



DYNAMIC DUO

**Daybreak Kennel & Tiffany
English Springer Spaniels**

- REDUCING PREGNANCY PROBLEMS
- 25 YEARS: AKC CANINE HEALTH FOUNDATION
- CONDITIONING PERFORMANCE RETRIEVERS



WINNING WAYS

DAYBREAK KENNEL & TIFFANY ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIELS

Running playfully, chased by a bunch of Cavalier King Charles Spaniel girls, Laura King is spontaneously frivolous and fun. Her animated gestures and happy voice turn exercise time at Daybreak Kennel into an ecstatic, catch-me-if-you-can game.

Sitting on the ground, watching them frolic, Robin Novack laughs heartily. "Laura is extremely talented. I love to watch her show dogs. She is very good at reading a dog, its faults and virtues, and adapting her handling and touch as needed," she says.

Once part of a huge corn farm, Daybreak Kennel is located outside Milan, Illinois, near the Quad Cities. Grouped in six exercise paddocks by their personality



Top: Laura King, left, and Robin Novack hold 9-week-old English Springer Spaniel puppies from a recent litter they co-bred under the Tiffany prefix. Above: Laura, who is a breeding advisor to Gayle and Tom Reardon of KilbridesPride Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, is chased by Cavalier girls in the exercise paddock.

and athletic compatibilities, a string of show dogs sprint around, chasing balls and carrying toys.

Celebrities on the circuit, a Samoyed named "Striker," an English Springer Spaniel called "Kimmie" and a Bearded Collie known as "Max" are living it up. Add to the mix a Portuguese Water Dog named "Beluga," a Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier who goes by "Fannie" and a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel called "Elliot." Eight English Springer Spaniel puppies, the first litter born under the Tiffany prefix co-bred by Robin and Laura along with Beth and Bill Fink, romp with joy in the puppy play yard.

Exercise in the spacious, grassy paddocks lets the dogs be dogs and lets the handlers

and their assistants observe the dogs' behavior and physical condition. Intentionally having no indoor-outdoor kennel runs, Daybreak was designed to be a hands-on kennel with frequent daily interactions among the dogs and the team.

"The dogs' mental condition is every bit as important as their physical condition," Laura says, pausing to talk to Cavalier girl "Classy" and looking smack into her eyes. "We start by letting dogs have fun as we get to know them. The time spent outdoors in the paddocks where we play and interact with them is good for their mental stability."

Everyone knows the best show dogs are born with natural talent, and the way they move is important. "Just like an athlete, the best ones have a natural gait or trot," Robin explains. "You can't force it or teach it. It feels like you are floating at the end of the lead."

The red-and-white Siberian Husky bitch "Amaze" (MBIS/MBISS GCHP/CAN CH Nanook's This Girl Is On Fire), whom Laura showed from 2017 to 2019, had "it" — good foot timing. "It's hard to explain, but when you see it, you know it," Laura says.

Amaze amazed Laura and Robin from the git-go when she arrived from Canada for the 2017 Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. "The first time we saw her was at the Piers," says Laura. "I put a lead on her and moved her in the back and turned around. You could see the brilliance in her eyes."

The serendipitous career of Amaze included winning 61 Bests in Show, setting a record as the winningest Siberian bitch in history and topping a 30-year record. As she settled in at Daybreak Kennel, Amaze was wicked smart, opening latches at her whim. She won more than 180 Working Group Firsts and was a two-time winner at the Siberian Husky Club of America National Specialty.

Everyone knows the best dog handlers have a natural affinity for showing dogs. Count Robin and Laura among them. Partners since 2010, they have a combined nearly 60 years' experience as pro handlers. Laura has put Bests in Show on dogs in all seven AKC Groups, an impressive range with many winning multiple Bests in Show, and has



At Daybreak Kennel dogs spend time daily outdoors exercising. Clockwise, from top left are: "Striker," a Samoyed; "Kimmie," an English Springer Spaniel; Robin with "Max," a Bearded Collie; "Nancy," a Wirehaired Dachshund; an English Springer Spaniel puppy; and Laura with "Classy," a Cavalier.

Shown with her current Special Kimmie, Robin has been breeding Tiffany English Springer Spaniels since 1991. She also was a longtime partner in the Telltale English Springer Spaniel breeding program. “Springers are very people-oriented,” she says. “You must be positive with them and have a good time.”



won National Specialties with dogs of five Groups. Robin has handled dogs to more than 300 Bests in Show, a huge number that is notable because she specializes in the highly competitive English Springer Spaniel.

As a girl, Laura loved to go to dog shows with her mother, Sandra King, a breeder of Sandevel Belgian Shepherds and Schipperkes. “I was really shy and would stalk the handlers’ setups,” she says. “I would sit around all day and watch them. I never wanted to do anything else.”

