

- **Brabanter or Danziger Bollbeiszer (Bullbaiting dog from Brabant or Danzig)**
- **Old fighting dog of Córdoba or Viejo Perro Pelea Córdobaes**

Although their history is scanty and pictures are rare, that the following breeds existed is indisputable, which is quite something in this world of speculation and theory. Solid evidence is difficult to find in the early history of dog breeds. Sometimes old pictures and early descriptions can help us reconstructing their history. That's the only possibility to determine whether they went extinct ingloriously or have contributed to the creation of still-existing breeds.



A 'Brabanter Bullbaiting dog'. Sculpture in bronze by the Dutch artist Gerda v.d. Bosch. (Collection Dr. D. Fleig.)



'Bull baiting', one of the many drawings by Henry Alken (1823). The bull is tied and the public seems to be very interested.

A bloodthirsty scene

In ancient Rome, bullbaiting dogs performed in the arenas, fighting lions, bears, elephants and - hence the name - bulls. These dogs mostly came from Great Britain, at that time occupied by the Romans. The Roman conquerors were introduced to these dogs that seemed to be even braver than their own dogs at home, the Molossians. Roman documents enthusiastically report on these English fighting dogs, capable of breaking the neck of a full-grown bull.

In 1578, the Flemish painter Jan van der Straet (1523-1605), better known under the fashionable name of Giovanni Stradanus, depicted armed men sitting on horseback, trying to overwhelm bulls with their lances. Seven fighting dogs can be seen on the engraving as well; one of them has already forced the bull to his knees. It's quite a bloodthirsty scene that shows bullbaiting dogs were not unknown in the Low Countries during the 16th century.

'Bullbaiting dogs'

There are records of bullbaiting dogs in ancient England. As early as during the reign of King John (1199-1216) a writer reported a fight for a cow between two bulls. The fight took place in the neighbourhood of Stamford Castle; William, Earl of Warren, gave the eyewitness account. He wrote, "Suddenly some big and small butchers' dogs joined the bulls in the fight en one of the bulls was pursued throughout the city". Obviously, the Earl was enchanted by the chase, because he organized an annual bull-chasing and bullbaiting event six weeks before Christmas. The local butchers provided the bull. Why? Well, in exchange, the butchers' cows were allowed to graze on the meadows around the castle belonging to the Earl.

By the Middle Ages, dogs were being used to provoke cattle. One reason was to provide a kind of public amusement, the other reason - seen through our eyes - is absolutely ridiculous. It was believed that beef tasted better and was more tender if the cattle have been provoked shortly before being slaughtered. With this in mind, butchers kept big dogs - "butcher's dogs".

'Sport'

The English painter Henry Thomas Alken (1785-1821) engraved several prints depicting this kind of 'sport'. Usually the bull was tied with a rope or chain; sometimes he was mutilated to make the dogs as bloodthirsty as possible. Even the well-known English painter Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-1873) could not resist drawing scenes with bulls and bullbaiting dogs. A drawing from 1821 shows a bull fight with as many as six dogs; one has been tossed on the bull's horns and flies through the air. During such fights, the bull was often grabbed by his sore nose; victory was complete when the giant of a bull was knocked down.

'Bollbeiszer' - vicious and malicious

Back to the European Continent. Hans von Flemming gave us a detailed report of bullbaiting and bullbaiting dogs in his book *Der vollkommene Teutsche Jäger* (The Complete German Sportsmen), published in 1719. About the Bollbeiszer (bullbaiting dog) Von Flemming wrote: "They are medium sized dogs but heavy in bone. Their chest is wide, the head is short and broad and has a short, sloping nose. They have erect pointed ears and a double bite. That's way they can hold on so strongly. Their movement is ponderous, but they are strong, heavy and well-fleshed. Apart from the big 'Danziger Bollbeisser' (bullbaiting dog from Danzig), another type exists in Brabant (a province in the Low Countries). They are also medium sized but most of the time a little smaller than the Danziger. Their limbs are the same and they also are heavily built. These dogs are called 'Brabanter Bullebijters' (bullbaiting dogs from Brabant). In case of lack of bears these dogs are trained to chase and attack bulls and bullocks, however these sport is more suitable for butchers than for hunters."

