



Helper Feature

Jim Laubmeier (USA)



Interviewed by Kathleen Vos (Belgium)

jimboheather@cox.net

www.firehouserotts.com



Jim Laubmeier at
ADRK BG Goldenstedt

Please tell us about yourself.

My name is Jim Laubmeier. I have been married for 15 years to my beautiful wife, Heather. We have two daughters, Annika, 3 years old, and Kerstin, 2 years old. Heather is a neonatal ICU nurse. I am 45 years old and was born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona. I grew up in a large family and we always had big dogs around our home. My family is 100% German-American, with my father's family from Bavaria south of Munich and my mother's family from the Black Forest/Baden area near the town of Pforzheim. I was an athlete growing up and played college football as a fullback. Helper work has been a great outlet for my athletic nature and is a very physical contact sport between helper and dog. After college, I joined the Phoenix Fire Department where I have

worked for 22+ years as a Captain/Paramedic. I am currently on a north Phoenix engine company with a great station and crew. I spent 18+ years working in the roughest gang-infested parts of Phoenix which are known for shootings, stabbings, overdoses, fires, and violent mayhem. This area was a great training ground for me. On my days off from the fire department, I teach EMT and Fire Science and am the lead instructor for the Paradise Valley Community College Paramedic program, as well as teach in the Phoenix Fire Department Paramedic programs. I have enjoyed teaching for the college and fire department for over 20 years and have mentored many new firefighters and paramedics. I am proud to have been on the Phoenix Fire Department's FEMA Urban Search & Rescue Team, AZ-TF1, as a Medical Specialist. AZ-TF1 has been deployed to many major disasters such as New York 9-11, Oklahoma City Bombing, and Hurricane Katrina, among others. My family and I live on a large property north of Phoenix with our three Rottweilers. I am the President and training helper for the new RKNA club, Phoenix Rottweiler Club. I have been a USA Schutzhund/IPO National-level helper for several years and have worked many club trials, BSTs, Körungs and the following large events, always with excellent ratings:

- 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010 USA Southwest Regionals
- 2006, 2007, 2008 AWFDF Championship
- 2009, 2010, 2011 USRC National Championship
- 2010 USRC SW Regional Championship
- 2007 USA North American Championship
- 2007, 2008 USA National Championship
- 2008 WUSV World Championships
- Selected by AWFDF as FCI World Championship Helper

- Multiple USRC BST events



Jim & ADRK Judge Dieter Hoffmann



Jim &
ADRK Judge Uwe Petermann

Please tell us about your past and present dogs?

I have owned Rottweilers since 1993 and had AKC American-bred Rotts for many years. Due to temperament and health issues with our AKC American-bred dogs, we decided to join the Phoenix Rottweiler/Schutzhund Club to find a Rottweiler in 2005. This is also where I started helper work. Through education, research, and help from my German firefighter friend, Detlef Berensmann, we decided to import our first ADRK Rottweiler. Our male, Bronko vom Wachberg, was our first ADRK dog. I found Bronko by researching and studying ADRK bloodlines and observing the ADRK Körungs. I saw Bronko's dam, Wendy vom Wachberg, at the 2005 ADRK Spring Körung where she had a super performance while five weeks pregnant with Bronko's litter from Odo vom Fleischer. We have since researched the ADRK system and imported two ADRK females, Vaika vom Herrenholz and Leyna vom Schwaiger Wappen. We have concentrated our efforts into owning Rottweilers from strong working lines and Gekört parents. I trained and handled Bronko, Vaika, and Leyna to their BH and BST titles. Our working Rottweiler kennel, Firehouse Rottweilers/Vom Feuerhaus is dedicated to the total Rottweiler in type, temperament, working ability, and health. Our goal is to breed for complete Rottweilers; we use only Rottweilers that have proven themselves breedworthy through the Ztp/BST. The Ztp/BST is, in our opinion, the best test for the Rottweiler.

Please tell us about the club you train with?

I am the President and training/trial helper for the Phoenix Rottweiler Club. We are an RKNA club with multiple working breeds within our club including Rottweilers, GSDs, Malinois, Dobermans, and American Bulldogs, to name a few. We have a great group of working dog people that train together. I am currently mentoring three new helpers in our club who have all attained their USA helper classification. We have hosted the AWFDF and National Sieger Show as well as many Regional Sieger shows, BSTs, and Schutzhund trials and events in our



Working 2009 USCA SW Regionals

20+ year history. We support our members in all their working dog goals. We look forward to our future with RKNA and plan to host many successful events.

How did you get introduced to the Rottweiler?

Several years ago, I worked for a Captain on the Phoenix Fire Department that owned a male named Tibor von Kaufmann. Tibor was bred in the USA, but was from all ADRK lines. He always impressed me with his type, temperament, and extremely friendly attitude. I bought a Rottweiler from a local breeder in Phoenix after that and the journey began. We owned three Rottweilers through the mid '90s and early 2000s and visited some Rottweiler Sieger shows starting in 2001-2002.

