

People

Sylvia Barkey has gone to the dogs - and won

By BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

Sylvia Barkey gives a quick tug on the lead of her two-year-old Staffordshire Bull Terrier named Sioux. The pair set to enter the ring to join an assortment of other dogs and their handlers at the recent all breed championship dog show held at the Stouffville Country Market. Like a parent trying to convince a child to put its best food forward, the veteran who has shown dogs across Ontario and Quebec over the past 21 years gives the dog a stern glance and a muffled admonition to behave.

"You only want to win half way with these dogs," Barkey says after the judges have completed their inspection of the candidates. "You want them to retain their animation." The show is one of roughly 100 Barkey will enter annually with her two select Staffordshires. The highlight of the past two years was when she, Sioux, and her other two year old show dog, Willie, walked away with the lion's share of first place ribbons from the annual Credit Valley Dog Show at Toronto's Sky-Dome. Her ability to breed top Staffordshires has seen dogs she has sold post strong results in shows as far away as the United States, Bermuda, Mexico and even Singapore. Two of the dogs she has bred are presently on Canada's Super Dog flyball team.

While Barkey admits she could make money by strictly breeding the dogs for sale from her Rolona Kennels operation near Clarendon, she admits to being hooked by the show bug. "You can make money if

you don't show, but that's my hobby," said Barkey, a mother of two school aged children. "Breeding and selling the dogs just covers my expenses."

While she acts as handler for shows close to home, Barkey hires handlers to look after out of town shows, adding to her overall expenses. She enjoys the competition and the company, and has learned to assess both judges and fellow competitors. More than once she has had to jockey for position with handlers looking to gain points

by getting a rise out of one of her dogs. "It's a bit of a game. Some of the regulars have been around for 20 years."

Judges, she said, are not without their biases, and can sometimes be swayed by the darling breed of the day. "Basically, shows are beauty contests. You breed for looks and temperament. You make sure they're muscled up, properly fed and groomed." The satisfaction, she said, comes from competing where there is a knowledgeable judge. "It's great to get

a judge who knows their stuff. I always do well in those shows." Barkey said her decision to breed and show Staffordshires came about as a result of a difficulty she had replacing one as a pet 21 years ago. "The dog I had died and I wanted another one. Staffordshires were almost inaccessible at that time but I managed to buy one. I knew a few people who bred dogs and they got me into it."

She said she enjoys Staffordshires because of their temperament. "They're a good

breed, a really nice dog. They're dogs of great strength for their size, but they're known as "the nanny dog" in England because of their affection for children."

Barkey takes each day as it comes in the world of breeding show dogs. Each dog is different, and they can show better in some competitions than others.

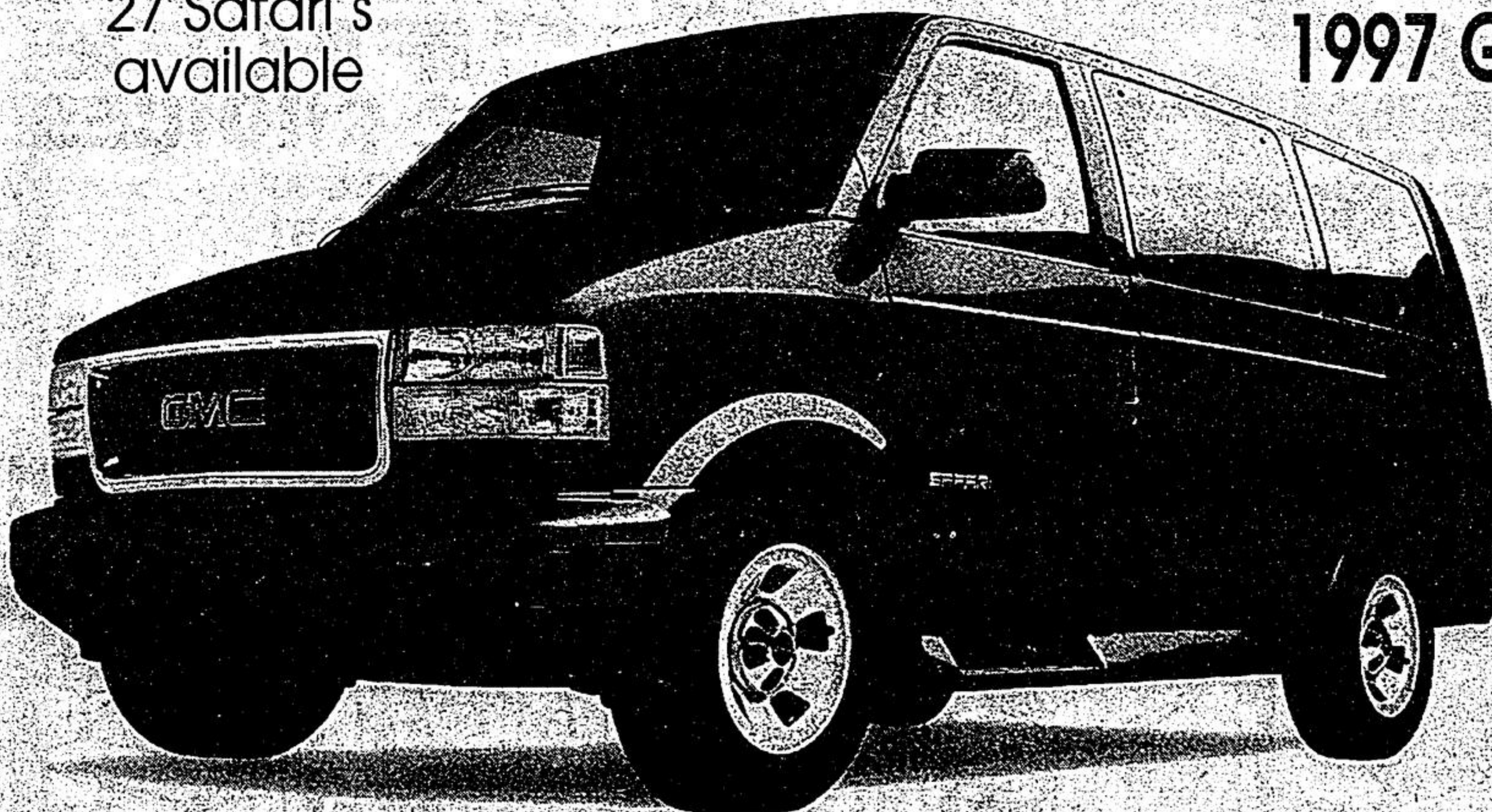
"They're like people. Dogs of the same breed have different temperaments. There are good days for showing, and there are bad days."

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CORRECTION NOTICE

We wish to draw your attention to the error in our current '1997 Performance Catalogue'

Page 28 - Item 2, Sur-Step Truck Bumpers, 41-5245X.
Copy reads: each 129.99 up
Should read: each 199.99 up

We sincerely regret any inconvenience we may have caused you.

cnote Performance Catalogue-97 All Zones

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