and typey but without a squared jaw, has less of a slope to the upper arm, and her tail should set lower.

BITCH A

My third place is sound, balanced and typey but not feminine – a minor fault in the Canadian standard. Her ring tail is also a minor fault in Canada but a serious fault in the U.S.A. Her less pronounced atypical stop disturbs (it should be strongly pronounced). As does her large, out of proportion head. Her body is shorter than my first and second place choices (a longer body for bitches being permissible, though not desirable), and this is a plus. She is powerful and has appeal and, aside from her lack of general tuck up, it is only when compared to equally sound bitches that her 'doggy' appearance becomes apparent.

BITCH B

The loose skin at the throat of my fourth place bitch spoils the appearance of what should be a clean, dry neck and, although the planes of her muzzle and skull are parallel, the stop is too pronounced. Her body is too long, and there is a decided arch over a long loin. Her withers are high, and she seems to have a well angulated shoulder blade, but her lower than brisket elbow position suggests that the steep upper arm angle is inferior.



BREED CONCERNS

A body lacking depth with the elbow positioned below the brisket may be due to immaturity. Sometimes Dane body depth, like body breadth, never comes.

Tall, narrow, slab-sided, shallow, poorly constructed, poorly balanced Danes have little to offer the breed, regardless of their great height.

Canadians and Americans ask for great size, while the British stress the Dane be strong though elegant. All want a minimum of 71 centimeters (28 inches) for bitches – the height of some Doberman Pinschers. This would be a very small bitch by today's standards. The current trend is toward bit with many exhibitors claiming their bitches stand 94 centimeters (37 inches). But bigger isn't always better.

For over 30 years the American standard has advised that the Dane is one of the giant working breeds but, in the same sentence, also tells us the Dane is unique in that its general conformation must be so well balanced that it never appears clumsy. The Dane must always appear as a unit, and size alone is never enough to ensure this will happen.