In 2002, we visited the Phoenix Rottweiler Club for a Sieger Show and protection tourney, and had the opportunity to meet and see a stunning male named Egor von Maerz participate in the protection tourney. Egor was a SchH3, ABST Wotan son that impressed us with his incredible type and working ability while still being extremely friendly and approachable. Egor left an impression on me for the type of Rottweiler I prefer: big, strong, powerful, confident dogs who can work but also be friendly as well.

How did you get involved in Schutzhund/IPO?

My wife and I contacted Jacko Rousseau in Phoenix looking for help finding our next Rottweiler. Jacko talked to us about the German-style Rottweiler system and invited us to visit the Phoenix Schutzhund/Rottweiler Club which trained at her ranch in Peoria, Arizona. On my first visit to the club, I was asked if I was interested in being a schutzhund helper, given that I had an athletic background and that I was about 6' tall and 240 lbs. Watching the current club helper work the dogs, I thought it might be a fun activity. I had no idea what I was getting myself into, but this was the start of my training helper education. I visited the club four days a week to work dogs and learn as much as I could about helper work. I started helper work at 38 years old, which is late for a beginning helper. The club hosted many Schutzhund trials and I was able to see some high level dogs. In the summer of 2005, I was encouraged to attend a USA helper classification with USA Judge/Teaching Helper Nathaniel Roque. I was able to successfully pass the classification and was encouraged by Nathaniel to start working club trials to improve my skills. I worked my first USA trial in the fall of 2005 and worked several club trials in 2006. In 2006, I was invited to work the USA SW Regional Championship where I worked the SchH1, 2, and front-half 3 dogs. This was the beginning of my championship trial helper career. That year I worked my first AWFDF and continued on for the next five years, being very active in several big events.

What skills do you possess that make you a good helper, handler and effective trainer?

As a trial helper, I am an ex-college football player with an athletic background which has helped with working high level trials. Championship trial helper work is a very intense event over three to four days, sometimes working 100+ dogs over the course of the those days. The last dog must be worked and

tested the same as the first dog, which requires a high level of strength, fitness, and mental toughness on the part of the helper. As a training helper, I am always learning and trying to find new ways to get more out of each dog in every session. At our club, we stick to a defined training template that dictates that the handlers and helpers communicate effectively before and after working each and every dog. We plan the work and work the plan, then critique the session and preplan the next session. Communication is key for the handler and dog, and I use my background as an educator to better assist each handler with attaining their individual goals for their dogs. As a handler/trainer, I try to incorporate the same discipline into my handling. Each dog has different strengths and weaknesses, and the key is to find the best way to work through problems and minimize conflict with the dogs. In protection, we work dogs through the development/teaching phase using and promoting their prey drive. We promote barking for grips through the use of prey work and move through a progression of different tugs, wedges, and sleeves. Grip development is worked throughout this phase and depending on the dog's genetics, we move forward into using the dog's natural aggression to fight the helper. Ultimately, the dogs' genetics dictate how far along they go in IPO and Ztp protection work. The real art of training helper work is working dogs with limited drives and genetics to accomplish realistic goals in the sport. It is very gratifying to me to assist handlers with achieving their goals in dogsport.

How does the Rottweiler differ from other breeds?

From my experience, the biggest difference is the rate of maturity. Rottweilers mature physically very quickly, but most are still puppies and immature mentally well into their youth years and require patience with training. Trying to push a Rottweiler too soon or introduce harsh compulsion is a recipe for disaster. The key for me is to identify where each individual dog is and assist handlers with a realistic training plan. Too often handlers see other dogs/handlers, especially with breeds such as GSDs and Mals, making quicker progress and try to rush things with their own dogs.



Courage test with Zeus vom Turnleberg

What is your training and teaching philosophy?

Many times the hardest part of training at our club is training the handlers, so I use clear communication for the handler and dog. I encourage handlers to ask questions and watch other handlers during their sessions to help them grasp training concepts. We use positive training techniques utilizing food for shaping behaviors and toys/tugs/balls to reward the dogs during the teaching phase. Once they have learned the behaviors, we increase speed with the "game," utilizing a two-handled tug for the handler and dog to play. The issue of compulsion usually comes up and we do utilize this, but only when the dogs know the exercise. The level of compulsion is dictated by the hardness of the dogs.

What do you think are the keys to a dog/handler's success in schutzhund/IPO?

The same formula that continues to provide success to handlers:

- A. Super, genetically well-bred dog for SchH/IPO that is bonded to the handler. Top level SchH/IPO dogs in the working breeds such as Rottweilers are BORN and BRED,

not MADE. The dog's genetics ultimately will dictate the level that he/she attains even with excellent training.

- B. Experienced training director or coach who can assist the handler with training their dog using modern, proven training techniques.
- C. Schutzhund/IPO training facility with the needed equipment and available tracking
- D. Smart, open-minded handler who recognizes that the key to success simply is hard work on their part and dedication to their dog and sport.
- E. Excellent training helper to work the dog in protection consistently who can read the dog.
- F. Support team/club members who assist each other at trials and training.

