



WUSV Helpers Prepare to Step Up to the Plate **Four Brave Hearts for Cincinnati**

by Claudia Romard

We all know by now that this year's world Schutzhund competitors are coming into the United States to compete at the WUSV World Championships (www.wusv2008.org). Many people here in this country planned their vacation time around this event and are anxious to finally travel to Cincinnati to see the world elite and their dogs in action. All of the people that are involved in planning and organizing this event have worked hours and hours getting everything ready to welcome all of the competitors and spectators and to make this trial memorable for everybody.

Four of these people I am talking about will stand in the limelight and will have a big load on their shoulders. Many critical eyes will be on them, and they are the most important "tool" for the favorite phase of this sport...the protection part. I am talking about the four brave men who were chosen to do the helper work at the 2008 Worlds.

We all know them by name, but for most of us that is all we know. I think it is time to find out a bit more about those guys. I want to thank Shane Garrehy, Jim Laubmeier, Clark Niemitalo and Lotus Perkins for taking the time to answer my questions and giving our readers some insight into private areas of their life.

Shane Garrehy

My name is Shane Garrehy, and I am 34 years old. I live in Danville, CA, with my wife, DeAnne, and kids, Makena (8 years old) and Tyler (6 years old). We have a dog kennel and training business.

How and when did everything start for you in the dog sport and especially as a helper?

I was introduced to Schutzhund in 1999 by John Riboni. We had an older Rottweiler and were looking for a puppy, and contacted John. He invited us to his place to look at some puppies and when I saw Schutzhund, I was hooked. Not only



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did I want to train a dog to do Schutzhund, I wanted to be the bad guy also. So it started with driving two hours each way, every Saturday, for years. I tried with a Rottweiler but it didn't work, so I got a German Shepherd Dog. He had elbow dysplasia, so was only able to get a BH. By this time, I was dedicated to doing helper work. John got me started and pointed me in the right direction, which led to me meeting Gary Parks.

Who did you learn from?

With Gary's trial helper instruction, and the help of John Riboni, David Deleissegues and Rob Dunn, I have become a national and world level helper. Without their guidance, I could have never gotten to this level. So, thank you very much! There have been a lot of handlers and helpers that have given me tips along the way, and I thank them also.

What was the hardest for you to learn as a helper?

The escape bite was the hardest for me to learn. I had a hard time keeping my arm against my body. After a couple of face plants from an American Bulldog, I got it.

What excites you most about being a helper?

Seeing a dog come in the blind and bark with power and transitioning into doing the whole routine with power and courage.

What was your most memorable experience as a helper?

I think the most memorable experience as a helper was trying out for the 2000 Nationals. I was so nervous I ran as fast as I could and drove the dog as fast as I could, and they said, "This kid can't keep that up."

How will your preparation for the World Championship look like? Especially when it comes to the rigors of 140 dogs in 4 days?

I am training in the gym three times a week, and I am working dogs three days a week. It is going to be hard work for the four days. When I worked the back half of the GSD Nationals in 2005 and 2007, I felt really good throughout the entire event. So, I feel I know where I need to be for the Worlds.

If you could choose which part would you prefer in a SchH3 trial routine, the front or the back half? And why?

I don't have a preference when it comes to the front or back half. They are both fun. The front gets more action and has more bites; the back is more technical and I think there is more pressure on the helper. I just like being on the field and testing the dogs. It is going to be a real pleasure to work the best German Shepherd Dogs in the world.

Do you have dogs yourself that you train? If yes, what is your breed and what do you have at home right now?

Between doing helper work for several clubs I have trained a couple of dogs to different titles, my biggest accomplishment,

handler wise, was taking my Malinois, A'Ivan (eight years old now), to the AWDF championships in Alabama 2006. I am currently training a son from Ivan (20 months old) and have a new German Shepherd puppy.

As a club helper you spend most of your time helping club members training their dogs. Often there is nobody there that can do the same for you. How is the situation for you?

With coaching my kids in soccer, baseball and all the other activities, there leaves little time for training my own dogs these days. After the Worlds, I will focus on becoming a better handler, training my own dogs and showing them. I am very lucky to be able to train with San Jose Schutzhund Club, South County Schutzhund Club and Placer County Schutzhund Club, a lot of great helpers.

