



EPIC GREYHOUNDS

TOP GREYHOUND BREEDERS IN SWEDEN FOR THE PAST 6 YEARS

FEW SCANDINAVIAN KENNELS have climbed to the top as quickly as Kennel Epic of Annalena Almgren and Johan Rosengren. Just 10 years into Greyhounds they have clearly earned the respect of fellow breeders. They are truly dedicated and committed to their beloved Greyhounds and have a clear picture for the future. They have strong views about the breed and talk openly about their dogs and the future of the breed.

By Stephen Wheeler

Please think back and tell us the very first time that you encountered a Greyhound and do you recall who it was and what impact it had on you both?

The first time Annalena really noticed a Greyhound was in 1986 at the Gothenburg Show and he made a great impression on her. He was not only a dog among the others - he was glowing. We are not sure who it was but we think it was Honey Classic White Elephant. The first Greyhound Johan met was Annalena's Kazimierz Quilla Quassida. His first impression of a Greyhound - to see her in action in the fields was just so fantastic!

Let's start with the early years in dogs. Did either of you come from doggy families? We would like for you to share with us a little about your family, how you live and where you live?

Annalena has had dogs all her life. They were family pets and hunting dogs. In 1972 when she was 12 years old, she got her first sighthound, an Afghan. As Annalena then lived 200 km north of the polar circle, he had a thick coat but cut short to manage all the snow that otherwise would be hanging in the coat. When moving from her parents to her own home



On the beach, Ch Epic Epic and Multi Ch Epic.

Annalena bred Persian cats for some years. In 1982 the first Borzoi came and was followed by three more, all of them from Kennel Invibes. The last one died in 1997 at the age of 14. In 1990 came a Scottish Deerhound from Kennel Champhurst. These dogs were shown sparingly, but the interest for shows and how dogs are constructed was awakened. In 1992 Annalena was lucky to get Kazimirez Quilla Quassida from Anette Hellblom through the contacts of my Borzoi breeder. Johan did not have any dogs when growing up, but was looking for the right breed when he met Annalena. The Deerhound was one of the breeds on the want-to-have list, and Annalena suitably had one.

For two years we live on Gotland, Sweden's biggest Island in the middle of the Baltic Sea. We have designed and built our own house suitable for having a lot of Greyhounds. The house is 230 square meters on one level so that the old dogs do not have to negotiate any stairs, and it is also we think a beautiful house to live in. Our house is situated in a typical Gotlandic surrounding with forest and fields and just a couple of kilometers from the most beautiful long sandy beach. We have our own company, a real estate business and a design business and can therefore easily plan our days to suit what is best for the dogs and us.

What was it that attracted you to the Greyhound over other breeds and what made you decide to start breeding?

Greyhounds are fantastic dogs to have around, open and



Our first Greyhound and the dam of the EPIC A litter Ch Kazimirez Quilla Quassida. Photo Elisabeth Espedal

gentle to all people and easy to teach the basics. We can be out all day, in the forest and in bad weather and can practically the minute after go directly in to the show ring. And the greatest joy is to see them on the beach or in a field in full action. Everything shows, the muscles, the body, how they twist and turn. It is clean, aesthetic POWER.

What year did you breed your first litter? Tell us about the breeding and did this first litter produce well for you and has it had any impact on your dogs of today?

It was natural to start breeding. Our first Greyhound was a high quality bitch and could compete, with the best dogs around. When we had our first litter, we had been involved in sight-hounds for 27 years and in Greyhounds for seven years. With the Greyhounds we traveled a lot to shows in Sweden and Europe and got a good picture of what we wanted to accomplish with our breeding. By then we also felt that we were well set to start our breeding program. We have our own large house and the income that was needed to be able to afford breeding Greyhounds the way we wanted.



Above: Ch EPIC Attitude pictured 10 years old, dam of EPIC D and F litters. Photo Camilla Bäckman

Below: Int Ch EPIC Ambitious dam of EPIC C and E litters.

