



# Featured Owner Handler Colleen Nicholson Kelview Dobermans

**S**hock! Surprise! Surreal! That's how I felt when I won Best of Breed at the 2009 National. Funny, those were also the same words I felt just ten months earlier when I found out I had breast cancer. In a split second your life can change forever!

When I found out the end of January 2009 that I had breast cancer, I was shocked beyond belief. I knew my life would change forever. Deep inside I knew I would fight this terrible disease, and that I would not let it rule me. Being a strong person was definitely going to help me with the difficult journey ahead.

It seems funny now, but from the moment I was told I wondered what my future would be like for my children, my family and my dogs.

In March 2009 the ante was upped when I was diagnosed with Stage 3 Breast Cancer. Let the battles begin! I had two surgeries that included a mastectomy and the removal of 34 lymph nodes, 29 of them cancerous!

I was saddened greatly but just wanted the surgeon to get as much of the cancer out as possible.

I had to keep away from my dogs so they didn't jump on me. It was hard for them to understand why I was not with them.

I was very careful to do exactly what the doctors said. I did not want to get lymphedema in my arm. I wanted my life back and had to show dogs again.

I think that's when it really hit me how much I love the dogs and showing dogs. My passion for the breed

is so strong. I was determined that I was going to the National that year — 2009!

The oncologist was my next visit. During our meeting to discuss my treatment options, I told my oncologist that I would be going to the DPCA National on October 9, 2009. She asked me what I would be doing there. As I explained to her about the dog show and showing dogs, she shook her head and told me I would not be doing that. I would be too weak and would need a lot more time to start recovering from chemo and radiation treatments. I said I would be going! I had to go!

Chemo started the beginning of April. I had some options as to what medicines would be used in my treatment of breast cancer. I had heart problems in the past, so the best medicine to help fight my type of cancer was also the medicine that could adversely affect my heart. I wanted to fight the cancer hard. Hit it hard, make it leave! I chose the best medicine.

So now chemo begins! I was hooked up to a four hour IV drip, waiting for the medication to invade my body, killing not only the bad cells but my good cells as well. By the end of the first week, my hair was falling out. I had my hair cut shorter knowing this would happen. I told myself it was just my hair. After a week and a half, I took a shower in the morning and when I turned off the water I looked down at the drain. It looked like a yellow cat was laying there. It was my hair! I called my mom over to shave off the rest. It's real, it's happening! There is no turning back.

My dogs were back as my companions since my recovery from the surgeries. They were sweet and



patient with me. They would be by my side through the ugly times that chemo would bring me. They loved me unconditionally!

My family and friends took turns helping me and helping my children. It was hard for them seeing their mother so weak. It was my oldest daughter, Taylor's, senior year in high school. She was supposed to be excited about prom, graduation and college, but instead she worried about me and took care of me. I felt bad but she said for all that would still happen, she wanted to be with me. My youngest daughter Alexa was only nine years old. She was scared seeing my bald head and suffering. She was very brave and very helpful with me. Both girls did a great job in helping with my care and in keeping the dogs in great condition.

I had kept a black bitch puppy from my last litter. She knew she was very special. I named her "Gemmi". From the time she was five or six weeks old, she thought she was a princess and that my life should revolve around her. She loved the show ring. At her first show, she won Best in Sweepstakes over 24 puppies, Best Puppy, and Reserve to a 4 point. major. She acquired a major and two singles from the 6-9 class right before I found out I had cancer. Gemmi and her mom, Dynasty, would lay by my bed patiently. They would get up and look at me, want a pat on the head and then lay back down. They knew something was wrong. I would watch the girls run and play outside and Gemmi would stack herself just beautifully. I could not wait to get her back in the ring. Two months went by and my oncologist started me on another chemo drug. This one made me ache all over like I got hit by a truck. It hurt to lay, stand, walk and eat. All I could think about was showing again. Near the end of that treatment I thought it would be a good idea to enter a dog show. I had to start somewhere! Two weeks after my

last chemo treatment, I spent a weekend at the dog show. It was not just to show my bitch Gemmi who was now 16 months old, but to show two other Dobes also.

I did not feel good – not while going to the show, during the show nor after the show. I had to sit down, rest and drink water after every class. I had my scarf covering my bald head and no eyebrows. The judge and ring steward clearly knew what I was going through and they were very patient. The dogs showed so great. They knew I wasn't my usual self and were very careful and well-behaved. I took winners dog and also winners bitch with Gemmi. As I was in the ring, my heart wanted to be there but my body was screaming to leave and go home. What was I thinking?!!

When I returned home, I decided to put a plan in place so I would be strong enough to go to the 2009 National in Kentucky in October. This was the beginning of August and radiation would start in 2 weeks.

I was told radiation would make me even more tired. Radiation was Monday through Friday for six and a half weeks. There was a lot of fatigue but no pain. I could deal with it. I exercised at home and walked every day. I entered a dog show every other weekend to monitor my progress of strength. The dogs I was showing were young but easy to train. They were in good condition and ready to win.