Her mother’s influence shaped her love of the sport. “She taught me that when you work hard you’ll see the results in the dogs,” says Laura. She also learned from her mother’s friends with whom they traveled to shows like Tebue Collie breeder Barb Browner and Landmark Schipperke breeder and pro handler Doris Hearing.

Laura’s early handling experience at age 9 was in Novice A obedience. It took her four years to put a Companion Dog Excellent title on “Bridget,” a Schipperke. “I was too little to show my mom’s Belgian Sheepdogs,” she grins.

As a girl growing up in Michigan, Robin caught the show bug when her sister, Diane Lalone, recruited her to show her obedience dog, “Bobby” (CH Venetian Bobby Bear CD), a liver-and-white English Springer Spaniel. In high school, Robin worked at the boarding kennel owned by Lorrie Carlton of Belle Creek Bichon fame.

This connection led to a second Novack family springer. Bred by Karen Prickett Miller, “Tiffany” (CH Loujon Elegance) was a black-and-white bitch whom Robin finished as a junior handler and for whom she later named her breeding program. Tiffany helped Robin get an apprentice job after high school working for Miller caring for her Loujon English Springer Spaniels.

“It was priceless working for Karen,” she says. “I trimmed the kennel dogs for her comments and guidance and learned to condition and present dogs. I learned about breeding dogs from Karen and her co-breeder Monica Bowers of Esspecial English Springers.”

After a dedicated six-year apprenticeship with Miller, Robin went out on her own in 1991. Her

family wanted to be involved with breeding dogs and supporting Robin, so her parents, sister and brother-in-law moved to Jackson, Michigan. They converted a garage to a kennel. There is still a kennel in Jackson with a full-time staff.

Robin's first clients were the Telltale English Springer Spaniel breeders Delores Streng of Farmington Hills, Michigan, and Celie Florence of Manakin-Sabot, Virginia. "They were waiting for me, as their handlers, George and Mary Ann Aliston, had retired," Robin says.

Streng began the famous Telltale line in the 1960s, producing over 600 champion show dogs before her death in 2019 and the subsequent retiring of the Telltale prefix. Eventually, Robin joined Telltale as a partner on breeding and showing decisions.

"Delores was like a mom to me," says Robin. "She and Karen (Prickett Miller) taught me to stay positive and that all dogs have something to offer."

Robin took her first Best in Show in 1993 with the liver-and-white male "Zeke" (CH Telltale

Eclipse) at the Battle Creek Kennel Club show. She was 26 years old. The win fueled her confidence and that of Delores and Celie in their new handler.

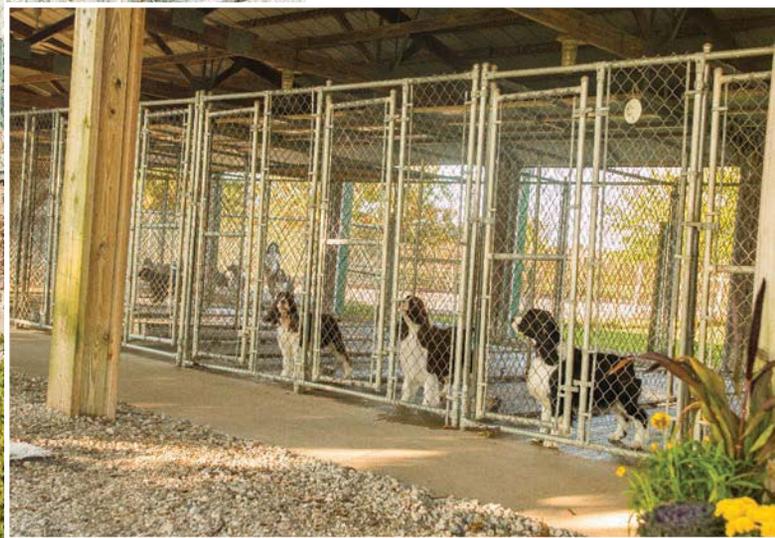
Meanwhile back in Illinois, Laura's dream of showing dogs was on hold until she satisfied her parental requirement to first go to college. Four years later, with a degree in exercise physiology from the University of Iowa, she returned to the Quad Cities and set up six dog runs at a house she rented. Mostly showing her mother's friends' dogs, Laura trained whenever she could with pros like terrier handler Susan DePew and Boxer expert Audrey Gerhardy.

In 1993, Laura went pro. "I wasn't doing any serious winning, but I felt like I was," she says. "I handled an American Staffordshire Terrier named 'Bill' to four or five Group Firsts."

Then came "Bud" (CH Seabrook's Headmaster Tabu ROM), a black male Newfoundland. Laura, who was 27, handled Bud to Working Group First under Houston Clark at the Tennessee Valley Kennel Club show. Next, she took him around



Left: Cavaliers run to play. The double-fenced Daybreak Kennel ensures dogs do not escape. Below: Protected outdoor kennel runs are used to hold dogs temporarily and when the weather is inclement.



