

DID YOU KNOW and OTHER STORIES

Unusual Characteristics:

The combination of their intelligence, exotic appearance, stunning movement and extreme loyalty set them apart from other breeds.

Azawakhs can run at speeds of about 32-35 MPH for miles and miles.

With adequate daily exercise, this is a very calm housedog.

Best Owner:

The best owner is someone with a firm, but fair hand that enjoys the companionship of an intelligent dog of incredible beauty.

Described in Dog World as a “warrior class dog,” they have the intelligence and heart to protect

Many Azawakhs can be reliable off lead. This characteristic makes the breed an enjoyable companion for people who like to run, hike, and camp or just hang out!

Quote from a respected Swiss breeder relating her first impressions of Azawakh: “...at a show in Vienna in 1975, I came across my dream hound, full of aesthetic grace and charm. This was a red Tuareg hound with white stockings, very proud bearing, floating past with long strides without a lead, ignoring everything about him. This proud, almost arrogant made a deep impression on me. My first thoughts were ...prima ballerina, miniature Arabian horse...Verdi...Bellini...Rossini... I ask forgiveness for such a comparison, but I have never seen anything like it before, and I was overwhelmed. My skin was all in goose bumps, as always happens when something touches me deeply. Of one thing I was sure; this was the breed to accompany me through my future.

We sent Bani Bangou, our first Azawakh, to a professional dog trainer for an extended time. When we returned, he had taught Bani at least 17 commands, including an emergency stop. The most amazing was a “wait” command where you could draw an arbitrary line anywhere with a hand motion, and Bani would wait behind that line until you told him “OK.” The trainer said he learned from that experience that the mind and spirit of an Azawakh seemed like more that of a horse than a conventional dog. You can’t make a horse do anything – you have to become its partner. Once he figured out the Azawakh was the same way, he made rapid progress on the training.

One thing that horses do is that they can sleep standing up. So can the Azawakh. A few weeks ago, we took all the dogs to our farm and let them run around there for several hours, and they were very pleasantly worn out by the time we had returned to the city. As our family was sitting down to our supper, our alpha male, Jakuba, came and stood patiently at the table hoping for a treat. One of our females, Zika, who is a bit smaller than Jakuba, placed her head on Jakuba's back and fell asleep standing up. We thought it was something of a fluke, but we observed it several times that evening. I wished I had my camera close by to capture the moment, but alas, you'll have to take my word for it.

They are fast! A good 10-15 mph faster than a whitetail deer. On occasion I've seen Lafia run right past a panicked deer...and have to turn around to be able to continue the chase. But the deer is a better jumper, and much better thru the thickets...so thankfully chases don't go on for miles. I've also seen Lafia pull ahead of a Saluki and a Sloughi on separate occasions, even though the breed is supposed to be slower. And when the little dog, Hanisi, pre-certed for ASFA coursing against a good running Greyhound, he more than held his own on the shorter straights and blew the Grey away through the turns. I can only attribute that to their superior conditioning and the work of their diligent coach.

NYC & "Legs"

I had met Deb the summer before at a rare breed dog show in the Buffalo, NY area. I came to see my first Azawakh, having only seen pictures on the net and Sloughis in Tunisia, and was hoping I would be able to recognize them when I saw them. There musta been 20 different rare breeds there...each one bigger and uglier than the next. Then I saw Deb off in the distance holding three of her dogs on leash. You couldn't mistake them for anything else. It seemed they were the skinniest things I have ever seen. I spent the day there, hanging out with Deb, realizing that she was the type of person I would want to get a dog from...even if I did not get an Azawakh...as she was totally honest about, and totally dedicated to, the breed. Strangely, the more time you spend with an Azawakh, the more they seem to be the proper weight for a dog...and everything else seems fat. That day I was still deciding if the breed was what I wanted after three years without a dog in my life and the twenty years before that spent with Rottweilers. What convinced me was the combination of the athletic elegance that exuded from the breed...but even more than that was the bond that was apparent with their owner. I had never witnessed such a total connection.

