

Championship Show Attracts 2,500 Dogs

Event is one of the biggest of the year for the American Kennel Club.

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Credit: American Kennel Club About 2,500 dogs representing over a dozen countries participated in the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship during the weekend of Dec. 2 and 3, 2006, at the Long Beach Convention Center and Arena in Long Beach, Calif.

The event, sort of an Olympics for dogs – albeit with a financial incentive for the owners – was televised live for the third consecutive year in its six-year history. Animal Planet and Discovery Channel both broadcast the international event both nights. A portion of this year's show was aired live on the East Coast from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday and Sunday nights, and on the West Coast on a three-hour delay. The show will also be rebroadcast multiple times in the coming weeks.

But the televised portion was only a sliver of the actual proceedings, which stretched to roughly 24 hours over the course of two days. In addition to the televised competition, there were numerous other activities, most notably the family-friendly "meet the breeds" booths.

At the informational booths, attendees could see and interact with dozens of dog breeds, from Dalmatians to Giant Schnauzers, from Borzoi to Irish Wolfhounds. Well-behaved dogs were available for petting, photographs, and even handshakes. Breeders stood ready to answer questions and hand out informational brochures about their favorite breeds.

Also among the events were live demonstrations of sheep and duck herding, Frisbee catching and other activities. Separate competitions were held in the categories of agility, obedience and conformation.

In total, about 2,500 dogs in every American Kennel Club-recognized breed and variety – including 116 competitors from foreign registries representing 16 countries – competed for a combined \$225,000 – the most prize money of any dog show in the world, according to the AKC.

At the end of the weekend, the winner of the title Best in Show was English Springer Spaniel Ch. Felicity's Diamond Jim of Fairfax Station, Va., handled by Kellie L. Fitzgerald, owned by Mr. & Mrs. Allen Patton, R. Dehmel and D. Hadsall, and known to his friends as "James."

Earning a \$50,000 cash prize and the title of AKC/Eukanuba National Champion, James was crowned the nation's top dog at the conclusion of the two-day conformation competition.

"Millions of dog lovers around the world witnessed history tonight when James the English Springer Spaniel was crowned the AKC/Eukanuba National Champion," AKC Chairman Ron Menaker said in a statement after the show. "We welcome James and his proud owners to this elite group of winners."

To find out what dogs won the Group and other conformation awards, [click here](#).

For information about the agility and obedience winners, [click here](#).

To learn more about the American Kennel Club, visit www.akc.org.