

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink short-sleeved button-down shirt and blue jeans, stands on a wooden deck. She is smiling and looking down at a large brown and white dog sitting next to her. She is holding the dog's leash. The background is a lush green garden with many trees and bushes. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Significant Sire

# Spirit

*Photo by  
Christina Freitag*

NSBISS MBIS MBISS INT'L CH GCH Adili's American Idol JC CGC ROM



Zarafa, a Spirit / Vomba daughter



**S**pirit was special from the moment he was born—but I believed he was not meant to be with me. I had two young sons and three dogs at that time. We tried to place Spirit several times. When the last home fell through, his Grandfather passed, leaving a space for him—it was meant to be.

Karen LaFleur was excited about this breeding also, and because of our long-term friendship, she was added as a Breeder. Although the litter didn't produce the female she wanted, she remained a Co-Owner throughout Spirit's life. She showed him to his first Breed win, and to his Regional Specialty win at GVFRRC in 2014 from the Veteran's Class under Doug Johnson. They went on to a Group 1 over 400 Hounds that day!

Spirit was Winners Dog and Best of Winners at the RRCUS National in 2007 from the Bred By Class at just 13 months of age under Betty-Anne Stenmark. He was BOS in Sweeps under Mary Lynne Elliott also. He followed this amazing Specialty with WD/

BOW at the RRRRCOM Regional Specialty later that week! Unbeknownst to me, he had caught the eye of Kiki Courtelis and her handler, Frank Murphy. This was to be the beginning of an adventure like no other—which forged a lifetime friendship/ sisterhood between Kiki and I.

It was a difficult decision to let my heart dog go out to be campaigned. Karen & I made this decision after meeting with Frank and Kiki at the Old Dominion KC in Oct. 2007. Kiki had a plane to meet, but Karen and I were undecided. After a short talk, we decided it was something we would like to do. I could practically hear her tires squeal, as she turned around and came back—so excited about our newly formed "Team Spirit." What an adventure Spirit took us on! He left with Frank at 18 months of age. Kiki followed the show circuit in her RV, calling me with his daily wins. After winning the Group in Perry, GA in April, Kiki called to give me the blow-by-blow details. I was grocery shopping as she gave





**Sire of 50 Champions & 23  
Grand Champions to date**

**NSBISS MBIS MBISS INT'L CH  
GCH Adili's American Idol  
JC CGC ROM**

**Breeders:**

Tammy Lynch, Karen LaFleur & Phyllis Lia  
(\*Nadine Vaccarino left off at her request)

**Owners:**

Kiki Courtelis, Tammy Lynch & Karen LaFleur

**OFA:**

Hips Good, Elbows, Thyroid, Cardiac, CERF  
& BAER Normal, DM Carrier, EOAD High  
Confidence Clear

**2015**

#1 Stud Dog (tied)

**2014**

GVFRRR BISS & Group 1 from Veteran Class  
RRRRCOM BISS from Veteran Class

**2011**

RRCUS National Specialty BISS  
RRRRCOM BISS & Group 1  
International Ch with 6 BIS wins in 2 days  
AKC Grand Champion, Undefeated in the  
Breed with a Regional BISS win, 2 Group 1's  
and 2 Group placings  
#7 RR, #11 All Breed in 10 Shows

**2009**

Westminster KC Breed Winner  
RRRRCOM BISS winner  
RRCUS National Specialty Top 25 Winner &  
People's Choice Winner, 1st AOM  
#2 RR (All Breed) #3 Breed  
#10 Hound (2 All Breed BIS)

**2008**

#2 RR ( All Breed) #3 Breed  
#7 Hound ( 3 All Breed BIS)  
RRCUS National Specialty AOM