Photo Elisabeth Espedal



Int Ch Sobers Bartsia, dam to EPIC B litter. Photo Elisabeth Espedal

Please tell us a little about your early foundation, the dog's themselves, their breeding and where they came from?

The first litter was born in 1999 so we have a 10 year jubilee this year. The mother was our first Greyhound, Swed Ch Kazimirez



Ch Sobers Voyante, sire of EPIC A-litter.

Quilla Quassida, the father was Swed Ch Sobers Voyante. Both of them were classic Greyhounds without any excess. There were two males and four bitches in the litter. Five of the six are champions. Three moved to the USA and two are used in breeding there. We kept two bitches at home: Int Nord Ch EPIC Ambitious and Swed Ch EPIC Attitude both have had two litters each with a lot of nice, successful offspring. This first combination lies behind all our bred litters, apart from B & H litters. Ambitious is the one from the first combination that has had the most success in the show ring. She was top bitch in Sweden in 2002 and BOS at the big Greyhound specialty the same year. She was also was BIS at a sighthound show and BIG 1st at an International All Breed Show. What we would have liked to see more of in the A-litter was primarily better movement, especially how they covered ground. Movement was then - and still is - something that could be much better in the breed. That has been one of our main focuses when going forward. The three Greyhounds that we bought in the beginning do still have a big influence in our breeding. Swed Ch Kazimierz Quilla Quassida (Hilja) whose father is the well-known SBIS Swed, Norw, Int Ch Gulds Tawny Topstar (Shafleet Signalight-Gulds Neat Naiad), one of the most successful dogs from the famous Kennel Gulds. He is out of a long range of quality Gulds Greyhounds, one of the most important dogs in Greyhound breeding in recent years and represented in many Scandinavian pedigrees. Hilja's mother was Swed Ch Kazimierz Magnific Marionette, a classic Scandinavian Greyhound with a pedigree containing many nice Greyhounds from the 80's. Anette Hellblom, Kennel Kazimierz, started with Greyhounds in 1972 and continued breeding until 1996. Anette held Hilja as one of the best Greyhounds she ever bred. Swed Ch Sobers Voyante (Aston) who was by Swed Ch Sobers Siglorius and out of S N Ch Scottwil Aquamarine Dream. Sobers Siglorius (Gulds Tawny Topstar-Trearne Amber at Solstrand) is from the fantastic restart litter in Greyhounds at Kennel Sobers. Scottwil Aquamarine Dream was also imported from England by Sobers for the restart of Sobers Greyhounds. She has a big influence all over the world through the offspring of Sobers Voyante and his half siblings Hickory's Nauticus and Nautica. The third of our Greyhounds is Int, Nord, Dan Ch Sobers Bartsia. She is of a type that was not often seen in Sweden at that time. Her pedigree is a mix between Swedish, English and Australian lines. For those days very dramatic, with shapely lines, long neck and with, as Göran Bodegård wrote in a critique "an interesting reptile-like head". Her father is Swed Ch Hickory's



Above: GB Ch Boughton Benvoluto sire of EPIC C litter.

Below: Int Nord Fin Ch Jet's As You Like It sire of the EPIC B litter.

Photo Elisabeth Espedal



Nauticus and the mother Swed Ch, SV95-97 Sobers Seraphia, a wonderful shapely bitch, quite small and very feminine. She was a sibling to Sobers Siglorius.

Have you imported any dogs to help with your breeding program? Please tell us your reasons for your selection of the dogs you imported. Were the results achieved beneficial to your breeding program?

We have not imported any dogs but have used several males



Am Ch Willomoor Sequel sire of the EPIC E litter.



Fin Ch Rantalaukan Merikarhu, sire of the EPIC F litter.

