Angel's Lair

Irreconcilable Differences

Jim Engel



Show Line Type **Working Line Type**

In the latter 1990s the German Shepherd was at an unprecedented, globe spanning pinnacle in terms of prosperity, popularity and prestige. Yet a quarter century later we find the breed in collapse, on the verge of irrelevance. How can this be?

Although there are several diverse factors driving this decline—including burgeoning disillusion with of the purebred paradigm—the predominant causative factor is the ongoing cleavage of the House of von Stephanitz into the foundation police working lines on the one hand and the increasingly effete conformation show lines on the other. In order to comprehend this on a practical level it is necessary to have a good understanding of the characteristic differences in terms of function, moral attributes and appearance.

To this end the above renderings of contemporary show and working type have been created by Louis Donald, a well-known and respected Australian judge and advocate. These images are not photos of actual dogs but renderings of ideal type as conceived and created by Mr. Donald. (This is an entirely legitimate use of artificial intelligence.)

The image on the left is from a painting created to represent the physical ideal according to the standard. Unfortunately dogs winning in the SV show ring today tend to be much more extreme.

In my view the rendering of working type on the right is spot on, exactly what every German Shepherd should look like. Though primarily involved in conformation affairs Mr. Donald is to be commended for taking the trouble to understand and faithfully render

the collective vision of German Shepherd type as seen through the eyes of the working community.

As for the dog on the left, the problem for me is that is not even really a German Shepherd, exemplifies everything that has gone wrong in the show ring over the past half century.

Over the decades the conventional wisdom has been that this crisis must be resolved by the reunification of working and show lines into one truly comprehensive and uniform type. Yet in spite of these noble sentiments the chasm has incessantly widened.

The inherent problem with trying to turn the clock back half a century is the impossibility of resurrecting a common genetic pool that would even begin to work for either side; the fundamental problem not being that we have de facto created two breeds but rather that we have become so divergent that we cannot begin to comprehend the mores and ideals of the other side, that real dialog is impossible when we cannot get beyond talking past each other.

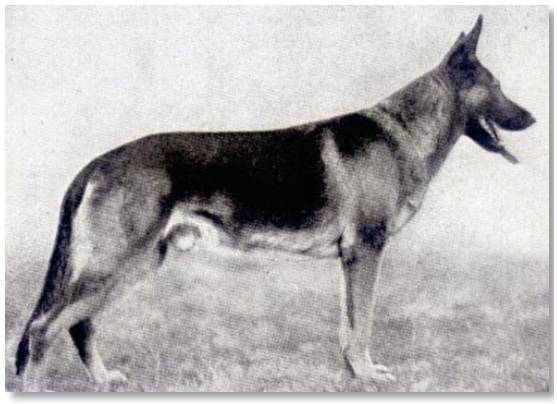
A particularly pertinent example of this is the banning of the IPO stick hits by the FCI. for most of the show folks this is no big deal, something that we should easily compromise on by accepting. But for the hardcore working community this is finally the hill worth dying on, the point of no return.

These are inherently irreconcilable differences.



Show Line Type **Working Line Type**

Evolution of German Shepherd Type



Klodo vom Boxberg Sieger in 1925.



Utz vom House Schutting 1929



Bernd vom Kallengarten 1957



Contemporary Show Line Type



Contemporary Working Line Type

The photos above illustrate the evolution of the breed over a century.

In 1925 Max von Stephanitz set a new direction when he made Klodo vom Boxberg Sieger. In this dog and others such as Utz vom House Schutting we see the type preferred by the founder after three decades with his hand firmly on the tiller. He had set the right type and tinkering by later generations tended to do more harm than good.

In the 1957 photo of Bernd vom Kallengarten we see the consequence of a half century of tinkering, finding more slope in a still relatively straight back line and a bit more angulation but still in my opinion broadly within the spirit of von Stephanitz.

A full century later we see in the contemporary working line type rendering created by Louis Donald what in my opinion would merit the approval of the captain in view of his selection of Klodo vom Boxberg.

In the rendering of contemporary show line type—quite moderate in view of what is going on in the SV show ring today—we see a dog with a shorter back which is much more curved and sloping, a deeper chest and extreme angulation. This dog would certainly be absent without leave in a serious 1970s style Schutzhund trial—in American football terminology would clearly rank as physically unable to perform.

Jim Engel, Marengo 2026

Background and Reference

Glossary
Decline and Fall of the House of von Stephanitz
Who Owns the House of von Stephanitz?
SV Power Corrupts
Working Dog Organizations
Supreme Authority of the Canine World
Animal Rights and Wrongs
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AWDF, Stillborn American Elite
Emergence of a new Canine World Order
American Consequences of the WUSV Vindication

The Way Forward

Meltdown in America
Legacy Lost, the Other Breeds
Temperament or Character Testing
Jack of All Trades?
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The Commercialization of Schutzhund
How We Play the Game
Has Sport Subverted the Schutzhund Trial?
The Herding Canard
The Mother State 2016

Web presence:

Schutzhund America
Ongoing FCI / WUSV Strife
Conacts & References

Much more historical detail can be found in the police dog book:

The Police Dog: Evolution, History and Service