

## SPOTLIGHT SUNDAY ~~~~ BLAKE – BAIT DOG TO PART OF THE FAMILY



The scars on Blake's face scream a terrible tale without uttering a word... And every day, countless other pit bulls suffer the same fate Blake was lucky to escape from. A fate he escaped because he wasn't very good at the job some monsters intended him to have. His good and loving nature wouldn't allow it. As we share Blake's life and journey, we give you a glimpse at the horrors of dog fighting and dog baiting. Welcome to the cruel world!

If you have never heard of dog baiting, then you have probably never heard of dog fighting either. I wish you didn't have to hear about it, and more than anything, I wish such problem didn't exist. Unfortunately, it is much more common than one would imagine and it has been happening for centuries. It occurs in many countries and in every type of communities.

This sadistic "contest" requires two dogs, usually specifically bred, conditioned, and trained to fight, to be placed in a pit to fight each other for the spectators' entertainment and gambling. These fights average one to two hours, ending when one of the dogs will not or cannot continue. And the "fighting" dogs are not the only ones to suffer with this vile activity... Bait dogs are the dark underbelly of the dog fighting world, and one of the cruelest acts performed by man. They are what the term implies: dogs used as bait to further the practice of the dogs that fight in the "ring". Purchased from local ads, stolen from shelters, picked up as strays and even taken from backyards, bait dogs do not stand a chance.

On Thursday morning, December 15th 2011, Joe Blancato, an East Brookfield's animal control officer and a volunteer at Second Chance Animal Shelter, was walking another dog from the Shelter when he saw a car stop and throw a pit bull puppy out of the car. Realizing the pibble was seriously injured, Joe decided to bring him to the shelter where he volunteers and his wife, Sheryl, is the executive director.

"He took me in where I was too scared to do much of anything" Blake explains. "I had a nasty cut on the top of my nose and many scars all over my head and hind quarters. It was believed that I was used as a bait dog in a local dog fighting ring".

"Where the wounds are, in my experience, they are probably related to dog fighting in one way," Sheryl told NECN. The shelter believed Blake was probably used as bait in those fights, but that it was likely his good natured temperament saved him from such a fate.

"They're not interested in that," continued Sheryl. "Can't make any money. There's no blood to be had from a dog like this, so they abandoned him."

Blake began his road to recovery at Second Chance before he could start looking for a family to adopt him. "The first day he would shake and barely move", the shelter updated at the time. "We couldn't get him to stand on his own feet or walk. But, in just days, and with an outpouring of love, he began to walk on leash, wag his tail, give kisses, and become an ambassador for the breed. He has shown everyone that this breed is not the scary dogs portrayed so often, but a gentle loving companion. His only desire is to be loved and to give a famous 'bully bath' kiss in return."

"The most part we had to do was on the rehab part," the shelter's executive director, Sheryl Blancato told NECN. "He was very scared. He came in here crawling on his stomach, shaking. And we just really socialized him, spent a lot of time with him. And he's really come around."

Stacie and DJ Ross were one of the many who found out Blake's story through the media and decided to give him a different fate. "He's such a loving dog," said Stacie Ross. "We came with a bone. He was chewing on the bone. I got right in his face. I took the bone out of his mouth. He just wagged his tail and was so happy, where most dogs would be growling at you."

And so the New Year arrived, bringing Blake a new beginning in life... On January 2nd, 2012 the pibble was adopted by his forever family.

"They instantly fell in love," Blake said, "and I hoped the shelter would pick them since there were several other families who wanted to take me home. I am so happy my new family found me!"

"We are thrilled to report that Blake has a wonderful home", the shelter updated. "He is already spoiled and has his own Facebook page for those that want to follow his new life. We are so happy that Blake has a happy ending to his rough start in life".

With love, understanding and patience, slowly but steadily, as his physical and emotional scars began to subside, Blake was on the way to full recovery...

"We have had Blake for 5 months on June 2nd and he will be a year old on June 15th. At least that's the birthday we have given to him," his mom stated on his Facebook page by the end of May. "He has come a long way in five months. He had no idea how to walk up and down stairs when he first got here. Now

he has mastered them. He was terrified of the bathroom but now he walks in and out freely without a care. We used to have to pick him up to put him in the car where he would shake uncontrollably and pant to the point we thought he would pass out. Now when we tell him we are going for a ride he runs to the car and jumps in. He will even lie down and relax. His skin used to be so dry and his coat was terrible. Now we get compliments everywhere we go about how shiny and beautiful his coat is. He has done wonderful with his training and we will conquer the CGC someday”.

A year after being saved, Blake’s life had been completely turned around... for the better! “A year ago today I went on a two hour car ride,” Blake recalled. “I left the shelter and my forever friends, and arrived in a small town south of Boston with a woman, a man, two teenagers and a cat. My life was about to change forever. There have been endless car rides, marrow bones, bully sticks, walks, hugs, kisses, cuddles and toys. Life is completely different than a year ago and I wouldn't change a thing! I now call that woman, mom, and that man, dad. I also call you....friend.”

And the handsome pibble goes on... “Today I am thankful for my loving furever family, to be a family pet and not a bait dog anymore, my warm bed, my side of the couch, yummy snacks, toys, car rides to Plymouth, my kitty Winston, Nana and Grandpa, daycare and my furiends, and lastly but certainly not least: all my wonderful FB friends!!!”

But Blake is not the only grateful one in this story... “It may seem that we rescued him but he has truly rescued us,” his mom says. “He has brought so much joy to our lives. Every time he looks at us with those gorgeous hazel eyes there is nothing but love and trust in them. I never knew I had such a hole in my heart until Blake came and filled it. It may seem we spoil him but after everything he has gone through and everything he has given to us we want him to have nothing but the best”.

Blake wishes that by sharing his story and journey he may help other pibbles and prevent them from suffering the way he did. “I am hoping to spread my story and make more people aware of the horrors of dog fighting and educate those who are afraid of pitbulls. I am a sweet, loving dog. Ask my mom, I give her a "bully bath" (pitbull kisses) every day!!”

“I am a very lucky dog to have escaped the horrors of my first 6 months,” Blake recognizes. “I have a great life now and wonderful fans. Thanks for loving me. Let the journey continue...”

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Blake-Bait-Dog-to-Part-of-the-Family/343235945687492>

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