

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

From *Dogs in Canada*, December 1996

THE BULLMASTIFF HEAD

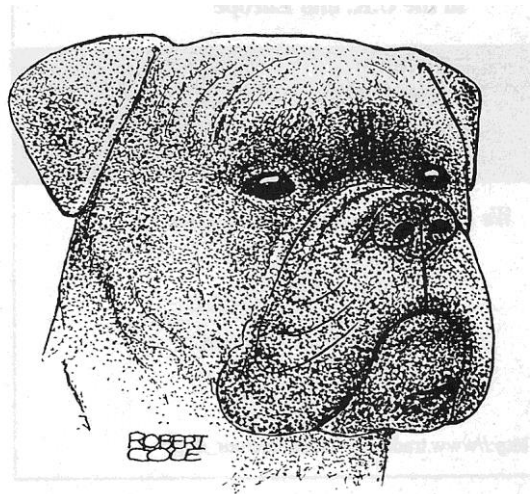
Based on the 1994 CKC standard

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

You are invited to experience, in the form of an illustrated judging scenario, the challenge that's presented by a breed in which there is a great deal of head diversity. The Bullmastiff, a man-made (60 percent Mastiff and 40 percent Bulldog) breed with easily discernible head features, is the ideal candidate for in-depth study.

A REPRESENTATION OF TYPICAL

I have long been intrigued by the seemingly endless variety of Bullmastiff heads presented to me both in and out of the show ring. The head being the hallmark of a breed, I have provided an unofficial representation of a typical Bullmastiff head (above) for those not familiar with this Working dog.



EIGHT HEADS – TWO CLASSES

So as not to overwhelm you with variety, eight real-life Bullmastiff heads – none representing ideal – are presented four at a time. Your task, after reading excerpts of the standard's description of the head along with my comments, is to place each class of four in order of merit and then decide on Winners Dog and Reserve Winner's Dog.

THE CKC STANDARD: HEAD

Expression: Alert and intelligent. **Eyes:** Dark or hazel and of medium size. **Ears:** V-shaped and carried close to the cheeks, set on wide and high, level with the occiput, giving a square appearance to the skull, when alert the point level with the eye, darker in colour than the body and medium in size. **Skull:** Large, with a fair amount of wrinkle when the dog is interested; broad with cheeks well developed. Forehead flat with furrows between the eyes. **Stop:** Definite. **Muzzle:** Short, broad and deep; its length should not exceed one third that of the entire head. Broad under the eyes and nearly parallel in width to the end of the nose; blunt and cut off square, appearing in profile in a plane parallel with skull. A black mask is essential. Lower jaw broad. **Nose:** Black and flat with nostrils large and broad. **Flews:** Not too pendulous. **Bite:** Preferably level or slightly undershot. Canine teeth large and set well apart.

STANDARD EXPANDED

No Bullmastiff standard describes the shape of the dark eye, nor do available books on the breed, with the exception of *The Mastiff and Bullmastiff Handbook* by Douglas F. Oliff who describes the eyes as almost almond shaped. The broad muzzle should sustain almost the same width to the end of the nose, the underjaw should be broad to the end, and the eyes should be spaced well apart or, better still, as the CKC standard advises, "set apart the width of the muzzle."

FIRST CLASS (A, B, C, D)

Now that you have read the official CKC description and my further comments, and studied the representation of a typical head, you are invited to judge the first four heads, placing them in order of preference before and/or after reading how I, as an artist, would improve each one.

HEAD A: The round skull should be made square and the ears should be brought forward and their inner edge made to lie close to the cheek. The broad muzzle is impressive as is the strong underjaw. The cheeks should be better developed and the looseness at the neck tightened. The loose eye rims also need to be tightened and made almond shaped.

HEAD B: The eyes are set far enough apart but are round; they should be almond shaped to produce an intelligent expression. The ears need to be made smaller. The narrow, caved-in muzzle, small nose and narrow underjaw all require broadening. The flews are too pendulous and the neck roll should be removed.

HEAD C: The ears are too large and set on too close together at the top of the skull. The eyes should be spaced further apart and the eye rims tightened. The loose cheek wrinkles should be removed and the cheeks filled. The muzzle should be made a little broader at the top.

