

World in Review

Reports from major international shows anywhere in the world are welcome. Please write to DR Editor-at-Large Bo Bengtson, P.O. Box 479, Ojai, Calif. 93024; U.S. E-mail: bobengtson@impulse.net

Judging in England
Saluki Festival, Ring Procedure and Richmond
by Bo Bengtson

America and England — two countries separated by a different approach to the pursuit of dog show judging. At least that used to be the case. In the old days the party line was that the English didn't care how a judge behaved in the ring as long as the dogs were placed in the right order, while over here ring procedure was ALL we cared about... Like all clichés, those two contained some germs of truth; if you've been to an English dog show you may have seen the proverbial "old biddy" judge in action, a venerated specialist who has forgotten more than most of us know and wanders around the ring, muttering to herself as neither handlers nor spectators have a clue what's going on... while, conversely, American judges tended to be promoted more based on their ability to sign the book right and look snappy than due to any real background in dogs.

Well, things have changed: now the English have become just like us! At least that's what it looked like to me when I judged in England in September. It's been a few years since I last judged regular breed classes over there and the change was distinct. Before leaving I went to the Kennel Club web site (www.kennelclub.org.uk) to print out an up-to-date breed standard and found an item for "Overseas Judges in the United Kingdom" called a "Best Practice Document," the stated aim of which is to make show organizers understand their responsibility for briefing judges from abroad in procedure as laid out in the KC Guide for Judges and Ring Stewards. In other words, in Britain it isn't the judges' duty to learn the rules in advance so much as it is the host club's job to tell us what they are.

I found this especially interesting since as far as I know there's no corresponding requirement in the U.S. Whenever AKC approves a foreign judge to officiate here he or she is, I believe, sent a copy of AKC's Guidelines for Conformation Dog Show Judges, but nobody checks if they read it. It would no doubt be an advantage if visiting judges were given a short list of 10 or 20 rules based on the most common misunderstandings by foreign judges. The guidelines are fine for judges accustomed to AKC shows but don't necessarily spell out the pitfalls for those who are used to a different show system.

At the hotel the night before the show I met with my co-judge Ken Allan (who has judged several times in the U.S. and Canada) and Nick Bryce-Smith, chairman of the Richmond Championship Dog Show Society and also, through his wife, indirectly involved in the Saluki Festival. The festival was attracting a large number of overseas Saluki fanciers to, among much else, four championship shows in a week, including the parent club show where I was going to judge, held at the Richmond venue the day before the all-breed show.

Nick did exactly what the rules request: "...the Show Secretary/Manager, or Chief Steward or other suitably qualified person, should brief all the overseas judges officiating at the show on U.K. judging procedures. This should take approximately 10 minutes and should cover Kennel Club Breed Standards [and] Ring Procedures in accordance with the Guide for Judges and Ring Stewards."

Dealing with foreign standards should not be a problem. Depending on breed they may be anything from nearly identical to vastly different from ours. If you are not willing to judge according to the standard in the country you've been invited to, you simply should not agree to judge abroad.

As for ring procedure, here are some of the differences compared to judging AKC shows:

You must check the Judging Book for order of classes and make sure that the slips for all classes and major awards are present, and you sign the Judging Book in the appropriate space after each class has been judged.

You should endeavor to judge approximately 30 dogs per hour. That's more than AKC's 20-25 dogs per hour and furthermore includes critiques (see below). However, you don't mark the time you start or finish judging anywhere, and a couple of English judges I watched at Richmond didn't seem bothered by judging much more slowly.

The judge is requested to "take into consideration the health, well-being and condition of the dog." A dog that is "in an obviously unhealthy condition" can be dismissed from the ring, and a dog "of a savage disposition" should be dismissed.

Such dismissals should be reported to the show management immediately by the judge or the ring steward. No dog should be dismissed from the ring apart from those reasons. If a dog goes lame, however, it is appropriate to allow the handler, if they wish, to withdraw the dog.