**2007**

RRCUS National Specialty  
WD/BOW & BOS Sweeps

me the details of who was up and how they looked. Did they hit their Freestack? When I was checking out, Kiki commented that the judge was taking a long time to write down the winner. I replied "it takes a long time to write Rhodesian Ridgeback haha." Then Kiki yelled "He did it!!! He is Best in Show!!!" I had tears running down my face and the cashier asked me if everything was ok. I replied "It's Great!! Our dog just won Best in Show!!" As the year went on, there were many more phone calls. Spirit built an enviable record, becoming a Top Ten Hound. He defeated over 16,000 dogs that year, with 3 Best in Shows at just 2 years of age. Spirit campaigned in 2009 and again finished a Top Ten Hound. Retirement came at 3 1/2, with 5 AKC Best In Shows and a solid lifetime friendship with Kiki that will never be broken.

As one would expect from a Top Ten Hound 2 years in a row, Spirit quickly proved himself as a Sire. It was an amazing moment in time to Owner handle his son to Winners Dog at the National Specialty in 2009. That son later went on to Sire the tied Top Best in Show winning bitch, Ida Belle.

From that first National Specialty to his last one, Spirit was always a contender. He earned many Awards of Merit (before there was a Select Dog Award). I had the pleasure of Breeder/ Owner handling him at his first and last National Specialties to great accolades.

In 2011, AKC created a new level of ranking—the "Grand" Championship. Kiki always teased me that Spirit's sister, J Lo, was a Grand Champion and Spirit wasn't. Spirit and I took up the challenge. He won his Grand Championship undefeated in the breed, with a Regional BISS, 2 Group 1's, and 2 other placings in 5 shows. At the Raisin River RR Club of Michigan, Frank asked if he had "gotten that stupid title" because Spirit was tired of showing. Frank had to show Kiki's beagle in the group, which gave me Spirit's lead. I asked Spirit to "show him." We flew around that ring to a Group 1 win and Frank said "you need to show that dog." With that comment, I set my sights on the National in Rapid City SD. I had never shown a dog to Kent Delaney before. I thoroughly enjoyed watching him all week, working with people and dogs. He would pull out dogs and ask them to go around twice, (once with each dog in front). I laughed along with everyone else when he ran Cathy Acosta until she said "No more—you're going to kill me!" After which he sheepishly gave her Winners Dog.

We made it through several cuts and had to come back after lunch for the "Grand Finale". He pulled a dog, had him go around and stack on the other side. Along with everyone else, I thought he was the winner—Until Mr Delaney announced "that's my 10th Award of Merit". GAME ON—we still had a chance! As the other dogs were chosen and cheered for, at some point I realized there were only 2 dogs left. We (the



last 2 dogs went around twice). Then we ran against a female. Lastly, against Spirit's granddaughter Ida Belle. By this point I couldn't breathe, but Spirit never let me down. He circled 1 1/2 times behind, then in front 1 1/2 times. There was a sense of the surreal when Mr. Delaney walked up to me and stretched out his hand to congratulate me! We were the first BISS winners to be Breeder/Owner handled in over 20 years!

Although Spirit was bred a limited number of times, Spirit is the Sire to 50 Champions to date (23 of whom have attained their Grand Championship or higher). He was a Top Stud dog for many consecutive years, culminating with being tied for #1 Stud Dog in 2015. He is the Sire of a Best Bred By Exhibitor in Show winner and Grandsire to another. His daughter Nola was Best Baby puppy at the National Specialty in 2012. Several of his sons and daughters are ROM winners who have produced not only many titled get, but more ROM winners. He has produced Top Winning dogs and bitches who have been Nationally Ranked. His get and grand get have won Regional and National Specialty BISS, BOSS, Awards of Merit, Selects, Winners Dog, Winners Bitches. His most famous granddaughter, Ida Belle was Best of Opposite to him at the 2011 National and went on to being #1 RR, NSBISS in 2013, and is tied for Top Best in Show winning RR Bitch of all Time. He has several get and grand get who are ROM recipients. The legacy he created will continue to affect our Breed in a positive way for decades to come.

