

Gerben Kamphuis Interview

Chris Jones : Hello Gerben, thanks for giving me your time.

Gerben Kamphuis : No problems.

CJ : Tell me about you and your background, specifically with dogs and dog sports.

GK : Okay, well I live in Almelo, the Netherlands in the Overijssel province. I am married to my wife, Monique, and I have one son called Boy.

I have been involved with the KNPV and Police Dogs since I can remember. My father was a long time trainer and breeder in the KNPV and a lot of the bloodlines show an influence of my fathers breedings. He was breeding in the KNPV for over 25 years, breeding around 70 litters. We would have around 3 litters a year in our house, so I saw many, many dogs and pups throughout my childhood.

I first started going to the club when I was around 3-4 years of age, and continued with this through my life. During my younger years I would not be allowed to training on week nights as it would finish late and I had school to go to.

CJ : So when did you first start to train a dog for the program and when did you start to decoy for the dogs, how be it in a limited way?

GK : Around the age of 12 years I started to train at the club, and do some smaller decoy work. I was a good speed skater in my youth and I used to use the decoy work for conditioning in this sport. It worked quite well.

CJ : How many dogs have you titled in KNPV and what are some of their names?

GK : I have titled around 9 or so. Some of their names were Kira, Beppie, Tosca, Berry and Rocco.

CJ : Which recent dogs have you trained with?

GK : Well more recently I had Beppie, Kira and Endor.

CJ : Can you tell me a bit about them and what you liked about each one.

GK : Well Beppie was a xMalinois female and she was a Duco2 Seegers daughter going back to Rambo Rossum. She was a very tough female. She had the most extreme parts from Duco and Rambo. She was very highly driven, very hard and a good biter, with a lot of independence and a bit of stubbornness. She however had a massive tolerance to corrections, and was very self assured.

Kira was a female xDutch Shepherd that I got as a green dog at around 10 months of age.

Kira had extreme drive and was a workaholic. She was also a serious female.

Endor was my last male Malinois. Endor is the hardest biting dog I have had or seen. He had also very high drives and was a very hard hitting dog. He would throw himself into the decoy without hesitation.

He was also a very, very difficult dog to train and handle. I got him as a green dog because his owner was scared of him. He could be handler aggressive if you did not know what you were doing. But he was a super tough dog and if I could continue to get dogs of his quality all my life I would be very happy.

He however broke a number of teeth while doing an attack and this happened just before we were to trial. It was so disappointing to have gone through all the work and troubles to get this dog under control to then miss the trial. He was sold to Mexico as a stud dog after this.

CJ : So who would be your all time favourite?

GK: That's very difficult to answer. All dogs had their good points that I liked, and all were quality dogs. If I was pushed I think to get hold of another female like my Beppie would be very exciting.

CJ : Who were your training mentors and who have you learnt from?

GK : Many people at the different clubs I have been at I have learnt from. Jos vd Berg, Anton Nijland, Appie Kamps, Hans Pegge have all been quality trainers. But I have also trained with non KNPV people that I have respected and learnt from, people like Mia Skogter for instance. I try to learn from everyone I train with and am exposed to.

CJ : So what type of breeds do you prefer?

GK : Malinois and Dutch Shepherds.

CJ : Are pedigree papers important to you?

GK : Absolutley not. It is far harder to find the quality of dogs I like from the FCI bloodline dogs. It would be too hard a task to consitantly get the type of dog required for the KNPV program from the pedigreed dogs.

CJ : So there is still a big difference between the FCI and the xKNPV dogs?

GK : Yes there still is. While most all of the FCI Malinois have an influence of unpedigreed dogs in them, and they have improved a lot, there is still a gap between them. Regardless of what people say, price isn't the only factor a KNPV guy takes into account when buying a puppy.

CJ : What well known KNPV dogs have you had on the suit?

GK : Lets see, Arras Pegge, Rudie Pegge, Marko Pegge, Pecco Pegge, Kukays Quatro, Robick Kamps, Ringo Wolterink, and Rico vd Berg to name a few.

CJ : Which ones impressed?

GK : Well they were all quality dogs, but the hardest, most toughest and extreme dog I ever worked was Rico vd Berg. He was as extreme in every possible trait as a dog could be. Brutal dog.

Arras Pegge was the hardest hitting dog I ever had on the suit. Once he even knocked me out he hit that hard.

CJ : You seem to breed on a few dogs, namely Rambo Rossum, Duco 2 Seegers, Arno Kleine Schaars and Catro Jansen. What is it about these dogs you like?

GK : Rambo Rossum – Rambo always produced good dogs. He is one of the best producers the KNPV ever had. He gave hard, full pushing grips, excellent attackers and sometimes they were not easy to work with. He also gave very short build dogs, that I like.