As in the U.S., awards may be withheld because of lack of merit. The judge must mark the judging book that the award has been withheld. If the award for third place is withheld, no further awards in that class can be given. Fourth place is called Reserve; some shows offer a Fifth (Very Highly Commended), Sixth (Highly Commended) or even Seventh (Commended) placement. At the show I judged beautiful rosettes were offered to all the seven dogs placed in each class.

On completion of the class, the dogs “must be placed in descending order from the judge’s left to right in the middle of the ring,” and the judge must then complete the relevant class slip and sign it. There are no place markers.

As in the U.S., only the judge may complete the Judging Book with regard to the placing of the exhibits. However, the stewards may mark the absentees in each class.

At the conclusion of the judging of the last class for each sex, all undefeated class winners return to the ring to compete for Best of Sex. If the judge feels that the winner is worthy of the title of Champion it may be awarded the Challenge Certificate, provided that CCs are offered. The number of CCs offered annually for each breed is predetermined each year by the Kennel Club, which means that not all breeds are eligible for CCs at all championship shows. The number of CCs available for a breed in a year varies from just a handful to more than 40 in each sex. There is almost invariably one CC for dogs and one for bitches, but in numerically small breeds just one CC can sometimes be awarded to BOB.

The number of classes may vary from one show to the next and from one breed to another: big shows and popular breeds are scheduled more classes than others. At the show I judged there were 13 classes for each sex, with eligibility based on age or previous wins: Minor Puppy (6-9 months), Puppy (6-12 months), Junior (6-18 months), Yearling, Maiden, Novice, Graduate, Post Graduate, Mid Limit, Limit, Open, Veteran and Special Veteran. Dogs are often entered in more than one class; a young puppy with no previous wins could at least theoretically be entered in all the classes for its sex, but as it matures and achieves a show record it will be eligible for just a few classes: adult CC winners can compete only in Limit and Open, adult champions only in Open. There is no separate champion class, so to win the three CCs required for a champion title an up-and-coming dog must defeat the current top dogs of the same sex in its breed. (An inexact but useful parallel would be for an American dog to finish by winning three 5-point majors, all with BOB or BOS over specials.)

Once Best of Sex (with or without a CC) has been awarded, a Reserve has to be determined, in the same manner as Reserve Winners at an AKC show. After a best dog and a best bitch have been declared the two compete for Best of Breed. Entries are often such that a separate judge for each sex is required; the two judges then determine BOB jointly, and if they cannot agree a predetermined referee is called in.

When awarding the CC, Reserve CC or Best of Sex, Reserve Best of Sex and Best of Breed cards, “it is recommended that the card be handed to the winning exhibitor as the award is declared.” The card should then be handed back to be completed, signed by the judge and then given back to the exhibitor. Only the judge is permitted to fill in the details of the exhibits on the award cards. It felt odd to me to write out the name of the winning exhibit and the owner’s name on the CC and Reserve CC, but that’s the way it’s done.

Oral critiques or a commentary by the judge are not permitted. (This is different from the U.S., where it is possible — although admittedly rare — for a club to get AKC permission for the judge to offer oral critiques after each class.) However, notes on the dogs placed first and second should be taken following the judging of each class; many judges use a tape recorder. Written critiques on the first two placings must be completed after the show and sent to the U.K. dog press — the weekly Dog World and Our Dogs — and, in some instances when judging a breed club show, also to the club secretary. This used to be voluntary but is now a requirement; judges have been disciplined for not submitting critiques. The publications provide self-addressed envelopes to each judge at the show.

The show I judged was the Saluki or Gazelle Hound Club championship show, part of the Saluki Festival and held on Sept. 6 in Loseley Park, a beautiful venue with acres of lush grass and the historic mansion — still inhabited by the Molyneux family since the 1600s — in the background. Perhaps it was thanks to the Saluki connections with Richmond championship show the next day that we got such a wonderful ring: large, tent-covered, with open sides, and with the typically immaculate English lawn. The hospitality was superb, the trophies amazing, a bottle of wine was given to a random entry in each class, and reportedly more than 200 foreign visitors — many from the U.S., Australia, Asia and of course Europe and Scandinavia — were attending, a few of them even showing dogs. Other attractions during the week included a breed symposium, the opening of a Saluki art exhibition at the Kennel Club, a gala dinner and a lure-coursing event.

