

# A Brief History of Canada's Top Dogs

March 13, 2024

Owning a Top Dog is an honour bestowed on few and remembered by all in your sport. Taking a dog to the top of your chosen discipline requires hours upon hours of training, research, conditioning, grooming, travel and yes, it also takes money. It's a feat that no owner gets to by themselves. Even before your puppy was yours, years of careful breeding went into that pup and countless people in the dog community helped bring your dog to this level.

I thought it would be great to look back on how Canada's Top Dogs began and revisit some great dogs of the past while looking towards the future of Top Dogs and exciting changes happening through the Canadian Kennel Club's partnership with Canuck Dogs.

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## ***Here are some of the important dates in the history of reporting Canada's Top Dogs:***



In **1963**, First Top Show Dog Stats were introduced by *Dogs in Canada* magazine publisher, Elizabeth Dunn. At that time, they were referred to as the "Blue Book of Top Winning Dogs". This list presented the Top 3 all breeds, Top 3 in Group and Top 3 in each breed. The formula wasn't always consistent; some years included only the total points, while others total points, plus the number of Best of Breed, Group placements and Best in Show wins. Joan Morden was the first recorded statistician for the Top Show Dogs. A memorial trophy in her honour was awarded to the Top Show Dog up until 2010.

Obedience were stats introduced in **1966**. In the beginning only the number of dogs competing in each breed was included as part of a *Dogs in Canada* obedience column written by Betty McHugh.

In **1974**, the first Top Obedience Dog Stats were published in *Dog in Canada* magazine and were compiled by Betty McHugh.

In **1988**, Barry Truax took over tabulating the Top Show Dog Stats, creating a computer program that would expand coverage to also include group and all-breed performance stats. In **1991**, this same program would be used to complement the stats published for the Top Obedience Dogs.

Prior to **1998**, the occasional Field event stats were published. June 1998 marked the first official Field Issue of *Dogs in Canada*, combining a field-dedicated editorial with the **1997** Top Lure Coursers (Bonnie Goebel), 1997 Top Pointers (Sue Deyell) and 1997 Top Retrievers (Dennis Voigt).

In **2008**, *Dogs in Canada* ceased publication. With the exception of Field events, Top Dog statistics began to be generated by the Canadian Kennel Club.

Top Agility Dogs were first published in **2009**. Created by Seanna O'Neill, it was a mix of Top 10 by points, Top 10 by yards per second and Top 5 in each breed. In an effort to be more inclusive, in **2012**, the Canadian Kennel Club's Agility Council introduced a point system for qualifying scores and the new Top Agility Dogs followed the same format as other disciplines, highlighting the achievements of competitors at the Breed, Group and All-Breed level.





In **2011** Top Dog statistics began to be published on [www.ckc.ca](http://www.ckc.ca), picking up where the former *Dogs in Canada* website left off with official stats and the return of the much loved winners' interviews.

**2013** saw Canada's Top Rally Dog Statistics shared for the first time, while Beagle Trials expanded the Field category for the **2017** results.

After **2015**, CKC created a new category of Top Dogs: Multi-Discipline to acknowledge the incredible achievements of versatile dogs who perform well in different event styles. Only one dog in CKC history made it to the Top 10 All-Breeds in two disciplines and he did it in style, achieving the seemingly impossible for six consecutive years with his handler Charlie MacMillan. Appropriately named, "Fly'r", this adored Golden Retriever retired from the ring as a legend and inspired a whole new generation of Top Dogs to increase their versatility. It did not take long! The 2016 results introduced the world to "Caesar", a Labrador Retriever and his owner-handler, Heather Watts. While Caesar is the first dog Heather trained, it didn't stop them from taking the Multi-Discipline

crown in 2017.

As the Top Dog program continued to expand, it becomes clearer and clearer that this growth is driven by the dogs and owners who build their bonds in competition; the teams who show up every weekend and turn challenges into achievements leaving a trail of broken records and breed firsts behind them. Even as competitors across the country eagerly await CKC's official Top Dogs results, a new Top Dogs season has already begun and thousands of teams have already started to defend their titles or make a first run for the top spot. In dog sport there are no guarantees - first-time owners, first-time competitors and novices of all kind have claimed their place among veterans and pros in the Top 10, All Breeds.

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In late 2023, the Canadian Kennel Club announce that **ALL TOP DOG STANDINGS** are now available on [CanuckDogs.com](http://CanuckDogs.com).

Dog lovers can now check out the rankings for Agility, Herding and all Field Trial events including Beagles, Lure Coursing, Pointing, Retrievers and Spaniels.

On top of that exciting news, it was also announced that performance standings on [CanuckDogs.com](http://CanuckDogs.com) now rank all dogs with qualifying wins, not just the Top 10 Dogs. The standings for these events are updated weekly. (please remember that there is a lag between an event ending and results being submitted to CKC and checked/confirmed).

In early 2024, the Canadian Kennel Club announced new Top Dog offerings, including a focus on the Owner Handlers and a breakdown of Top Dogs by Province. This will expand Top Dogs will allow the club to celebrate more dogs and identify those top winning dogs (who might not be able to make it to all of Canada's biggest shows).

2023 was the final year of Multi-Discipline Top Dogs. With the launch of the Versatility titles (which are **free** for CKC members), the Canadian Kennel Club has a new way to celebrate those dogs who are involved in multiple events. The Versatility Title Program includes over 30 events and offers six different titles.



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***Cheers to last year's Top Dogs, the Top Dogs of decades ago and the Top Dogs of tomorrow!***

**Photo Credits:**

1989 - CH JAMELYN SECOND EDITION. Lakeland Terrier.

1977 - CH KISHNIGA'S DESERT SONG. Borzoi.

2001 - CH FREESPIRITS FAR AND AWAY. Doberman Pinscher.

1995 - CH DAWIN HIGH FALUTIN. Standard Poodle.