I decided on the breed and was going to get a dog from Deb. But the litter didn't take and she set me up with her friend Ursula Arnold from Germany who was co-breeding a litter with Ingrid Aigeldinger in Switzerland. I actually bought the dog from Tobias Joesch, the owner of the sire of the litter. My new pup was being flown into JFK airport, and seeing how I'm a country kid and hate the City, my father agreed to ride shotgun on my trip to pick her up. And to help calm my anxiety! I was so worried about getting a dog "sight unseen"...and opening the crate to find an 8 year old Lhasa Apso. But my

fears were for naught. And we picked up a healthy, and howling, too-tall pup that my father instantly dubbed “Legs”.

And my gawd she was active and athletic. Here I’m expecting a little semi-helpless puppy, and at 8 weeks old she’s capable of jumping onto the couch or the bed. My father was amazed. He had to help his Basset Hounds onto the couch. And my little puppy was out running his adult dogs in the yard.

I’ve read, and been told, that Azawakhs are good guard-watch dogs. But after eight years in the breed, I don’t see it. My dogs are terrible watch dogs. They will sleep thru anyone driving in the driveway, and only start barking after the people knock on the door. But if there is a squirrel in the yard...or a deer...they go ballistic. From what I see, they are territorial. More so than any other breed I’ve encountered.

One of the first things we did in Lafia’s first spring was to take her down to the high school track. It’s a wide open athletic field of maybe 40 acres, set well off the lightly traveled town road, and it seemed safe to let her loose there. I would jog around the track and Lafia would run around like a fool...galloping from one part to another...occasionally chasing a rabbit along the brush line...sometimes pulling in behind a faster jogger to run a lap with him. It was a nearly every day thing for us. In a way, she grew up at the track, and it is one of the places she is most comfortable and sociable...with both people and other dogs.

The German Shepherd

Later that summer, we are down at the track and we have the place to ourselves. Jogging around and doing laps. Then another car pulls in and two guys get out with a German Shepherd on leash. Lafia and I were at the far end of the track, but somehow I sensed that something wasn’t right with these guys. They weren’t regulars...not joggers...or dog exercisers. And although I was pretty far away, it looked like the guy unleashed the Shepherd and sicced it on the “greyhound”. It looked that way to Lafia, too. Especially since this 80 pound dog was barreling down on her and didn’t look very friendly. Lafia panics, turns and runs. One of the bozos has the nerve to call out to me “Don’t worry, he’s only playing”. Like hell, he’s trying to eat my 10 month old puppy. But Lafia is faster...and she’s on open ground. And when she looks back to check on her impending doom, she realizes that the Shepherd can’t keep up. And then she begins to play. She makes a wide sweep to the left...comes around in a big circle and goes right in front of the Shepherd...zipping off to his right. The Shepherd takes off after her...running as fast as he can. But it’s no where near fast enough. And she makes another wide sweep to the left and comes around in front of him again. And he tries to catch her again...trying even harder this time. But it’s still not fast enough; Lafia makes a sweep to the right and zips in front of the big dog again. And at this point the big dog is getting pissed. He’s gonna catch “the greyhound” if it’s the last thing he does...and he runs after her again. But he’s running too fast and losing his form...and fast becoming

fatigued. And this continues for several more sweeps...each time Lafia is getting faster and surer of herself...and the Shepherd is trying harder and getting more fatigued...till it starts getting wobbly lame in the back legs. And Lafia just gets bolder...on one pass jumping over the Shepherd...and on the next pass doing a little nip to the Shepherd's muzzle. The Shepherd at that point fell over...and couldn't get back up. And as the two guys come running over to rescue their dog, and carry him off the field...and I holler over to them "Don't worry, she's only playing".

Love at first sight....

I had been to several "International Invitational" before – with my Ibizan Hounds. It was always a great time to watch the dogs excel running long and splendid courses and to catch up with the gang from the various states to celebrate our sighthounds!