Photo Kirsi Aalto

from other countries to widen our selection. In the B-litter we used from Norway, Int, Nord Fin Ch Jet's As You Like It. Primarily to get more drive in side gait and also more length over the loin. For the C-litter we used an English dog, GB Ch Boughton Benvenuto. We chose him to get more bone, front angulation and, again, better movement. In the E-litter we used an American dog Am Ch Willomoor Sequel. His type reminded us a lot of EPIC Bombastic and Sobers Bartsia and we wanted that type from a dog with another pedigree than we already have. That he was a good mover was again important. For the F-litter we used a dog from Finland, Fin Ch Rantalaukan Merikarhu with a lot of Australian blood, again for movement. We have achieved a lot of our intentions with these combinations. As this is quite a lot of outcross over a short time it is still to prove if this strategy will hold in the long run.

As breeders you are aware of the value in quality breeding bitches. Is there one special bitch from your kennel that has proved her worth as a producer of consistent, quality offspring?

So far only the sisters Ambitious and Attitude, from our first litter, have had more than one litter. There are several good dogs from those combinations, but too few litters to have a valuable opinion on that.

We can not see that any dog, male or bitch, has yet made a special mark in our breeding in general. We choose males with



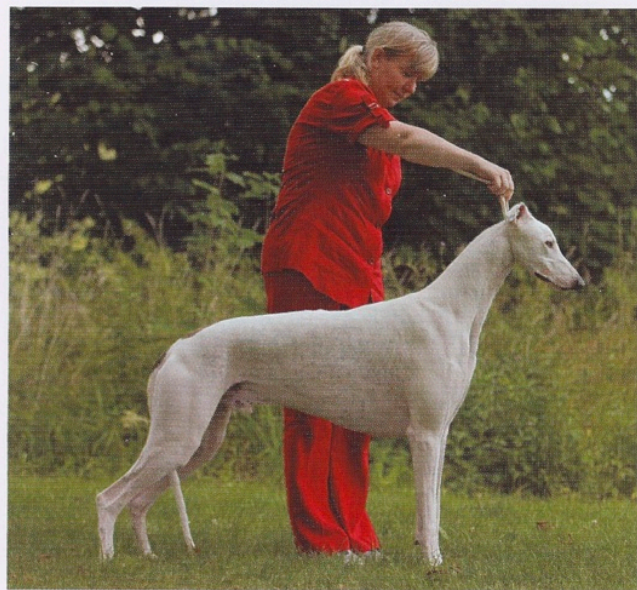
Int, Nord, Dan Ch Epic Bombastic

Photo Elisabeth Espedal



Above: Multi Ch Beauty at Sobers

Below: Int, It, Swed Ch Brave at Sobers Photo Elisabeth Espedal



qualities that complement the bitch and are in a type range we can accept. We breed primarily for the qualities we want and our idea is that the type will eventually strive out of that, instead of trying to clone a beautiful dog from the past. As we are two stubborn persons there are a lot of discussions and we do not always have the same ideas. But, we think that this is good and it helps us think in new directions when planning for the future.

Of all the stud dogs that you have used over the years is their one that stands out from the rest that has proved to be a valuable influence to your breeding and tell us why?

If we would have to choose one dog to answer this question it would be Int, Nord, Dan Ch EPIC Bombastic. He has produced three litters so far. Two of those litters here at home with two different bitches. The D-litter with Ch EPIC Attitude and the G-litter with Int Ch EPIC Clairvoyant. The third litter at kennel Jet's with the well-known Int Ch Jet's Once Upon A Dream. There are many successful Greyhounds from all three litters.

How many litters have you bred to date? Which of your litters has been the most successful and please tell us about the breeding and the results and success of this litter?

