

Intense Competition Marks AKC/Eukanuba

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Best in Show Scottish Terrier Ch. Roundtown Mercedes of Maryscot

Photographs courtesy

American Kennel Club Scottish Terrier Ch. Roundtown Mercedes of Maryscot continued her winning ways Sunday night by marching off with Best in Show and a cash prize of \$50,000 at the ninth annual AKC/Eukanuba National Championship. "Sadie" is the frontrunner for 2009's Top Dog all breeds.

American Kennel Club Chairman Ron Menaker noted, "The competition was especially intense this year, a fitting culmination to our organization's 125th anniversary celebration."

Sadie represented the Terrier Group in high style. The other Group winners competing against her were: Irish Setter Ch. Shadagee Caught Red Handed (Sporting); Greyhound Ch. Grandcru Clos Erasmus (Hound); Boxer Ch. Duba-Dae's Who's Your Daddy (Working); Toy Poodle Ch. Smash JP Moon Walk (Toy); Standard Poodle Ch. Dawin Spitfire (Non-Sporting); and Rough Collie Ch. Sylvan Argent Simply Irresistible (Herding).

There was an international flavor to the lineup, thanks to the Irish Setter's Canadian handler, Adam Bernardin; and the Standard Poodle's Canadian residence. The Toy Poodle "Walker" is a Japanese import, as is his handler, Kaz Hosaka.

In the Miscellaneous Class, a "dress rehearsal" for breeds soon to enjoy full AKC recognition, the top prize went to Tenango, a statuesque hairless Xoloitzcuintli (pronounced "sho-low-eats-queent-lee"). The Xolo is Mexico's national breed so it was fitting that this dog happens to live in that country.

Eukanuba World Challenge winner Top dogs from 40 countries and six continents competed in the Eukanuba World Challenge. Italy's Ch. Axel Del Monte Alago, a Bracco Italiano known as "Axel," earned the title of World Challenge Champion along with a purse of \$10,000.

This dog took my breath away. The breed looks like a smooth-coated Spinone Italiano with a Bloodhound head and wrinkles. It surprises me that the Bracco has not aroused more public interest among American dog lovers.

The discerning American judge Frank Sabella was equally mesmerized by this dog as it powered around the ring with impressive reach and drive. Mr. Sabella chose an exotic black-and-tan Saluki bred in Southern California but owned in Sweden and currently that country's Number One dog all breeds for his Runner-Up, and in third place a charming and typical Wire Fox Terrier from Brazil.

Breeders are often the forgotten component when owners with deep pockets pay rockstar professional handlers handsomely to show their glamorous dogs across the country. Happily, breeders receive the public recognition they deserve at the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship. Golden Retriever Ch. Rush Hill's River Road Payoff was awarded Best Bred-by-Exhibitor in Show, edging out more than 1,300 dogs and earning a \$15,000 cash prize for his breeder/owner-handlers.

The AKC also chooses a Best Breeder in each of the seven Variety Groups, all exemplifying the care, attention, research and testing that breeders invest in the science and art of breeding better dogs. Sunday evening, Dr. Claudia Orlandi of the famed Topsfield Basset Hounds in Vermont was singled out for Breeder of the Year. Dr. Orlandi writes and lectures widely on better breeding, and her own Bassets have broken breed records for many years.

The 2009 AKC National Obedience Invitational and the AKC Agility Invitational also held this weekend demonstrate the highest level of training and teamwork between dog and handler and were the culmination of thousands of trials held throughout the year.



For the second consecutive year, the AKC National Obedience Invitational Champion was a multi-titled Labrador Retriever whose very proud owner, Petra Ford of New Jersey, calls him simply "Tyler."

Five agility dogs and their owners – one dog-handler team in each of the five height categories – were crowned at the AKC Agility Invitational, which brought together more than 450 dogs from across the nation and beyond. The winners were (by ascending height division): 8" – Pembroke Welsh Corgi "Tobi"; 12" – Cardigan Welsh Corgi "Letti"; 16" – Pyrenean Shepherd "Luka"; 20" – Border Collie "Jace"; and 24" – Doberman Pinscher "Flare."

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