Is there anybody in particular you want to thank? Or some wise words you would like to share with us?

I would like to thank John Riboni, Gary Parks, David Deleissegues and Rob Dunn. They have helped me to get where I am. My advice to new helpers is to listen to everyone and do what feels good to you. Not everyone can have the same style and just because you don't have the same style doesn't mean you can't learn from them.

Jim Laubmeier

I am 41 years old, Birth date: July 12th 1966, 6'0" tall 260 lbs. I work as a Captain/Paramedic at the Phoenix, AZ, Fire Department.

I did helper work at the 2006 and 2007 USA Southwest Regionals, 2006, 2007 and 2008 AWDF Championships and 2007 USA North American Championships.



I was born and raised in Phoenix and grew up in a large family. We always had large dogs while growing up, and I have always loved animals. We live northwest of Phoenix in Peoria on a large property with our dogs. I was an athlete growing up and played different sports. I played college football as a fullback and linebacker, and helper work is my outlet for another contact sport.

After college, I joined the Phoenix Fire Department where I have been a member for more than 18 years. I am currently a Captain/Paramedic on a busy North Phoenix Engine Company with a great crew. I am also a member of our Phoenix Fire Dept. FEMA Urban Search & Rescue Team as a Medical Specialist. AZ TF-1 has been deployed to many different disasters such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina and the Oklahoma City Bombings to name a few.

I have been married for 12 years to my wonderful wife, Heather. We are very excited and proud to be new parents of our little girl, Annika. My wife Heather is a Neonatal ICU Nurse and Educator at a NICU in Phoenix and has been a NICU RN for more than 10 years. On my days off from the fire department, I am a faculty member at Paradise Valley College teaching Fire Science, EMT and am the Lead Instructor for the Paramedic Program. I am also one of the lead instructors for the Phoenix Fire Dept Paramedic Program and teach Paramedic Refresher courses and ACLS/PALS.

How and when did everything start for you in the dog sport and especially as a helper?

We came to the Phoenix Schutzhund Club looking for a Rottweiler and met Jacko Rousseau. While doing research for our new dog, I started learning helper work at the club in 2004. I did not have a dog yet and was asked if I would be interested in learning training helper work. I liked the physical nature of helper work and enjoyed the training and became interested in working trials. There were quite a few very good dogs to work including two Southwest Regional Champions. I became certified as a Basic level USA helper in June 2005 and met my friend and mentor Nathaniel Roque. I worked local club trials for two years and had the opportunity to work the 2006 and 2007 USA Southwest Regionals. I was also selected to work the 2006 and 2007 AWDF and worked the 2007 USA North Americans. I most recently just worked the IPO3 back half at the 2008 AWDF.

Who did you learn from?

Wayne Walcott and Rich Rosen were the first two helpers I learned from at the club level and who started me out in the sport, especially with training helper work. I have had the opportunity to work extensively with Nathaniel Roque on my trial helper work skills at both trials and helper seminars. I have also had the opportunity to work with Dave Deleissegues, Craig Groh, Armin Winkler and Doug Wendling to name some of the excellent teachers I have been fortunate to work with.

What was the hardest for you to learn as a helper?

Drives and catches. The mechanics of the different drives and what drive suited my body style the best. I am a big guy and have a lot of power and the skip drive suits my style. I am able to put a lot of pressure on the dog and drive them powerfully with the skip drive. Learning the proper technique for safe catches on the back half is a challenge for everyone as it was for me. I usually was always selected to work the front half until I worked the '07 North Americans. I was picked for the back there and was able to employ some of the techniques I learned from Doug Wendling and Armin Winkler on the back half. I had previously acquired a bad habit of trying to choose a side the dog was coming and was out of position frequently. Doug and Armin worked with me to come down the field square to the dog, put on lots of pressure and allow the dog to dictate the side he picks and open up my hips and take the dog in that direction. This has become a natural way for me to catch dogs on the back half now.

What excites you most about being a helper?

The excitement of working a very strong dog and testing them in a trial atmosphere. I have a type of dog I like to work and that is a strong, powerful dog that really wants to test the helper. That close contact fight with a banger type of dog is a real thrill for me. I have had the opportunity to work some awesome dogs in big trials, and it is always a challenge I look forward to.