These keys to success are essential and we see the same handlers achieve excellent results with different dogs due to the presence of all of these variables. When just one of the keys is absent, there is usually a decline in performance of the dog and handler. I have seen and witnessed handlers and dogs that compete with all these keys present here and in Europe, and their success is dependent on all these factors. To visit a top performing club and witness the precision level that the handlers/helpers work at is inspiring.

What are the biggest mistakes novice handlers make?

Probably the biggest mistake is simply lack of mentorship and preparation. I have seen new handlers that are well coached and prepared do very well at their first event such as a BH due to proper coaching and mentorship. As a new handler, try and join a good SchH/IPO club and be coachable with a positive attitude.

What are the biggest mistakes experienced handlers make?

The biggest mistake I have usually seen with experienced handlers is rushing training. They know the steps, but the dog is not ready to advance and therefore the training is rushed. SchH/IPO training to me is similar to moving through grades in school. The foundation must be laid properly at each level or the dog and handler will suffer setbacks and be held back. With proper training and realistic goals, a genetically well-bred SchH/IPO dog will graduate and move through the school grades very quickly.

What do you believe is the greatest threat to Schutzhund/IPO today?

Very simply, the wrong breed in the wrong homes. The Rottweiler is a working dog and should be maintained as a working dog. It is the responsibility of the breeders to breed quality Rottweilers with solid, stable temperament and carefully screen potential puppy buyers so that the right dogs are placed in the right homes. The other issues seem to be lack of breed education and improper marketing of the Rottweiler. Unfortunately, BSL gains strength on the sad stories that come with unethical breeders placing Rottweilers in the wrong homes. It is up to us to be protectors of the breed and assist with finding good, forever homes for our Rottweilers.

Do you see any differences in the Rottweiler of today compared to the Rottweiler of 10 years ago? If so, what are the biggest differences you see?

The Rottweilers of the '90s and earlier were bred to be harder dogs to withstand the type of compulsion-based training that was more popular in those days. The SchH/IPO sport has changed now with the new rules that dictate that the dogs must be social and approachable. Our training has become more advanced and allowed softer dogs to be successful on the SchH/IPO field. This is a double-edged sword in that we are breeding more social dogs but sometimes losing some of the harder temperament that is so essential to maintain true working temperament. The optimal situation would be to maintain the "old-school" dogs but utilize earlier socialization techniques with our pups and youth dogs to prepare them for the challenges they may face.

What do you like to see in a Rottweiler on the field?

As a helper, I love working very strong, confident, tough dogs. The heart of a dog's working temperament can be seen starting at the hold and bark exercise and the way they guard the helper. Intense, machine-gun barking in the helper's face is a sign of a very strong dog for me. I want the dog focused on ME, the helper, not the handler or Judge at that point.. The next exercise that truly shows the heart of the dog is the re-attack and pressure phases during a trial or BST/Ztp/Körung. I like to see a dog that is anticipating the re-attack and punches the sleeve at the first sign of stick movement, not waiting for the helper to take the dog for a ride. Active fighting of the helper and a hard crushing grip is another facet of the pressure phase that impresses me. The attack, drive/pressure phase, and stick hits are extremely important events and when performed correctly can separate the weak from the strong dogs.. The long bite/courage test is an exciting part of the protection routine but a dangerous one for fast dogs. It is not always the speed of the dog, but the commitment to the helper, that is impressive for me. The strong dog will not slow under the final threat of the helper and punch through for the grip under that pressure. The dogs that perform well in these areas under strong helper work are truly impressive and are the dogs I always remember in trials. Based on these specific types of genetic performance behaviors, the top dogs are born and bred for the temperament that they possess. What makes helper work interesting after a period of time is that you see these types of dogs produce themselves in their offspring.

Who are/were your mentors?

There have been several, but the ones I want to mention are the ones who motivated me to challenge myself to become a better helper. My friend, USA Director of Judges and Teaching Helper, Nathaniel Roque was instrumental in my early development in pushing me to work big events and continue to improve my trial performance. My friend Armin Winkler, worked with me as a championship trial helper coach and supported my development as both a front-half and back-half helper. Armin has an unbelievable photographic memory and can break down the helper performance to make the small adjustments to improve. My friend, Rich Rosen, was my training helper mentor and helped instill a back-to-the basics approach to training that I utilize today. Our good friends Klaus & Helga Feder-Frentz from Vom Herrenholz in Deutschland have been a huge support system for us and have become our "adopted" parents and the Oma and Opa to our daughters. There have been many friends here and in Germany that have contributed to my development and I want to thank all of them.



Driving Frisko vom Haus Rymar

What are your most important accomplishments?

My most important accomplishment and satisfaction is all the super people that I have met and become friends with through the Rottweiler/schutzhund world. I have been fortunate to have accomplished a lot as a helper in a very short five years in the sport going from brand new to being selected for the WUSV World Championship and numerous National Championships. But as always, it has been done based on the love and support of my family and friends.

What do you want to be remembered for?

Being a friendly, honest, and fair sportsman and ambassador and protector of the Rottweiler breed. We love the Rottweiler and it is an honor to assist others with their goals with their dogs. Thanks for the opportunity to be featured in TTRM!