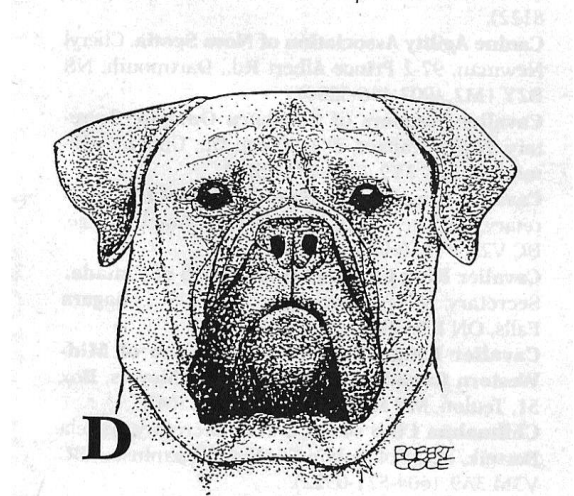
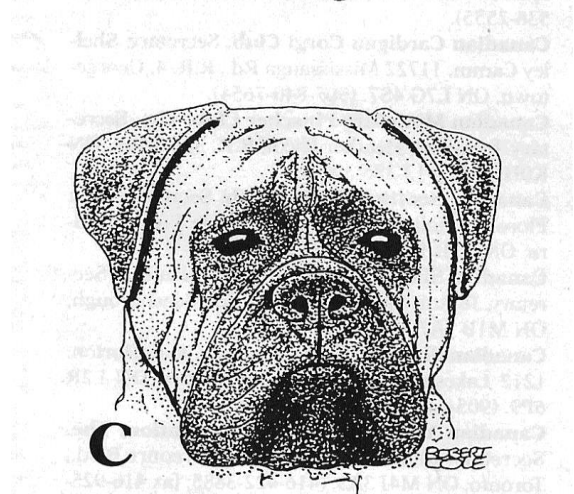
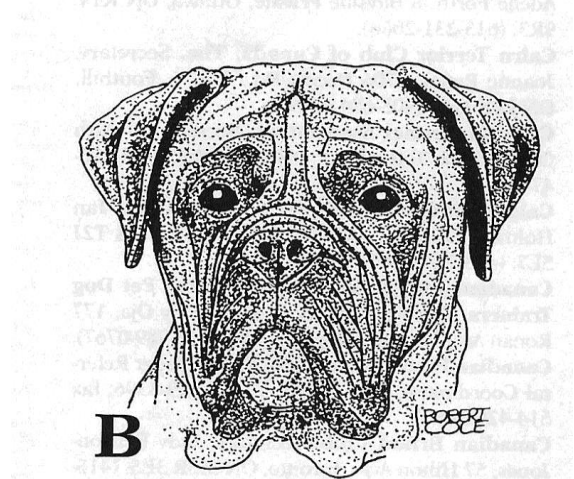
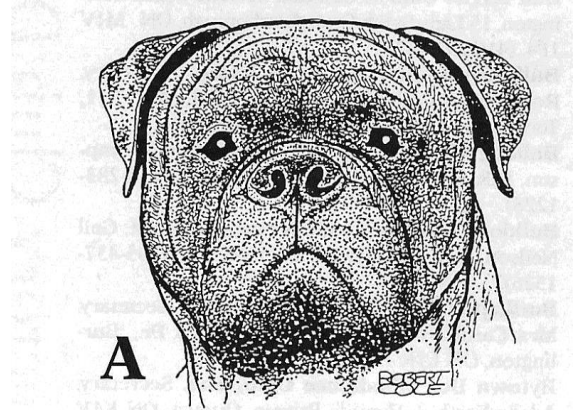
HEAD D: Imagine if, like a balloon, you could expand this head in every direction. If that were possible, then, aside from the round eyes, large ears and too much turn up of underjaw, you might produce a decent head. Notice that the eyes are balanced above each side of the muzzle – which is good except that the muzzle lacks breadth. The thick roll around the neck would also have to be removed.

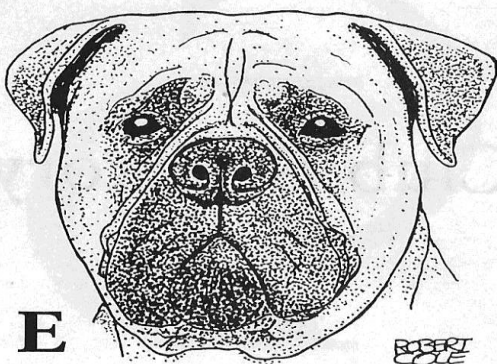
My order: I would place Head C first, followed by Head A, Head D and Head B.

SECOND CLASS (E, F, G, H)

The features and expressions possessed by this second class of four Bullmastiffs differ again from those of the previous class.