I was without my own vehicle and decided to go down with my dear friends in their motor home, simply to visit and enjoy. As we pulled in to check out the field that Friday afternoon – it was busy with all the "set up" activities you would expect.... What I did not expect was "the most beautiful dog I had ever seen"... but there he was standing in a group of.... "Azawakhs." I had never met the breed in person – only seeing one picture in Sighthound Review. The "bus" as we lovingly called it rode down the very bumpy drive and stopped... I could barely get my shoes on fast enough... had to get out and run over to the woman who was holding the "pack" – HIS NAME? "AMASTAN"! Oh yes, it was my now dear friend Deb Kidwell at the other end of those leashes.

Tall and elegant, dark red with dark mask – white socks and a personality that still delights me to this day when we visit with Deb & Rhonda. This was to be the debut of the Azawakh as they would run as test dog that year. While my man Amastan did his own thing – "Cinnamon" was dynamite along with her sister "Celie". I left that weekend knowing that one day; this breed would be part of my home pack.

Some of my original plans changed, but God knew what was in store – because I have been so blessed to have Amastan and Cinnamon's son, my most handsome... smiling and charming "Elkem". He tops his dad for sure, and receives many compliments on his outgoing friendly nature with all the humans he can get to get their hands on him. As many walk up, he is very pleased to show them just how nicely he smiles... can be a little intimidating if you don't know him... but all those pearly whites are on display in sheer joy.

Wow, what a weekend will bring when you go out for a ride with friends!

Lure coursing is one of the best things you can do with your sighthound. They can have their chase. And you can stand still knowing that they will be safe and will come back around to you. And watching a dog like a Saluki or Azawakh run at top speed is just amazing. The expression “to fly without wings” is so fitting. They are so beautiful to watch. And the judges seemed to think so too. Lafia always seemed to be at or near the top score of the dogs running at the New England meets. That is when she ran. But sometimes she would notice that there were people out there...dangerous, scary people to her...judges to anyone else. And she would run off and hide in the woods. And I'd have to go find her. And they would hold up the meet until I did. It was embarrassing. And it took her a long time to feel confident enough to run to the truck instead of the woods. And, I know...this is the reason why you have to socialize them well as a puppy.

Do you think they will bite?

My dear friend Jeannie and I had just arrived at the Kel Simoon homestead – with great excitement because I was getting my first Azawakh... a puppy out of “the best looking dog I had ever seen” – Amastan Kel Air. We arrived in the early morning and were treated to the litter of 9 playing around and I watched intently trying to decide which one of these would be mine.... 7 males... 2 females – the girls were spoken for – the beautiful Essari would be Rhonda's and little Emecheta would be flying to her new home in Germany in the next day or so.

Deb and Rhonda left to take Emecheta to the vets to ensure all would be well for her journey, AND THERE SAT JEANIE AND I in the middle of a pack of dogs that we had just met, on their own turf.....a bitch with a litter of puppies and two strangers that just arrived. Two of the big boys wrestled rambunctiously and a couple of the boys were a little on the reserved side... but one just sat there more watching me than running either to me or away from me – THAT ONE, DEB TOLD ME, WAS “ELKEM” who would come home with Jeanie and I (and his new best friend... big black Afghan.. best buddy Gilbert... who Jeanie had given a home as a rescue – the two of us got to pick him up too which is a tale..... but not for this book!).

The room was quiet and we had driven for about 11 hours altogether and boy did I have to visit the washroom... but neither Jeanie or I wanted to move – we felt every eye of the adult dogs on us... finally it couldn't wait any longer so I said to Jeanie.. “well I am going in” so with the deepening stares almost going through my back I walked to the bathroom – arrived safely – peered out and walked back to my seat on the couch....hmmm... no fooling, all eyes were intently watching each footstep... but no growling, no snarls, no movement from any of the pack (I think it was Amastan way up in the air on the couch and overseeing as it were – not sure just how the girls figured out

that the cool watchtower couch thing - just like on the roof hut of the desert I guess... but the dogs loved it!) – even Cinnamon with her litter mulling around, one being removed and two Canadians hanging out was alert but not aggressive.

We seemed to be “pack approved” and enjoyed a brief but wonderful stay and headed up north with my new red boy.

