

Timing is everything and chance of lifetime for this longtime Seattle Basenji breeder

by Ranny Green on October 1, 2013 in Features

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We all know how winter can be in Seattle: dark, dreary, wet and windy. And when you add January to the equation, feel free to toss in cold, too.



Naziki likes the view from the roof of her West Seattle doghouse. The surroundings are not quite the same as her native Africa but she has adapted nicely.

For Katie Campbell, of Seattle, a longtime Basenji fancier, this year was a breeder's nirvana accented with plenty of

psychological sunshine when two of her bitches – one native and one domestic – whelped litters within an hour of each other.

Naziki, one of three dogs she brought home from a 2011 Avongara Africa trip (led by renowned Basenji fanciers Michael Work and Jon Curby) and which segued seamlessly into metropolitan Seattle, was the first to deliver. “She was totally adaptable to other dogs in my household,” says Campbell, “and to children and adults she has met in all surroundings.”

That’s amazing when you consider her people were refugees from the civil war in Sudan. The name Avongara Naziki is from her native language of Lingala, which literally means “I’ve been burned.” And Naziki has the scar on the back of her ear to prove it.

“The translators told us that she apparently ‘ran into boiling water,’ which is the common method of discipline imposed on dogs when they raid human food,” explains Campbell.

Naziki whelped a litter of five, off of frozen semen from a former champion in Campbell’s line. And less than an hour later one of Campbell’s premier show dogs delivered a litter of six.

“It was pretty exciting for a few days,” she admits, “but it offered me an incredible opportunity to watch two distinct litters grow up side-by-side, one coming from half wild, native parentage and the other totally domestic, each with one international, high-profile, line-bred parent.”



The native Basenji was the “best mother I have had in all my years of breeding,” says owner-breeder-handler Katie Campbell, of Seattle.

Campbell was uncertain what to expect from Naziki – and she didn’t disappoint. “She was the best mother I have had in all my years of breeding (over 20 years of creating a bloodline),” Campbell smiles. “Very attentive and caring throughout the process. She’d watch them make a mistake then would teach them. She interacted with them throughout the process. “ Campbell’s intent was to assist Naziki as she had for more than two decades with her domestic litters, which is a fully hands-on method to assure first-time dams that their physical discomfort need not feed their anxiety and to help each whelp arrive safely. Naziki was uneasy about what was physically happening to her during labor, recalls Campbell, but she never panicked. Conversely, she went to great lengths to assure that she was silent. “I felt more like a coach with Naziki than a midwife,” adds

the breeder.

Naziki exhibited a hands-off attitude of sorts toward Campbell eight hours after delivery. “She warned me,” says Campbell, “by putting her mouth over my hand as if saying, ‘Really, I’d prefer that you didn’t touch my babies.’ I’ve never experienced that before, though I have heard of some dams that do.”

Campbell insisted on weighing all of the five offspring daily, which Naziki allowed, but the new mother clearly did not want visitors helping themselves to her puppies the first few weeks. The longtime Basenji fancier was struck by another facet of Naziki’s character. Campbell could see in the native mother’s eyes that she was overcome by instinct. “Her communication skills are unrivaled with any other dog I have owned,” she emphasizes. “She made it perfectly clear in every instance exactly what she wanted and how she felt about her puppies. If I misinterpreted her, she tried another means of communicating her point. Her patience was incredible and throughout the motherhood process her behavior was instinctual.

“Naziki proved to be an exceptional mother, demonstrating her raw, undeniable instinct juxtaposed with her love and respect for me in her new Western home.”



Campbell and Naziki are right in sync at the Basenji Club of America National Specialty in Auburn this summer.

Birth weights across the two litters were approximately the same, however the half-African litter gained weight faster, was quicker up on their feet, opened their eyes earlier and were (and continue to be) food driven. “The half-African puppies were more attentive to the environment and their mother’s relationship with me than any litter I have had,” says the breeder.

As an avid exhibitor, Campbell likes to stack puppies on a table for the first time at around 5 weeks of age. Her domestic litter stood like statues at 6 weeks, yet the half-native African offspring appeared to have an innate fear of heights. “They would fold to a crouch for weeks beyond what the domestics did,” she says.

Other differences between the two litters were not pronounced until about 4 months of age. Naziki’s litter of five had two tri-colored females, one tri male and two red-and-white males. Her tri-colors’ marks mirrored her domestic counterpart litter’s tri-colors. As Naziki’s pups approached 4 months, the black beneath the pips slowly became red/tan and now all three of her tri-colors wear what fanciers call an “open face tri.” In essence, a widow’s peak is featured above the brow and beneath that marking the face is tan/red (above it is black). The demarcation, says Campbell, is clear, but not a pattern commonly seen in the U.S. It is, however, rampant throughout the areas of Africa where Basenjis are native.

“Acquiring that pattern was not a surprise,” she continued, “and clearly it comes from Naziki because the sire was clear normal pattern tri-color with no such markings ever produced.”



To the victor go the rewards. Campbell holds Naziki and a rosette after the African-native dog won Best of Breed in the American Kennel Club lure coursing trial at the Basenji Club of America National Specialty. The lure trial is the closest emulation the national club has to a hunt – which showcases the preservation of the breed’s natural instinct and purpose.

Campbell is keeping a red-and-white male champion quality from the half-African litter which she will integrate into her breeding program but not campaign. Incredibly, a male litter mate, which Campbell co-owns with two English women and lives in England, has already qualified for Crufts 2014 – and before 7 months of age.

Five of the six from the domestic litter are already in show homes, with all placing in their respective classes at the recent Basenji Club of America National Specialty.

Putting the big picture in a rich cultural context, Campbell acknowledged, “I’ve had a window to raw instinct that few breeders ever see in their home. Naziki has opened my eyes to being a better, more compassionate and effective dog woman.” Since Work and Curby’s initial trip to Africa in 1987 when they returned with seven puppies, the American Kennel Club Basenji Stud Book has been reopened twice – in 1990 to accommodate the 1987 and 1988 imports and again in 2009 through Dec. 31,

2013, for additional native African stock. It has since been extended until Dec. 31, 2018.