CJ : So he got this from his father Eik?

GK : Rambo was a better dog and a better producer than Eik was. Without Rambo, there was no Eik.

Duco 2 Seegers – I saw Duco work on a number of occasions. He was a very complete dog. Duco had excellent drives, and retrieving. He was a very tough dog, with a very high pain tolerance. This made him excellent for police work. He was the type of dog you could take him into a bar fight and if someone hit him with a chair or two, he wouldn't even flinch. He produced this also in his pups.

He gave very heavy strong dogs with short coats and big heads. I like his type a lot. He also produced extreme drive for the bitework, and this with his very high tolerances to corrections could make the offspring a bit hard to control in the bitework.

Arno Kleine Schaars – A very angry dog, hard hitter, extreme drive and a very big good looking dog. He had so extreme drive he was difficult to train. Super, super police dog, but not so super for the points or sport.

Arno produced many dogs like himself. They could be sometimes slower to mature but they were also very big dogs. Sometimes these go hand in hand.

He also produced such extreme drive and guarding drive that this could be a problem for the owners. Many young Arnos bit their owners as they tried to approach the decoy or the box they were guarding. Very possessive dogs.

Catro Jansen – Catro is behind many of the good Dutchies in the KNPV. He produced good health, good looking dogs and excellent character.

He also threw the trait strongly of the high hitting flyers as seen in Arras and Rudie Pegge.

CJ : Who are some newer stud dogs you would breed on now?

GK : Arko Kikert and Ringo Wolterink, Tommy Lujiken, Carlos van Vos, Rudie 1 and Rudie 2 Pegge to name a few.

CJ : Most of those are xDutchies?

GK : Yes, at the moment we have some very strong xDutch Shepherd studs, so its going to be that the xDutchie will be more in vogue. But maybe in the future we see the wave go back to the xMalinois with studs like Berry Lamers getting more breedings. You also have to understand that these xDutch Shepherds also go back on a lot of the prime xMalinois lines such as Duco, Rambo and Arno.

CJ : So you will continue to breed xDutchies in the future?

GK : Yes, it's a project I like. It is not as easy to find a good Dutch Shepherd as it is a Mali. There are many more Malinois in the KNPV, with much more variety of bloodlines to choose from. So, it is my goal to breed as strong a Dutchie as I can, while also trying to keep the will to please. Its very important to maintain some element of trainability in the dogs, this you have to remember.

CJ : So you will also keep and breed Malis?

GK : Yes also. Most people don't care about the coat colour in the KNPV. You have your Mali lovers and your Dutchie lovers, but most care only for the dog. For me its just I had a great Dutchie in my Kira and also saw many others such as Rudie, Arko and Ringo that I have taken an interest in them.

CJ : Since we are talking Dutchie's, one of the main questions that gets brought up when discussing the breed is the difference between the FCI Pedigreed and the KNPV xDutch Shepherd. From a KNPV perspective, why do you see as the main differences to this sometimes controversial question?

GK : Im not too sure why there would be any controversy with it. The differences between the two is very big. The FCI dogs are smaller, with finer bone and narrower heads. The differences in character is just as big with the FCI dogs having less drive and working abilities.

CJ : So whats the biggest problem that lends them to not be so good at KNPV?

GK : Nerves and courage. Any working dog breeder will tell you that nerves are the hardest of all things to fix. Drive for the ball they have, and prey drive they have. They lack courage in the bitework and nerves with new experiences and situations. I have had a few that I have sold, however they could not be sold as police dogs, just as detection dogs.

CJ : So the FCI Pedigreed Dutchie is not at the same level as the FCI Malinois?

GK : Absolutley not. Not even close.

CJ : I have noticed a few more in the KNPV now?

GK : Yes, as is the way with dogs and pedigrees, a lot more mixed Dutch Shepherds have been given false pedigrees. There is a rush to paper as many mixed Malis and Dutchies as possible because soon DNA is going to come into play in Holland. This will mean that all the unregistered Malinois and Dutchies in the KNPV will never be able to go into the bloodlines of the FCI dogs.

It is a reality that some might not want to face but the FCI Malinois is where it is today because of the many, many KNPV and NVBK dogs that entered the gene pool through false pedigrees. This is soon to stop.

The FCI Dutchie is such a small gene pool that even with the influx of new working blood, it is still going to suffer the fate of been locked in a gene pool of lower working abilities. They better hope that only healthy animals are used.

CJ : What is the main reason you don't see many other breeds such as Dobermans, Rottis and Giant Schnauzers competing in KNPV?

