

The World Represented in Long Beach

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January 8, 2009, 6:30 p.m. EST

Well, the eighth annual AKC/Eukanuba National Championship is now history ... and I for one think the international flavor of the two-day show was among its strongest and most appealing components.

Top dogs representing 52 countries participated in the Eukanuba World Challenge. Contenders were divided into three regions – the Americas, Asia & Oceania, and Europe and Africa – with the semi-finals judged on Saturday evening and the finals on Sunday evening. Last year, the semi-finals began mid-afternoon and, even with the flag-bearers present, the event seemed to lack the importance it deserved.

I commend the AKC on the tweaks it made this year. By moving the semi-finals to the big arena and making them part of the evening festivities, this truly did feel like the Olympics of dogdom. “Charmin” the Sealyham Terrier and his owner-handler Margery Good were the USA’s entry, accompanied by proud flag bearer Dennis Sprung, the AKC president and CEO.

Exhibitors responded to the importance of the occasion by dressing in their very best. From conservative to slightly risqué, it made for a colorful event. As for the dogs, I was thrilled to see a magnificent Standard Xoloitzcuintli handled by Ernesto Lara make it all the way to the finals. Several Cocker Spaniels with undocked tails might have taken a few minutes of getting used to, but it was their collective quality that left a lasting impression on the audience.

I thought Great Britain’s entry, the white Standard Poodle Ch. Afterglow the Big Tease, breeder/owner-handled by the talented and gracious Michael Gadsby, was breathtaking.

“Donny” is currently the No. 1 dog all-breeds in Great Britain and I so appreciated having the opportunity to see him. You don’t have to be a Poodle fancier to recognize that he simply oozes “show dog.”

Ultimately it was an exquisite Saluki bitch from Germany that triumphed to win the second annual Eukanuba World Challenge.

Many of the dogs were also entered in the all-breed show and gave our American dogs a run for their money. The German Saluki bitch won Best of Breed while Donny the white Standard Poodle faced the black Standard Poodle bitch, Ch. Randenn Tristar Affirmation, No. 1 Non-Sporting Dog in the nation, in a red-hot ring that was tightly packed with enthusiastic fans. “Yes,” the black bitch, prevailed in the end but oh, what an exciting encounter.

For the USA, such international events are still a rare occurrence. This is all the more reason to support such an educational global effort. In one spontaneous standing ovation, the audience displayed its heartfelt appreciation.

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