

Honoring Great Breeders

Allan Reznik

SEPTEMBER 2, 2009, 2:45 P.M. EDT

I've just returned from the 96th and 97th annual Santa Barbara Kennel Club dog shows. This is a club steeped in tradition and the show, as always, drew high-profile exhibitors from around the country for a judging panel made up of arbiters from Canada, Mexico and Australia as well as the U.S.

This year an added feature was offered to entice participants. The Santa Barbara Kennel Club partnered with Purina ProPlan to host the first Breeders' Showcase, an elegant event designed to honor a group of often unsung heroes. After all, we have professional handlers within our ranks who are idolized like rock stars as well as owners with deep pockets who are well known for financing the show careers of their jet-setting canines.

However, without talented breeders producing generation after generation of the very finest dogs, handlers and owners would have nothing to campaign at our shows. So it was a weekend to tip our hats to successful breeders.

The rules for entering the Breeders' Showcase were pretty minimal to allow for as large an entry as possible (180, as it turns out). Dogs were entered in pairs and could be shown by their breeders, owners or handlers. The only stipulation was that both dogs needed to have the same breeder.

All seven Groups were represented – Sporting through Herding – and the prize money was generous: \$500 for Group First down to \$200 for Group Fourth. Breeders' Showcase Best in Show won \$1,500 while Reserve Best in Show took home \$1,000. The Groups were judged on Saturday evening; Best in Show on Sunday evening. On Saturday, round tables with white tablecloths were set up alongside the big ring and a complimentary buffet was provided.

The philosophy behind the Breeders' Showcase really resonated with the dog-show community, so much so that a few famous breeders in their 80s and beyond, icons to us all, flew to Santa Barbara with their dogs to exhibit. That added an unexpected wow factor to an already classy affair and served as a fitting reminder that great breeders remain the backbone of our sport.

- Read more of The Dog Insider blog -