We have had eight Greyhound litters so far with a total of 63 puppies. The most successful is the B-litter. Jet's As You Like It – Sobers Bartsia. That litter of ten has six champions in eight countries and five are International champions so far. Int, Swed, It, Croat Ch EPIC Beautiful at Sobers has numerous BIS and

specialty wins and ended top sighthound and top dog no 5 all breeds in Italy 2004. Int, Nord, Dan Ch EPIC Bombastic was top Greyhound in Sweden 2005, best male 2006 and twice BIS-3 at International shows. In 2005 he also won The Greyhound specialty at Skokloster summer show. He has also produced well both at home and at kennel Jet's. In 2008 he was sire of the two top males in Sweden. But there are not only show results - his daughter Swed Ch, SLC Ch EPIC Debonair was top LC Greyhound. Int, It, Swed, Sk Ch EPIC Brave At Sobers was top Greyhound male both in Italy and Sweden in 2004 and has several specialty wins and winner shows. He is the only Swedish born Greyhound that has won CC at Cruft's and he has produced several quality puppies. Among them Multi Ch Sobers Galathea. International Champions are also Int, Nord, Dan Ch EPIC Bizarre and Int, Nord, Est Ch EPIC Beamy at Pinero who both gained their titles early and were not shown that much after that. The sixth champion in the litter is Fin, Swed Ch EPIC Brilliant. There was a 7th promising bitch in that litter: EPIC Bewitched At Wintermoon. As a junior she was BIS at the Greyhound specialty at Skokloster Summer show. Unfortunately she died young. Of the eight litters we have bred three of the litters are not even two years old so we have a lot to expect from the future.

Health is always a matter of concern when breeding dogs.

Do you test for anything specific with your dogs? Have you encountered any major or minor problems in the breed and do you think that most breeders have an open mind when it comes to health and health testing?

We are not doing any specific health screens but are doing general checks when breeding. Greyhounds are a healthy breed, but if we know of problems in the lines we avoid doubling on them. Of course

we have bred some individuals that have not been completely healthy, but it has been different diseases and nothing to put a finger on for future testing. We believe that most breeders have an open mind when it comes to health in their dogs and we think every breeder would like to get healthy puppies. We wish that it would be possible to discuss more openly about health problems. The risk you take when being open is that you will get all the blame and if you had one dog that was unhealthy the gossip will most likely give the result that every dog in the kennel is sick. If all breeders could talk more openly, not gossip, it would for sure help us all; dogs, puppy buyers and breeders.



Specialty, Sighthound & All Breeds BIS Epic Int Nord Dan Ch EPIC Clairvoyant.

Of all the dogs that you have bred is their one dog that stands out from the others and please explain why?

"Silvia", Int, Nord Ch EPIC Clairvoyant. She is a beautiful Greyhound with fantastic lines and movement. She has good substance and still moves easily around the ring. Her topline - that flows from top of the head over the long lovely arched neck, strong back, long arched loin and good croup - is a dream. And her alertness and presence - wow. She is also a very funny dog. Her party trick - when she grunts like a pig - makes everyone smile! Plus she has won a little too... Four years running she was top Greyhound bitch in Sweden, two of them top Greyhound. She has also been top sighthound in Sweden. She has won all breed BIS, BIS at the prestigious Skokloster Summer Show and at the Greyhound specialty at Skokloster Summer Show and at the Greyhound specialty in Finland. She has several group firsts and sighthound BIS.

You have exported a few dogs over the years, tell us about some of your most successful or important exports?

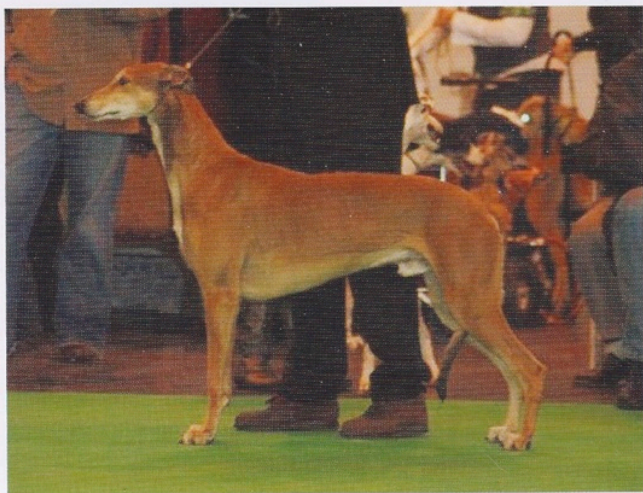
EPIC Beautiful at Sobers and EPIC Brave at Sobers mentioned above. Int, VDH, Lux, Fr, Be, Swed Ch EPIC Cool was exported to Belgium. He is an International champion, champion in numerous countries and recently CC winner in England. He is a specialty BIS winner in France with an entry of over 100 Greyhounds, sighthound BIS and several other prestigious wins. He