Right: The puppies enjoy a meal of *Purina Pro Plan* Puppy Shredded Blend Chicken & Rice Formula. Below: Laura prepares *Purina Pro Plan* Sensitive Skin & Stomach Salmon & Rice Formula for the adult dogs.



the Best in Show ring under revered judge, the late Anne Rogers Clark. “Mrs. Clark walked out and just pointed,” recalls Laura. “I exclaimed, ‘Holy, shit!’

“When we were taking the picture, Mrs. Clark said, ‘Let me give you a bit of advice. It’s best not to curse when the judge awards you Best in Show,’” Laura says, smiling.

In 2003 and 2004, Laura handled a black male Newfoundland, “Polo” (MBIS/MBISS Pouch Cove’s Politician), to 19 Bests in Show. Years later, in 2014, she handled the top-winning Newfie bitch in history, “Jordan” (Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS Pouch Cove’s Seabrook Enough Said), owned by co-breeder Kathy Griffin, the owner of Bud, Laura’s first Best in Show winner.

Honing her handling skills on sporting breeds, and the occasional Borzoi or Bouvier, Robin touched magic when she handled the liver-and-white male, “RB,” for Robin’s Boy, (MBIS/MBISS CH Telltale Salute CGC), the winner of 43 Bests in Show. “He was the total package. He had excellent bone and face. His tail set and topline were perfect,” she says.

RB was another dog that had “it” — natural foot timing. “In 2008, after two years in retirement, we brought him out, and he won the prestigious ESSFTA (English Springer Spaniel Field Trial Association) Eastern Specialty under judge Edd Bivin. RB thrilled the audience with his effortless movement and soundness,” she says.

Robin and Laura crossed paths showing dogs in the Sporting Group in 2005. Laura was handling a standout red male English Cocker Spaniel, “Copper” (MBIS Chestnuts Selling The Drama), who took his first Best in Show at 18 months. Copper was the first American-bred solid color English Cocker to place in the Group at Westminster when he took Group Third in 2005.

Following RB, Robin showed a bitch for Karmadi English Springer Spaniel breeder Diane HERNs. “Madam” (MBIS/MBISS AM/CAN CH Karmadi’s Madam President) was the No. 1 Sporting dog in 2007 and ranked No. 5 among all dogs. The top-winning black-and-white English Springer of all time and the top-winning bitch in breed history, Madam won 29 Bests in Show. “Madam had a great heart,” Robin says.

While Robin campaigned Madam, Laura was showing a male Mastiff named “Ivan” (MBIS/MBISS CH Lazy D’s Family Tradition CGC). The No. 1 Mastiff all systems in 2007, Ivan took 12 Bests



From far left: Laura dries the coat of Cavalier “Tori” before leaving for a weekend of dog shows. Kimmie jogs on the treadmill in the kennel, which is used to build athleticism. Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier “Fannie” gives Laura a friendly hug.

in Show with Laura. He also was a two-time breed winner at Westminster and a two-time winner at the Mastiff Club of America National Specialty.

Other top winners Robin has campaigned include 2012’s No. 2 dog in the country, No. 2 Sporting dog and No. 1 all-system English Springer Spaniel, “Peyton” (MBIS/MBISS GCH Wynmoor Champagne Supernova). The liver-and-white male won 82 Bests in Show and was the 2011 ESSFTA National Specialty winner. In 2019, she campaigned “Jace” (MBIS/MBISS Brightwater Gilchrist Dreaming Out Loud), the No. 1 Sporting dog and winner of 30 Bests in Show and over 100 Sporting Group Firsts.

Their partnership in 2010 brought new opportunities. “I was mostly known for handling sporting dogs, so this is when I began broadening the breeds I show,” Robin says. “It was a learning experience for me to fully understand the importance of exercise for dogs’ mental and physical well-being.”

Likewise, Laura says, “Robin helped me learn to evaluate a dog by first finding its positive aspects. You want to look at all a dog has to offer. As a breeder and handler, she considers form and function in looking for its best virtues.”

Robin, a breeder at heart, credits Delores Streng for teaching her to evaluate puppies. “I still hear her voice,” she says. “She taught me to judge dogs for what they are, not what you want them to be. You need to read the standard and believe in what they should look like and not fall into fads.”

Key to their success is taking time off from their busy work schedules. “We take a couple of vacations a year,” Robin says. “It is so important to keep everything in perspective.”

Winning Best in Show is as exciting for them today as the first time they won. Far more than just another rung on the rankings’ ladder, it drives their passion. It keeps them running around in the exercise paddocks, talking to dogs and having silly fun. ■



Traveling with about 25 dogs to shows, Laura and Robin typically take two assistants along, while some helpers stay behind to care for dogs not traveling. Pictured front row, from left, are Alex Gerber, Laura, Robin, and Trey Behm, and back row, from left, Lorrie Minear and Sam Hanle.