

## Judge's Perspective

**Education for Judges: Aspiring judges must learn to separate fact from opinion when learning from mentors.**

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For many years, aspiring conformation judges were given the opportunity to stand in a show ring and observe an experienced judge evaluate a breed. It was a wonderful opportunity to ask the judge questions and see what one might expect to actually find in the ring, as opposed to what one would like to find.

The American Kennel Club decided that in-ring mentoring would cease on Jan. 1, 2007. Instead, aspiring judges now observe from outside the ring with mentors appointed by the various breed parent clubs, or by other longtime breeders and exhibitors (if club-designated mentors are not available).

I recently had the opportunity to witness an excellent example of how ringside mentoring and education could be effectively accomplished. It stood in marked contrast to a number of such events I have participated in that did not accomplish the mentoring system's intended purpose.

### Mentoring the right way

The occasion I found so valuable was the Miniature Pinscher Club of America's National Specialty in Oklahoma City, held May 12 to 15, 2008. The entry was large (207 dogs all together, with 54 in the Best of Breed Class) and the quality was high.

What particularly stood out was the well-thought-out plan the Judges Education Committee, which organizes events that educate judges on type requirements, had outlined. The educational seminar, the handouts, the special hands-on portion of the event (in which aspiring judges evaluate selected dogs) and the up-close special seating section for judges resulted in time well spent and the feeling of a mission accomplished. We came to learn, and learn we did!

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