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My radiation finished a week before the National. I was so excited to go to the National. My sister Cindy and I headed off to Kentucky. When we arrived at the hotel, I was so proud. PROUD TO HAVE FOUGHT MY CANCER, PROUD TO BE BRINGING IN SUCH NICE DOGS TO SHOW, PROUD TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REACH MY GOAL OF ATTENDING THE NATIONAL! What I hadn't thought about is that no one seemed to know me. I would walk by, say "Hi," call them by name and people just looked and



stared at me. I heard them whisper "Who is that?" My trademark blonde hair was gone and it was replaced by brown peach fuzz and a hat.

When the National started the next day, my sister said people were asking who that was in the ring with the hat. No one knew it was me until someone looked in the catalog and saw my name. Then everyone started coming up to me saying they were sorry. They didn't know I was fighting breast cancer.

When I was in the ring, I felt totally at home. I have always loved showing dogs. IT IS MY PASSION. I love Dobermans and I love breeding and raising puppies. I was especially excited to show "Gemmi", my black 18 month old bitch. I entered her in the Am-Bred class. She loves to show and made it fun. She showed fabulous and we won the Am-Bred class. I won a few other classes as well. I took "Gemmi" in for winners bitch. I wanted it so bad as her grandmother was winners bitch at the 1999 National. We got reserve winners. I was disappointed but happy at how we showed.

The next day was the last day of the National, Best of Breed. I was showing a bitch of John and Shirley Eck's named "Tommy" that I had finished for them. She was special. She hadn't been shown in two years. She had just had puppies the previous year. We brought the puppies to show and decided to bring her along as well. She was in great shape.

We made it through the first three group cuts of bitches. I was excited at the prospect of getting an award of merit. Here we were now in the final group of dogs and bitches. We were showing together, having fun, loving the moment. The

more I asked of her, the more she gave to me. The judge was passing out the Award of Merit ribbons. Then I looked behind me – just winners dog and winners bitch. Then I looked in front of me and saw two male specials and a bitch special. Unbelievable — we were being considered for Best of Breed. The judge pulled out the other bitch special and Tommy and I. We were asked to move around the ring. It felt incredible. We were so in sync with each other and high on adrenaline. We stopped and set up. I remember looking down at Tommy and saying quietly in my mind "Don't give me an Award of Merit." The judge walked by me and gave it to the other bitch. That left two males and she gave one of them an AOM. It was down to the male special, winners bitch and Tommy. She brought winners bitch and put her in front of me. That meant Best of Opposite (the bridesmaid like Gemmi was the day before). I didn't want that! I was working hard with Tommy when the judge told me to go in front. She then sent us around and pointed to us for Best of Breed!

My emotions got the best of me. I couldn't believe it. The last nine months of my life was turmoil. It was hard, sad, painful and depressing. Now it was a dream come true. I had made it! I had persevered through two tough battles and had won!

Finally, my goal of getting to the National had helped push me past all my body had just endured and gave me the best joy of my life. I truly can thank the love of the Dobermans. They gave me the drive to get through the bad times and gave me something to look forward to.

I thank my family, my friends, and my dogs for being there during all the bad times in my fight and



Ch. Kelview's Diamond V. Nova

Ch. Triadel's After Tomorrow  
(Best of Breed- 2009 DPCA National)



recovery of breast cancer. I could not have done it without them.

I now help counsel other cancer patients, give them support and help them become survivors like I am.

I was hooked on Dobermans ever since I went to my first dog show in 1979. I have enjoyed showing not only

the Dobermans I have bred, but also the great dogs of other breeders that I have shown and finished.

I have been blessed to have bred and co-bred so many wonderful Dobermans in my life. Cindy, Roxann and I are excited about our "Fabulous Fourteen" litter that Gemmi gave us last July. Our pick bitch, "Stealer" has three majors at nine months and her brother, "Kadan" has a four point major also. "Eden" in Canada has her Canadian championship, many Best of Breeds, and Group placements. She will be shown in the States in May. Another sister "Tia" is coming out soon and more litter mates in the near future.

We are looking forward to our upcoming breeding of "Gemmi" to "Boss."

My goal for our breeding program is to breed healthy, correct conformation performance dogs staying true to our standard. I also look forward to bringing new people into our breed. I wish to thank my co-breeders for all their support and help, and to all my owners and their families for sharing my passion.

My Dobermans are an extension of who I am. They complete me as a person. 🐾

*Congratulations Colleen, on all of your accomplishments as a Doberman breeder, owner and handler. We have always admired your strong will and determination in fixing what is wrong. It certainly paid off in the fight for your life, which we are so thankful that you won! A special thank you for sharing your two lovely daughters with us.*

*Love,  
Eileen and Frank Schenck  
NOVA Dobermans*