What was your most memorable experience as a helper?

Working any National event has been very memorable for me. I have had the opportunity to work some great dogs and meet some wonderful people along the way. Having the opportunity to tryout and be selected to work the 2008 WUSV has been the highlight in my helper career thus far.

How will your preparation for the World Championships look like? Especially when it comes to the rigors of 140 dogs in four days.

The biggest area of preparation for me is always conditioning and especially being ready to work more than 100 dogs. I have gone back to my old style of training similar to football preparation-lots of running for both endurance and sprint work on the field with interval training. In the gym, I have gone back to using a lot of exercises which are explosive type motions including squats, power cleans, bench press and deadlifts. We have lots of hiking trails here in Phoenix, and I am starting to run the trails and do incline work to improve my aerobic conditioning. I want to show up to the WUSV very fit both aerobically and strong physically.

If you could choose which part would you prefer in a SchH3 trial routine, the front or the back half?

And why?

The front half used to be my favorite, and I was always selected to work that phase in previous trials but I have really started to enjoy the challenges the back half brings. The back

half integrates both the excitement and finesse of the long bite catch and the power/pressure feature of the front half. Coming down the field hard and putting a lot of frontal pressure on a dog before the catch puts a lot of stress on the dog and then the re-attack and drive really tests the dogs ability to maintain his grip under intense hard pressure from the helper during the drive.

Do you have dogs yourself that you train?? If yes, what is your breed and what do you have at home right now?

We are Rottweiler fans, and I currently have a two-year-old young male, Bronko vom Wachberg, that I am working on titling to his VPG titles. He currently has a BH and a ZTP. My wife also is involved in the sport and is working with her young female, Vaika vom Herrenholz. We also have a young eight-month-old female German import, Leyna vom Schwaiger Wappen, that we will be working with in the future. All three are German ADRK imports from working lines, and we are excited about titling and competing with them in the future.

As a club helper, you spend most of your time helping club members training their dogs. Often there is nobody there that can do the same for you. How is the situation for you?

That had been the situation in the past with working lots of club dogs and leaving little room or time for my own dogs' development, but I am training with a new group of people who are very supportive. My friend, Robert Pinkney, is a new helper and is a recently certified Basic-level USA helper. We work together in our training group to spread the work around between the helpers so one is too worn out to train their own dogs. Robert has worked very hard and learns very quickly and we are growing as a training group. I have great support from my wife in the sport and it is a real plus that she enjoys the training and we share common goals. Our training group is new, energetic and always learning and growing. Everyone is very supportive of each other and the dogs in the group.

Is there anybody in particular you want to thank? Or some wise words you would like to share with us?

I would like to first thank my wife, Heather, for without her support and love I would not have been able to accomplish many of my goals. I would also like to thank the people and clubs that have taught me helper work and allowed me to learn under their wings. My good friend, Nathaniel Roque, has been my friend and helper mentor since the start and was the one that encouraged me to continuously challenge myself. Lastly, I want to thank all the handler and dogs that have given me the opportunity to work with them and grow as a helper. The USA helpers that I have been fortunate to work trials with and spend time with have been a huge resource and support system as only the helpers know what it is like to be in front of the dogs. I will finish with a quote from former President Roosevelt that epitomizes what the spirit of being a helper is like to me: Thanks for the

opportunity to be featured in the USA magazine and for the great honor of being selected as a helper for the 2008 WUSV!

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcomings; but who does actually strive to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly. So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”

Clark Niemitalo

I was born in July of 1975 in Wyoming. Currently I live in northern Indiana with my girlfriend Krystin and her 11-year-old son Tyler. I am working seasonally doing road construction.

I have worked 10 club trials, 6 Regional events (Mid Central and Mid Eastern), 12 National level events as well as the IFR Rottweiler worlds for a total of about 400 dogs.

How and when did everything start for you in the dog sport and especially as a helper?

I am a USA member since 2001. I was involved with dogs and helper work for about ten years prior, USRC group in FL and did some ring work.



Who did you learn from?

I would say that John Nussbaum, James Laney and Armin Winkler are my main sources; but I do try to continue learn from any helper work that I am exposed to.

