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## Leader of the pack: how I became master again

By Danielle Paine

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Ever since my boyfriend Greg and I adopted our mastiff puppy "Brodie," I find myself watching those dog training shows on TV with envy as other people's furry little nightmares are transformed into four-legged saints.

Brodie loves to interrupt these shows.

A typical scenario: All 140 pounds of him will come skidding across the hardwood floor until his big Mastiff jowls drip toilet water onto my dinner, as he hovers over my plate barking for a bite so loudly that I have to cover my ears.

While our 140-pound pup isn't always a bad dog, he's got issues. Drinking from toilets, eating the couches, knocking over guests as they walk in the door, barking, whining, stealing meat from countertops, dragging me down the street and literally taking candy from babies.

So when I first heard of Scot Masamery and his new local franchise "Bark Busters," I was intrigued, if not already giddy at the thought of Brodie getting some manners.

Bark Buster's, the world's largest dog training company, has used the same simple concepts in their 300 franchises to train more than 300,000 dogs. Trainers come into your home and spend about three hours correcting each problem behavior and teaching owners the Bark Buster's way of communicating with dogs.



Scot Masamery poses with Brodie, a South African Boerboel mastiff, last week after a session. *Reminder Publications photo by Danielle Paine*

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Before Masamery's Bark-Buster-mobile even pulled into the driveway, I was filled with hope for a polite pooch.

From the moment he entered the door, Masamery went to work. With subtle techniques, he immediately began addressing our biggest complaint, that our sweet puppy had become a big, demanding boss.

"Anytime a dog tells you what to do, that's a general thing that we deal with," Masamery said. "We need to do things on our terms, not theirs."

A 45-minute sit-down with Masamery kicked-off the lesson. He explained how Brodie thought he was the leader of our little pack and more importantly, how we should start to revolt.

"You need to lead him and educate him, but he won't listen unless you are the pack leader," he said. "When dealing with your dog, think like a dog."

Using a guttural "Bah!" to mimic a growl, and a small nylon bag of lightweight chain, Masamery mimicked the way dogs communicate with one another in a pack.

The trademark "Bah!" is used as a dog's first warning correction. The bag of chain is used as a final correction, to be thrown at the floor near the dog's feet when they misbehave. Brodie responded immediately to the combination. Over time, Masamery said, owners can stop using the bags altogether as their dog starts responding immediately to verbal reprimand.

During the next two hours, Masamery had Brodie waiting patiently across the room while I answered the door, walking slowly beside us down the street and responding to commands as if he finally understood what we wanted.

Masamery had flipped a switch inside our dog's head and we were amazed.

He was listening. He was following. He was doing all of those things that we had kept hoping he'd "grow in to."

"The leader always leads," Masamery said as he "trained" Greg and I. "Through doorways, up stairs and in decision making. If he is whining to go out, take a mental message, wait until he forgets about it, then make it your idea."

I am happy to say that even after the bark-busters-mobile was long gone, Brodie stuck to his newfound wisdom. Armed with our "homework" (15 minutes of training Brodie daily for the next few weeks) we're committed to making it last. It's just too good not to.

Although our dog's problems weren't aggression, jumping, or any of the other dilemmas that dog owners find themselves faced with, Masamery's motto is "any age, any issue."

In many cases, good training can save a bad dog from a very bad ending.

As for us, we're enjoying Brodie now more than ever, especially when he's lying



quietly at our feet when we eat our dinner (sans toilet water.)

For more information, contact Scot Masamery at 726-2911.

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