Obviously Hans von Flemming had visited the Low Countries, because he continues: "In Brabant I have seen a bull chased by dogs. He was fettered on a long chain while attacked by this type of dogs. They grasped him on the nose and throat, while he was running around in circles. These dogs are also used as watch dogs and bandogs. The very fact looking so ugly makes them appropriate watch dogs. Usually they have a short nose with a black mask and the lower jaw pulls forward. Usually the colour is yellow or brindle. They look vicious and seem to be malicious."

A drawing in Von Flemming's book is captioned 'Niederländischer Bollbeisser' (Dutch bullbaiting dog). In dog literature, 'bearbaiting dog' and 'bullbaiting dog' were used interchangeably. The explanation is simple: the bullbaiting dog was also used for hunting bears and wild boars.

Creation of the Boxer

Europeans realized bit by bit that the so-called 'sport' of baiting dogs was not acceptable. In England it has been forbidden by law since 1835. In the first decades of the 19th Century bullbaiting dogs were mainly kept as watch dogs. Did those bullbaiting dogs become extinct or did they contribute to present-day breeds? Although the Danziger and Brabanter bullbaiting dog are extinct, the Brabanter - the smaller type - is generally considered to be the basis of today's Boxer. In creating the Boxer, the aim was to keep the old bullbaiting type and not stray off to a Terrier or Bulldog type.



The author H.G. Reichenbach drew various types of German 'Bollbeisser' for his book "Der Hund in seinen Haupt- und Neben-Racen", 1836. ("Primary and Secondary Breeds of Dogs").



The 'Niederländischer Bollbeisser' (Dutch bullbaiting dog) from Von Flemming's book *Der vollkommene Teutsche Jäger* (The Complete German Sportsmen), dated 1719.

The magnificent photograph of 1896 shows a group of Boxers from the City of Munich (Germany). Most have a head that reminds us of an English Bulldog's, and their colour is white - not surprisingly, because the old English Bulldog was used to create the Boxer. However, two dogs on the left in this photo show an explicit type of bullbaiting dog: dark, ponderous and broad, with a heavy bullbaiting-dog head. The dogs on the right show the smaller type Von Flemming wrote about in his book. This splendid picture from the end of the 19th Century shows the transition from the old bullbaiting dog to the modern Boxer.

In *Die Deutschen Hunde und Ihre Abstammung* (The German Dogs and their Origins), the famous German dog fancier Richard Strebel wrote with some regret about the decision to not preserve the original name 'Bollbeisser' when creating the Boxer. Instead of the German name, an English-sounding name was chosen.

Boerboel

Apart from the Boxer, there are other breeds that descend from the bullbaiting dogs. One of them is the Boerboel, created in South Africa. (In English, his name means 'bull dog of the farmer'.) The Dutch settler Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 with a bullbaiting dog - not intended for bullbaiting, but for protecting his family. This dog was described as "a bullbaiting dog of a Mastiff type". As well, English colonists brought their watchdogs to South Africa. Certainly in the period after Van Riebeeck and during the 'Great Trek' (great migration in the country), bullbaiting dogs, types of Mastiffs and Bulldogs, laid the foundation for the South African Boerboel. Many years later, about 1938, the Bullmastiff was added to the breed.



A meeting of Boxer fanciers in Munich (Germany), 1896. "Boxer Heil" (Long live the Boxer) is written on the board and the beer mugs are on hand. The two dogs on the left are true types of the 'Bullebijter' ('Bollbeisser').



An 18th Century portrait by students of the German dog painter John E.L. Riedinger (1698-1767). The fawn-coloured dog has a black mask. The author John P. Wagner assumes in his book about Boxers that this dog is a Danziger bullbaiting dog. Riedinger himself painted the 'Bollbeisser' several times. (Collection AKC Museum.)



Photographs of the Viejo Perro Pelea de Córdobaes are very rare. The breed became extinct, but is one of the ancestors of the Dogo Argentino. (Photo from: "El Presa Canario" by M.M. Bèthencourt.)