What was the hardest for you to learn as a helper?

I would have to say keeping my training helper instincts from coming out during trial work.

What excites you most about being a helper?

As a training helper, seeing my club member dogs do well in trial and being able to test my own as well as other peoples' training as a trial helper.

What was your most memorable experience as a helper?

2004 AWDF, Nashville TN. Pouring down rain, lightning, the field a muddy swamp, scooping mud out of my cleats with a cut off soda can. While still attempting to maintain consistent, safe, work without ending up with anything other than my feet down in the mud.

How will your preparation for the World Championship look like? Especially when it comes to the rigors of 140 dogs in four days?

I have been working very steady in the gym since the beginning of the year in order to be in fighting shape for the WUSV tryouts, and I will continue to do so throughout the year. I also work dogs consistently with my people and I am trying to travel around a bit and get on as many top-notch dogs as possible to keep my read and timing.

If you could choose which part would you prefer in a SchH3 trial routine, the front or the back half? And why?

I am traditionally picked as a front half helper. I do not personally have a preference either way; I am comfortable doing both. If you made me choose I would have to say the front half as there is much more opportunity to put pressure on and test the dogs.

Do you have dogs yourself that you train? If yes, what is your breed and what do you have at home right now?

I am starting out fresh this year with a male Malinois puppy that we whelped this January here at the house. We have a few other IPO Malinois females and a couple of French Bulldogs that we show in AKC conformation.

As a club helper, you spend most of your time helping club members training their dogs. Often there is nobody there that can do the same for you. How is the situation for you?

Right now I have no secondary helper at all in the group I work with. As my new puppy ages I will just have to start traveling the three hours to other clubs in area such as OG Indy when I can.

Is there anybody in particular you want to thank?**Or some wise words you would like to share with us?**

There are a TON of people I would like to thank but in the interest of space I'll try to keep it to a minimum. Mike Diehl and the guys at OG Indy for all the help and top notch dogs; all the local guys who let me work their dogs on a regular basis... Roni Hoff, Reed Raleigh and Bessie Huneryager. Mohawk John and Paula for putting me up at their place regularly so I can get on the dogs up in Michigan. Last but not least my girlfriend Krystin Hildebrandt for driving me to all the events, supporting me and filming all my work for me to review.

Lotus Perkins

My name is Lotus Perkins, I am 36 years old and the father of two. Currently I am working as a dispatcher for an industrial moving company. I have done six championships, 1 Regional event and many club trials to count.

How and when did everything start for you in the dog sport and especially as a helper?

I started in dog sport in 1991, in Saginaw, MI, with A.J. Slaughter.

Who did you learn from ?

I have learned from a lot of people and continue to learn every day.



What was the hardest for you to learn as a helper?

The physical part always came easy to me; the training aspect was the more challenging part.

What excites you most about being a helper?

It is a rush for me to feel the dog's power on the arm and to challenge the training on the dog.

What was your most memorable experience as a helper?

My most memorable experience would have to be the 2006 HOT Tournament. I was standing in the blind and I couldn't stop my arm from shaking. I was so nervous and excited.

How will your preparation for the World Championship look like? Especially when it comes to the rigors of 140 dogs in four days?

My preparation started May 1 and consists of four days a week, two hours each day. I run and lift weights.

If you could choose which part would you prefer in a SchH3 trial routine, the front or the back half? And why?

I would like to get the back half. Everybody seems to think my front half is better than my back half. I would like to challenge myself on the back.

Do you have dogs yourself that you train? If yes, what is your breed and what do you have at home right now?

Yes, I have a German Shepherd Dog.

As a club helper you spend most of your time helping club members training their dogs. Often there is nobody there that can do the same for you. How is the situation for you?

I guess I would have to say that I am lucky; we have a lot of great helpers in our club (South Metro Schutzhund Club)

Is there anybody in particular you want to thank? Or some wise words you would like to share with us?

Yes, I would like to thank A.J. Slaughter, John Bochenek, Brian Harvey, Wallace Payne and South Metro, Beverly Huges and Debbie Zappia. All of these people played a part in my development in this sport in one way or another. Last but not least I would like to thank Schutzhund USA for giving me the opportunity.

△ **USA**