

# The history of the american pitbull terrier



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The history of the American Pitbull Terrier is a true tale of rise and demise. This is a breed that has literally descended from a canine ambassador of our country to the black sheep of the dog world. The APBT is constantly reported in the media, most of which being negative press. Such horrible exposure has tarnished the breed reputation a great deal and may even lead to its dissolution due to Breed specific legislation. Although these creatures receive a most dreadful reputation, one must have a firm understanding of the breed's historical background in order to place judgment upon the dogs in an adequate manner.

The birth of the breed dates roughly back to the mid 1700s. The sport of bull baiting was very popular in many regions of Europe, England and Ireland being the top contenders for the sport. Bull baiting is an event in which a ring is placed through a bull's nostrils and the "catch dogs" or "baiters" are to take down the beast some two or three at a time. This was a popular sport for many Englishmen of the day and as it progressed, the need for a dog with a perfectly balanced amount of strength, agility, and pain tolerance became evident.

Far too many of the bulldogs of the era were being killed in the ring this was beginning to cause irritation amongst dog men. As time progressed bull baiting became even more popular especially amongst butchers. They would use the dogs to pin the bull for slaughter. Bulldogs of the mid 1700s and 1800s fought with so much tenacity that the simple butchers catch dog became an opportunity for men rich and poor to place bets on the outcome. This also led to the demand for offspring of winning bulldogs.

The following is an anecdote of a Bulldog bitch that appeared in a sporting magazine January, 1824: A butcher brought a bitch accompanied by her litter of puppies to a bull-bait. Upon letting the bitch loose, the butcher exclaimed, " Now gentlemen I will say nothing of the goodness of the breed; you will see. " Although she had scarcely a tooth in her head, the bitch immediately pinned the bull. The butcher then began to cut her to pieces with a hedge-bill and she only quitted her hold with her last breath.

There was instantly a great demand for her puppies, which the butcher sold for five guineas apiece. This is jus one of maybe hundreds of examples of what grave lengths owners went through in order to make money off of the sport. Although bull-baiting was still relevant another sport arose in the early 1800s, dog fighting. Dog fighting was created to exemplify the tenacity, strength, and most importantly gameness of a true Bulldog. Gameness was basically a dog ability to keep fighting while in the box, despite any severe injuries or circumstances.

In order to create the perfect pitdog or dog inside of the fighting ring, it is rumored that dog men of the middle ages crossed the Irish white terrier with their own bulldogs, thus giving birth to the typical pitbull dog. Dog fighters of the old days were strategic with their breeding program, they knew exactly what was needed for the breed. They wanted a dog with intense aggression towards other dogs, but non toward humans of any kind. Therefore when selecting the early pitbull type dog, any dog that showed even mild aggression toward a human being would be culled, or killed due to its fault.

The following is the feelings expressed by a dog man about the traits of a true pitbull dog in Sporting Magazine January, 1824: “ Any dog being fought in the ring should show true vigor when seized upon the rival, like wise the same dog should also be of kindred spirits toward the master, asserting a strong will to please. Any dog who places it’s teeth on the skin of a man will be forced to bite the bullet, death is the only just penalty of a man biter. ” Although the excerpt may seem harsh and cruel on the part of the dog, it also represents how dedicated the men were n establishing this breed.

As time progressed bull-baiting along with dog fighting was banned by parliament in Europe in the year 1835. Since then the breed has established a new home and a new name, the American Pitbull Terrier. The name was bestowed upon the dogs to distinguish the breed from all other fighting dogs. The term “ pitbull” is used to describe any number of generic bulldog crosses. A new name was needed to show how the breed has evolved since the olden days. In 1920, an APBT breeder by the name of Dave Wilson decided to take the breed in to a new direction.

He wanted to keep the same dominant physique, but exaggerate the most prominent features such as the head piece and the chest. He also wanted to eliminate the dog aggression out of the gene pool. Dave Wilson’s project soon gave way to a shorter-thicker dog with less drive and intensity, the American Bully. Dave later confessed to adding other breeds outside of the APBT in order to create a shortcut to his goal in a radio interview in 2002. The major downfall of both the AB and APBT is the issue of overpopulation. Both of the breeds suffered from becoming an urbanized trend.

This led to a numerous amount of “ vicious pitbull attacks” showing up in the media all over the country, thus giving the breed the bad reputation that still remains to this day. Most of which are reports of large blocky headed dogs that sometimes are a hundred plus pounds. Ant one who knows the standard for the breed would know that such statistics are no where near and accurate size. The APBT is a rather petite framed dog with an atheletic build males never exceeding 60 pounds and females being between 35-50 pounds max. Neither sex should be any taller than 20 inches at the withers (standards provided by the ADBA registry).

So in essence, the APBT is taking the blame for any bulldog breed that fits the mental picture that occurs when one thinks of the generic term pitbull. The APBT has come a long ways from the beginnings in Europe to its new foundation in North America. Although dog fighting has been outlawed they’re still rings being raided all across the United States bringing in a total of over 45 raids annually. How ever many present day enthusiast of the breed find several other outlets for the intense drive within the dogs such as weight pull, dock jumping, schutzund, and agility training.

All of which shed a pleasant light on the gentle nature of the breed while capturing the essence of its strength at the same time. pull, dock jumping, schutzund, and agility training. All of which shed a pleasant light on the gentle. In conclusion, due to recent over breeding and hefty petitions for BSL, no one truly knows what is next in store for the APBT. However, whatever the future may hold, the past will still ever so vaguely illustrate a true tell of rise and demise for the American Pitbull Terrier.