'The hunt for wild cattle' by the Flemish artist Jan van der Straet (1523-1605), dating from 1578. The artist is also known as Giovanni Stradarius.

The 'Bullebijter', 'Bollbeisser' or bullbaiting dog has a long history in large parts of Europe. Originally bred for hunting large game and fighting the bull, he ended his career as a watchdog. His type is still recognizable in various breeds, but his original name did not survive.

Old fighting dog of Córdoba

The name, place of origin and job of this dog are immediately clear. "Córdoba" does not refer to the city in Spain, but to Córdoba in Argentina, a large city and district northwest of Buenos Aires. At the beginning of the 20th Century dog fights were still very popular in Latin America. A lot of gambling money was involved, the earnings exceeding those from the cock-fights. The names of the winning dogs and their owners were proudly published. According to the present standards, dogfighting is a most objectionable 'sport', but in earlier times it was a fully accepted public amusement, especially for farmers and cattle breeders. Dogfighting was an inheritance of the Spanish Conquistadores; the roots of the Old fighting dog of Córdoba can be found in the Spanish Alano and the ancestors of the present Perro de Presa Mallorquin that the conquistadores took with them to their new country.

In the 19th Century, during the second wave of immigration, Bulldogs, Terriers and Boxers were imported to Argentina. It is generally assumed that the Old fighting dog of Córdoba was gradually created out of intentional crossbreeding of these ancient Spanish and modern European dogs.

"Something in between a Bulldog and a Mastiff"

A fighting dog must have certain characteristics; stamina, the will to win the fight and to fight to the death if necessary, and resistance to pain. Thanks to old photographs and descriptions we know the general appearance of the Vieja Perro Pelea Córdobaes. It was a big mastiff-like dog, of various types, generally white or white with dark spots on the head and body. Often they were described as "something in between a Bulldog and a Mastiff". However, the Córdoba was a slow dog with a mediocre nose. Apart from being aggressive to people, the males attacked the bitches during mating! They were not useful for hunting because they fought with each other in stead of the prey. When the conclusion was reached in this part of the world that dogfighting is uncivilized, the popularity of the Córdoba rapidly declined and their becoming extinct was a serious option.

Antonio and Augustin

In the first two decades of the 20th Century, dog fancier and hunter Dr. Augustin Nores- Martinez and his brother Antonio Nores-Martinez, worked together to create a new breed of brave gundog: the Dogo Argentino. One of their points of departure was that the Perro Pelea Córdobaes should not become extinct. In Martinez' philosophy, the best part of this dog had to be saved.

The new breed should not be just another dog, because it would be used for hunting bear, jaguar and puma. Dr. Martinez needed the strong and brave Córdoba mainly because of its great stamina. He was not interested in this fighting dog's useless aggression, but on the other hand, he could use its fearlessness.

Using the Córdoba, Boxer, Great Dane, Bull Terrier, Pointer, Spanish Mastiff an Irish Wolfhound, the brothers Antonio and Augustin created the Dogo Argentino. It is assumed that they started their breeding programme with 10 Córdoba bitches; after 30 years of 'doctoring', the influence of the Córdoba has been pushed back to an acceptable and useful factor in the new breed.

Antonio was killed (probably murdered) during a bear hunt in 1956. His brother Augustin, a lawyer who became Chancellor of the University of Buenos Aires and served as the Argentine ambassador of Argentina to Canada, continued breeding Dogos Argentinos, the heritage of the Viejo Perre Pelea Córdobaes.

More extinct dog breeds

The Bullebijter/Bollbeisser and the Perro Pelea de Córdobaes are not the only extinct Mastiff breeds. There were also the Bouledogue du Midi in France, the Garpehund in Norway, the Blue Paul in Scotland and in Russia the Mordashka (Russian Bulldog). Others breeds, from other groups, have also disappeared - the Afghan Spaniel, Canada's Tahltan Bear Dog, the Poi dogs of Hawaii and the Alaunt, which existed in several European countries.

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