is sire to some interesting litters where the offspring already have had all breed BIS and other great wins. We must also mention the young male exported to Russia: Russian Hungarian Polish Ch EPIC Fundamental. He is not even two years yet and is already a champion in several countries, all breed BIS winner and has Greyhound specialty wins.

How many dogs do you currently have? How your dogs are housed and please tell us your day to day routine with the dogs?

We have 11 dogs, all Greyhounds, living with us in the house, from one to twelve

years of age. We do not believe Greyhounds do well in kennels, so they all live with us in the house. When moving to Gotland and building a new house we designed the house with 50 square meters inside the house for feeding, dog shower, puppy room etc. It makes it easy for us to have many dogs, even when having litters and bitches in heat etc. The only room we have on the second floor is the office, where it is nice not to have nosy dogs sneaking around all important papers. Outside we have about 10.000 square meters for the dogs where they get a lot of exercise. We have the beach not far from us, where they have more than 10 km sandy beach to run on. We also have access to 50.000 square meters enclosed field where it is safe to let the dogs loose. The forest around our house is wonderful for



Int, Belg, Dut, Germ, Lux. Swed Ch Epic Cool.

the walks. In the morning we feed the dogs and then they rest until lunch. In the afternoon the dogs run free in the yard, many hours a day, but mostly not more than 30 minutes each time. In the yard we can let all adult dogs run together as there are trees and bushes so they do not really reach maximum speed. When we let them loose on the beach or the big field we match the ones with similar capacity, so the youngest or oldest do not overstrain. At least once a week we take the dogs to the big field or the beach. They love walks in the forest so we could/should do more of that. In the evening it is food and more rest. We do not let the young dogs play with the adults before 10-12 months. It is a big risk for a young Greyhound to overstrain, but it is very important also for the young Greyhound to exercise a lot. A combination of running free in the forest and in an open field is best to get the correct physical development and prevent injuries in the future.



Having fun at the beach
Above Ch Epic Epic and
below Ch Epic Bombastic.

The best is if they can run together with a youngster the same age or a much smaller dog. In general the exercise for a Greyhound should be much more running free than walking on a lead. Greyhounds are lazy and most of the time they just lay around, and if we sometimes take a late morning the dogs are happy to sleep until ten.



Pol, Rus, Hun Ch Epic Fundamental.

We would be interested to hear how and what you feed your dogs?

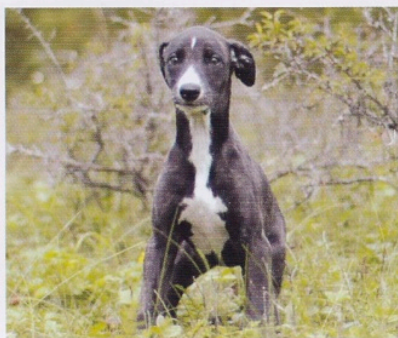
We feed Royal Canin and have done that for 15 years. We have tested all the big brands and some others, and RC really works well for our dogs. Our small puppies have good quality coats and put on the right weight. We feed RC Maxi Adult and Energy 4300 depending on season and age of the dogs. Puppies and juniors get the food RC recommends for the age. We always keep all our dogs in top condition. When exercising as much as our dogs do Greyhounds eat a lot. Someone told us they eat more than any other breed. But - the right food with the right exercise makes top quality dogs. Someone once said that you can design your Greyhounds by how you keep them, and we really believe that is true. The feeding and exercise is at least 50% of your success

How often do you attend shows? Please tell us some of your most memorable wins?