The day started with a parade of titled Salukis accompanying an Arabian horse and handler in native costume all the way from Loseley Hall on to the showgrounds, a stylish touch which allowed for wonderful photo opportunities. The catalog listed 184 dogs, quite a few of which made multiple entries. Keith Allan judged the dog classes first, and I was invited to watch: the British are a lot more casual (or just more mature?) than we are when it comes to contact between exhibitors and judges outside the ring, and they are also far less concerned about club officers showing.

Keith's black and tan dog CC winner looked impressive from ringside, and although frankly I didn't think the quality in general was as high as when I last judged this show many years ago, I had some lovely bitches. The Open Bitch class consisted of 14 exhibits, almost all of which were champions and had to be seriously considered. Some of those that looked most attractive standing wouldn't move; although handling and presentation generally was not that different from what we are used to in the U.S., few of the dogs showed with anything like the enthusiasm we see these days, and it's difficult to assess movement when the dog almost appears to walk backwards. My choice was a very feminine, balanced reddish cream with black fringes, Glenoak Izadi, who won her second CC that day. She was lovely and will no doubt be "made up" (as the term goes) soon, but I readily agreed that the dog was a worthy Best of Breed. He turned out to be Ch. Nefisa Baaz of Rhazias, a well-known Group winner with BOB at Crufts to his credit, sired by the U.S. import Ch. Timaru Valkyrie of Jazirat. Best Puppy was the cream bitch Ulmarra Shaquira, of all Australian breeding, and best Veteran was another cream bitch, Sedeki Nemune, whose late breeder Don Wieden used to live in the U.S.

The following day I was free to watch at Richmond championship show. (I had been invited to judge Finnish Spitz with CCs, but since I have no real qualifications to do so I felt it was best not to accept; I doubt the KC would have approved anyway.) Almost 10,000 dogs were entered, an almost unimaginable figure to us in America but pretty mainstream in England, where dog shows are much more of a regular hobby than they are here. The whole atmosphere is much more low-key and laid back, and it's easy to see that people go to dog shows just to have a good time and not so much for the ratings. I was not able to stay and watch Best in Show, but I saw the winner both in the breed ring and in the Group: the black and tan Afghan Hound Ch. Saxonmill Rum Tum Rio. His breeder/owner-handler Roberta Hall is, as Simon Parsons points out in his column in this issue, one of Britain's top "small" breeders, and it was great to see one of this category triumph at the top level. We have breeders like that in the U.S., too, but do they ever win Best in Show? Roberta writes that "...the win last Sunday was, for me as a small breeder, the culmination of 40 years dedication to the breed... I thought it also a win for the smaller breeder/owner-handler and hope that it may give others, similar to myself, a bit of heart..."

Australia
Results by Barbara Killworth

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find shows where the Siberian Husky, Gr. Ch. PVT STK's Fire In The Sky (imp. U.S.), is not winning Best in Show. I do not want those overseas thinking that we have no other dogs winning in Australia, but 'Freddy' has reportedly won 142 Best in Shows now, which is advertised as a world record for the breed and may be an all-time record for any dog in Australia, although official records are not available.

As mentioned earlier in Dogs in Review, the Siberian Husky was bred in the U.S. by S. and P. Wells. He is owned by Cheryl LeCourt's Suthanlite kennel in Brisbane but often shown in Sydney by handler Simon Briggs.

However, at the Nor-West Canine Club, held at Castle Hill outside Sydney on Aug. 25, General Specials judge Peter Warby (NSW) awarded BIS to a Cairn Terrier, Ch. Joymont Gold Nugget, born in Australia from Australian parents. Runner-Up BIS was the Great Dane Ch. Amasa Commanche Gold, sired from artificial insemination by Am. Ch. Lagaradas Aspen Gold. Best Puppy in Show was a French Bulldog, Pendragen Elifor Leather, sired by the Norwegian import Shi-Fra-Sas The Viking Hanahaus.