GK : Generally these breeds lack the courage to do the work. For instance finding a Doberman who will hold his bite on the stick attack is very difficult. They also do not have the drive and nerves to handle the stresses of KNPV training. It is a very difficult and long program, which can put a lot of stresses onto the dog. We need a dog who can take this pressure on Monday night and come out Tuesday night as if Monday never happened.

CJ : So with regards to your breedings you have done, which do you consider to be your best examples?

GK : That's also difficult to answer. I think if I had to put one up I would say that Bono Pegge was hard to beat for a male. Not only did he get full 440 for his PH1, and competed at the KNPV nationals but he had an excellent bloodline. He was a large, extremely good looking male.

He was an extremely confident dog, social and calm. But he could turn into monster very quicky if he was challenged civilly. He was the complete package. His only draw back was he wasn't overly spectacular in his attacks, unlike a Rudie Pegge for instance.

But to me what is the use of a good dog if he doesn't produce himself, and that's where Bono was exceptional. He only had 7 breedings in Holland prior to been sold to the USA but the % of these pups that went on to PH1 was extremely high. It wasn't till he had left the country and his pups were 12 months of age that the mistake of selling him was realized. Many people in Holland consider his offspring to be very valuable as Police dogs.

CJ : Its funny you should say that, I was talking to a national level KNPV competitor, who was visiting our club, about my Female Dutchie and how territorial she was to our house and how protective she was of us. He asked who her father was and I mentioned that it was Bono Pegge, his reply was straight away “Oh she bites for real then, no problems”.

GK : Yes, as you know my Kira was her sister and she would also bite for real, no problems.

I think the best female I bred was Bo Grevink PH1 408. She was just so extremely tough and came from a super successful litter. Seven litter mates got PH1 along with her.

CJ : So how do you think the dogs been bred now in the KNPV compare to the dogs of 15 years ago?

GK : I think we don't get them as strong as we used to. However, we are breeding more better dogs now. In the old days we would get one pup in a litter that was crazy and extreme, but after the top ones the other pups would go down quickly in quality. Now we get a lot more consistently higher quality pups. The difference between the top 80% of pups isn't that great. I think this is a better result for us. In some litters picking a pup is just as simple as putting your hand in and pulling one out, any pick should result in a quality working animal.

CJ : So how do you pick a pup from a litter?

GK : Well its very difficult now, and even more difficult when you haven't raised the litter. I like to test their drives, test their nerves and confidence in new surroundings and new stimulations. When the characters are similar I look at their size, colour and the way they move.

CJ : You travel a lot around Europe, be it to IPO clubs or NVBK clubs, do you see the KNPV bloodlines as being very different in terms of their characters to the dogs used in these other programs?

GK : For sure. Obviously each program requires certain things from the dogs, that other programs may not. This is the case with the KNPV dogs. IPO and especially NVBK require a lot of control. Control, control, control. The KNPV does not require this same level of control. This can be seen with just the stop attack. The distance between the decoy and the call back in KNPV is quite large, whereas in NVBK and French Ring the distance is very small, less than a meter desired. And in other ways the KNPV dog is required to work more independently than other programs. We require a dog to run 150 meters away from his handler into the woods and search for the decoy. When he finds the decoy he has to guard the dog for a large number of minutes before the handler arrives.

So we have dogs that would not be suited to the high control sports such as Ring or IPO, while a lot of IPO dogs wouldn't have the nerve to work in our program for instance.

CJ : And finally Gerben, with all your experiences around the world with IPO people and police officers what are the main misconceptions you find they have about the KNPV?

GK : Very good question.

Firstly that KNPV is a sport in the same way IPO is. This just isn't correct. Sure we have a trial, points are awarded and a National is held, but the KNPV is ran by the Police, not a breed club or sport organization. It's purpose is to train dogs for the police and military. This is still the intention of 90% of the people who do KNPV. They buy a pup, they train it to the PH1 certificate and then they sell this dog to the Police. In IPO and NVBK the handlers will buy a dog, train it up and spend the next 4 years trialing for points and competition.

I also hear from people who have never trained in the KNPV that most KNPV dogs are just trained in Prey/Play drive. Again, this is just not correct. The Police control the KNPV and these dogs are trained for Police work. If the dogs been sold to the Police were being trained in prey/play drive for their entire lives do you think the Police would be happy with this? No, of course not.

And even more confusing is that when Police officers in the USA get our dogs and see for themselves that these dogs are biting for real, then they think we have trained them in "defence" from a young age.

We want our dogs working in fight, not in prey or defence. We want our dogs to be "A-social" in nature. We want them to love the fight. They are motivated by the desire to fight the decoy, not to gain a sleeve for the run back to the car.

I think also that the KNPV has bred a dog with more fight. Our dogs are in drive for the decoy at a young age from their genes.

CJ : Thanks for your time.

GK : Anytime.