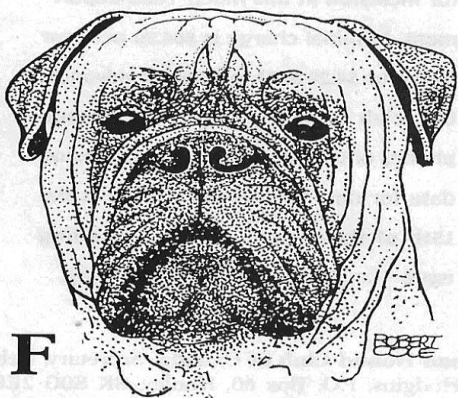
HEAD E: The rounded head and nose give this dog a pig-like appearance. Bringing the edges of the ears closer to the cheeks and broadening the top of the muzzle would help. However, the improvement would have to include increasing the depth of upper lip (the distance between bottom of nose and closed lips) as well as setting the canine teeth wider apart (broader jaw) and cleaning up the loose rolls of skin on the neck.





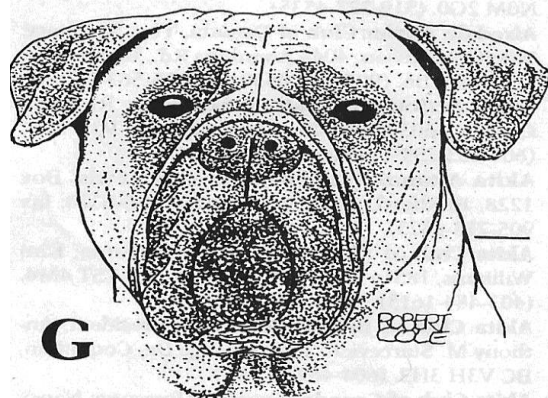
E

ROBERT COLE



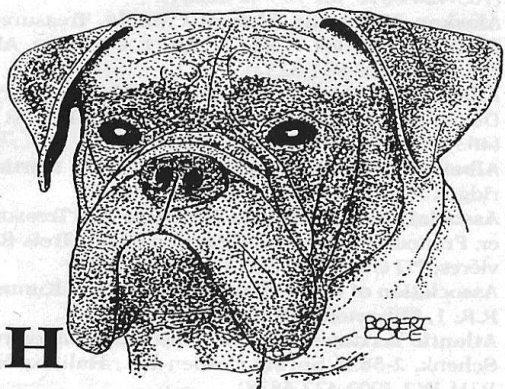
F

ROBERT COLE



G

ROBERT COLE



H

ROBERT COLE

HEAD F: The profuse cheek wrinkles should be eliminated and the jaw bones should be better defined (under the cheeks). The eyes are acceptable and the muzzle has breadth but some of the flews should be removed and the neck could be cleaned up.

HEAD G: The ears need to be made v-shaped, the muzzle broadened and the nostrils made large. The flews are too loose and heavy, as is the loose skin at the base of the throat. The degree of upturn of the jaw should be reduced – which, if you are not familiar with the breed and the concern of fanciers about the danger of reversion to the Bulldog, may be difficult to visualize face on. Allow me to explain it this way ... look at the horizontal line I have drawn under the left ear and beside the neck roll. This line is the level where the closed lips would meet if the upturn of the underjaw was not pronounced. The distance would then be increased between the nose and the mouth. The upper lip would be as long (deep) as on Head F. It will be easier to see a reversion to the Bulldog when you study Head H.

HEAD H: The large, cabbage-leaf ears draw attention to the narrowness of the skull near eye level. This narrowness is probably the reason for the slightly oblique eye angle. Fill under the eye appears to have melted away and the cheeks lack fill. The flews are too pendulous but that isn't as major a muzzle problem as the reversion to Bulldog type. The muzzle needs to be lengthened and the end squared off, bringing the nose forward and perpendicular.

My order: First place goes to Head F, second to Head E, third to Head G and fourth to Head H.

WINNERS DOG

My number one in the first class was Head C; in the second class, Head F. Interestingly, it took me as long to deliberate between these two heads as it did to decide between Heads B and D for third place in the first class. My choice for Winners Dog is Head C.

RESERVE WINNERS DOG

The selection is between Head F and second place Head A in the first class. Both heads have merit and are similar in type. Deciding on preference is easier than for Winners Dog. My choice for Reserve Winners Dog is Head F.

HEAD VARIETY

Regardless of how you placed these eight heads, if I was able to bring to your attention – hopefully in a dramatic manner – that heads can vary considerably depending on the breed, then this was a successful exercise.