We go to 15-20 shows a year, mostly in Sweden but we try to do a couple of shows abroad every year. Thanks to our puppy buyers there are EPIC Greyhounds shown every other weekend somewhere in the world. It is so wonderful to receive all the nice results. The most memorable wins are with Clairvoyant, winning BIS at Skokloster summer show and BIS at a big International all breed show with over 4600 dogs in Sofiero, Sweden. Other memorable wins are at the Greyhound Specialty at Skokloster summer show: Bewitched At Wintermoon 2002, Bombastic 2005, Clairvoyant 2007. Another nice memory is the day Annalena was at home, working in the garden and got the call from the French National Greyhound Specialty, Le Blanc, with 95 entries where EPIC Beautiful At Sobers won BIS, EPIC Brave At Sobers BOS and young EPIC Cool Best male number 2. It was easy to work in the garden after that.

What are your views on the quality of judges? Do you think that most have a good understanding of the breed?

The Scandinavian judges are used to very high quality Greyhounds and most of them understand the breed specifics. They are keeping a high standard at home but sometimes you are surprised what they put up abroad. As Greyhounds are such a numerically small breed we unfortunately very often get judges with little interest and knowledge of the breed. We think the judges in general do not acknowledge enough good movement, and the importance of good sidegait. There is far too much focus on back and forth in the movement. The Greyhound should move easily with good extension and close to the ground, not spend energy on lifting the front feet high



Epic puppies at play.

or kick in the empty air with the rear legs instead of pushing the body forward. Some judges do not understand the right balance of the breed and tend to put up quality details they prefer instead.

Looking ahead, what are your future plans as a breeder?

We have just, as we write this, done an AI, to EPIC Clairvoyant. The dog is AM CH SkyHi Diamonds and Rust. He is a son of Am Ch EPIC Ambassador from our first litter. This is exciting as we for the first time double on our A-litter. For the future we have several bitches to use from the two different lines (Kazimirez Quilla Quassida and Sobers Bartsia). As we are keeping some of the litters from these two lines separate and have done many outcrosses in the beginning, we feel we have a stable ground with a lot of possibilities. We will keep going the way we have,

using quality outcross quite often so that we always have the possibility to use our own males on our own bitches. We will have about one litter every year. That is what we need in order to fulfill this. Next planned litter after Clairvoyant will be from Ch EPIC Epic. As we sit and write this interview we have just received some wonderful news from the UK, so this is hot off the press. Multi Champion Epic Cool has just won BIS at a very large Greyhound Specialty with some 85 Greyhounds entered while Epic Generous also won his class.

Please mention a few of the best Greyhounds you have seen over the years and tell us what it was about them that impressed you?

Swed Ch Sobers Seraphia is still one of our favorite Greyhounds. Even though she was quite moderate she had beautiful s-lines and a wonderful type. Int, Swed, Norw, It, Slovak Ch Sobers Cadelia – a very well constructed bitch with good bone and nice movement. GB Ch Boughton Bonheur, a curvy beautiful bitch that we fell in love with – therefore grandmother to our C-litter. Am Ch Willomoor Sequel – visiting the Eastern Specialty in US we could not take our eyes from him. We just had to get something by him! After several tries we got what we wanted: our lovely bitch Swed Ch EPIC Epic.

And finally, the last question. If you could have changed just one thing you have done in past years what would it be and why would you change it?

There are some combinations that we would have liked to do in the past but they were just not meant to be. Luckily we always have new projects ahead and do not have time for the past...

Last comment. Thanks for reading. We hope you know our dogs and us more now and we hope we have inspired new people to the wonderful ultimate breed – THE Greyhound!



Above: **Swed Ch Epic Epic** Photo Camilla Bäckman
Below: **Swed Ch Sobers Seraphia**
Right: **UK Ch Boughton Bonheur**