On Sept. 7, the Dogs NSW Public Relations held a special holiday show in Sydney. With a public holiday being declared in the metropolitan area due to the APEC conference, which attracted many world leaders including President Bush, the public relations committee decided to take advantage of the opportunity for an extra show: the whole of the city was in lockdown mode, so what better time to hold a dog show?

General Specials were judged by Bob Curtis (NSW); the entry of 850 was quite good considering that this was a mid-week show and a public holiday was only observed in what was classed as the metropolitan area, with others still having to work. BIS was the Siberian Husky again, with Runner-up BIS going to the English Setter, Gr. Ch. Tarquin Once Is Not Enough, sired by the U.S. import Aust. and Am. Ch. Trailstars Timbertrail Titan. Best Puppy in Show was the Labrador Retriever, Driftway Silver Fern, bred and owned by Guy Spagnolo. Interestingly, both Bob Curtis and Guy Spagnolo are scheduled to judge at Westminster in 2008.

Europe
Report by Karl Donvil

The show in the Neckerhall at Mechelen in Belgium on Aug. 19 grants international awards (CACIB) and has a lot of advantages: the hall is huge, bright and spacious, there are good parking facilities and easy access. Mechelen is close to Holland and not far from either France or Germany.

Seventeen judges were invited, of which nine were Belgians and the rest came from other countries. A judge should on the average have 70-80 dogs to judge per day, or around 150 dogs over a weekend, to be cost-effective, especially if they come from abroad. It seems that a lot can still be done to achieve this goal here. The show was well organized, with lots of trade stands, a nice main ring, and plenty of space.

Among the judges were Antonio Rojo Fajardo from Spain, Seamus Oates from Ireland, Bas Bosch from The Netherlands and Eva Mjelde from Norway. Robert Pollet from Belgium was granted the honor of judging BIS and chose the Whippet, Fiefourniek's Vacation in Paris, owned by Leif and Liese-Lotte Knudsen from Denmark. Runner-up BIS was the famous Yorkshire Terrier, Ch. Qoccle's Oliver Lightsome, owned by Mrs. Pollini from Italy. All the Group winners on Saturday came back on Sunday for Best in Show and all were present. Not only the quality of these winners was outstanding, but the quality of the dogs overall was very good.

I hope that these Danish and Italian wins will bring a massive number of entries for this show next year on Aug. 23-24. Foreign visitors could combine the show with a holiday in Belgium, as Mechelen has a lot to offer and is only minutes away from Brussels and Antwerp. For more information on the show visit <http://www.kvsr.be>.

At Leuven a few weeks before Mechelen dogs from 11 countries were present, including two from the Ukraine and two from the U.S. At this show, puppies under 6 months of age can now be entered in the Baby class, good training for a future show career, although Baby puppies cannot compete for the CAC award.

There was only one judge from Belgium at this show; the 10 other judges represented eight other European nationalities, including Zsusanna Balogh and Laszlo Erdös from Hungary, Christine Rosier, Barbara Muller and Lisbeth Mach from Switzerland, Jaromir Dostal from the Czech Republic, Dorota Witkowska from Poland, Hans van den Berg from Holland, Paul Jentgen from Luxemburg, and Wilfried Peper from Germany.

On Saturday, Jaromir Dostal chose the Best of Day. His winner was the Weimaraner Ch. Unity Grey Classic's Double Trouble, owned by Lenaerts-Pilatus from Belgium. Laszlo Erdös selected the Best of Sunday and awarded the top spot to the Beagle Ch. Florreke Lighthouse Family, bred and owned by Abrams-Dielens, also from Belgium. Wilfried Peper was given the honor of picking the ultimate winner, and he finally selected the Weimaraner as Best in Show.