

Scottish Terrier Wins Best in Show at Westminster

Sadie the Scottie sailed through competition to capture Best in Show in the country's main event.

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Hound Group winner,
Whippet Ch. Starline's Chanel
Photographs by Mary Bloom

The long-standing traditions that are "Westminster" shine through every year at Madison Square Garden as surely as the monumental silver trophies that are presented to the evening's Best in Show winner. Unlike the winner of any other American dog show, the victor of the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show instantly makes history books, news reports and the TV morning shows.

Day One

Glitz, glamour and purple neon announced to the sold-out opening night crowd at Madison Square Garden Monday night that the 134th Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, America's most prestigious dog show, is in full swing.

Monday evening's proceedings began with judge W. Everett Dean, Jr., of Richmond, Va., presiding over a beautiful Hound Group. From Afghan Hound to Whippet, this is the most varied of all the groups with elegant sighthounds and "talkative" foxhounds.

During a commercial break, the Greyhound "Era", Ch. Grandcru Clos Erasmus, next dog on deck, entertained a delighted audience with her handler's tricks, leaping for liver treats, barking on command, and instantly became an audience favorite.

Among the line-up were many great dogs with interesting story lines. Harrier Ch. Downhome Family Tradition, the No. 1 dog of his breed of all time, handled by Kim Pastella-Calvacca, came out of retirement for the weekend, perhaps hoping to ignite some of the excitement that launched then-10-year-old Sussex Spaniel "Stump" to his Best in Show win last year.

Dean pulled a short list of contenders, consisting of the Basset, 15-inch Beagle, Wirehaired Dachshund, Greyhound, PBGV, Ridgeback, Deerhound and Whippet.

Going around the ring in the finals, the Wirehaired Dachshund ignited the Garden audience to the loudest crescendo of cheering since the Knicks were playing well here. And that's been a while. Nonetheless, Dean was unimpressed, and the Whippet Ch. Starline's Chanel sailed to the head of the line, followed by the Greyhound, Scottish Deerhound bitch Ch. Foxcliffe Hickory Wind, and the seven-year-old Australian-imported PBGV dog Ch. Rokeena Carte Blanche.

Toy Group winner, Toy Poodle

Ch. Smash JP Moon Walk Judging the Toy Group was Shirley D. Limoges, from Ottawa, Canada, breeder of champion Pugs and Cairn Terriers for many decades.

Twenty-three breeds or varieties compete for the Toy Group victory. Unlike the Hound Group, there's no confusion as to how this colorful line-up of miniature overachievers have been labeled "Toy."

The No. 1 Non-Sporting Dog of 2009, Ch. Smash JP Moon Walk, appeared in the Toy Group ring with another Westminster regular, Kaz Hosaka, surely one of the world's most celebrated Toy Poodle handlers. Kaz worked as an apprentice under the famed Poodle breeder and all-breed judge Anne Rogers Clark, the breeder of Ch. Surrey Spice Girl, the Westminster 2002 Best in Show winner.

But brace yourselves: The Pomeranian, Pug and Papillon breed winners, all judged by high-profile Andrew Brace of Wales, were surprises to seasoned dog-show exhibitors, as the No. 1 dogs in each of those breeds were defeated at the breed level. Westminster always has its fair share of upsets and on Monday night the majority of these occurred in the Toy Group.

Limoges pulled the following finalists: the Brussels Griffon, Chinese Crested, Italian Greyhound, Maltese, Papillon, Pekingese, Toy Poodle, and Shih Tzu.

No surprises here: the Toy Poodle triumphed, handled by the great Poodle handler Kaz, followed by David Fitzpatrick's Pekingese, Shih Tzu Ch. Hallmark Jolei Austin Powers and Papillon Ch. Forevr Errol Flynn, handled by Jane Alston-Myers.

Non-Sporting Group winner, French Bulldog Ch. Robobull Fabelhaft Im On Fire Shimmering in lovely Westminster purple, Dorothy Dalton, from Stuart, Fla., moved gracefully into the center ring on towering taupe heels. There's no doubt that this classy lady is a Poodle breeder! Dalton had the honor of judging a splendid Non-Sporting Group. This fascinating fraternity of canines appears to have virtually nothing in common other than their collective desire to win Group One. A closer look reveals that this Group is united by personality, audience appeal, and no small degree of showmanship. Furthermore, 75 percent of the dogs possess high-maintenance coats. From ringside, we counted 13 grooming brushes out of 18 dogs!

Certainly one of the rotunda's faves was the Bulldog, not coincidentally 2009's top Non-Sporting Dog, owned by three resident New Yorkers! The other Bulldog, the Frenchie, also captured the audience's heart, by poking out his tongue for his closeup on the big screen over the center ring.

Dalton pulled audience favorite Bulldog, the Shar-Pei, Dalmatian, Frenchie, Lhasa, both Poodles and the Schipperke. Unexpectedly, this Poodle lady left the Poodles mainly in the dust. Dalton's Group One was none other than the dark brindle French Bulldog Ch. Robobull Fabelhaft Im On Fire as Group One, followed by Chinese Shar-Pei Ch. Chaoyang Chick Magnet At Asia, Bulldog Ch. Kepley's Showbiz Razzle Dazzle and black Miniature Poodle Ch. Splash Di Caprio.

In 134 years, the Frenchie has placed in the Group at Westminster 21 times but this is the first time the breed has won it. C'est magnifique!

The final Group of the night, the Herding Group, was judged by Linda More, long-time Shetland Sheepdog breeder from Cary, N.C.

Herding Group winner, Puli
Ch. Cordmaker Field of Dreams Two new breeds entered the Herding Group this year, the Pyrenean Shepherd and the Norwegian Buhund, and both winners made history by virtue of being the first Best of Breed winners at Westminster. From the 17 Pyrenean Shepherds entered, breed judge Lynette Saltzman chose Ch. Burgerhaus Grand Prix RN, and from four Norwegian Buhunds, she chose Ch. Norskwynd D'Lola Of Trollheimen.

Ch. Cordmaker Field of Dreams, last year's Group One winner, returned to this year's Group, handled by Linda Pitts. This black Puli was also the top Herding Dog of 2009, breaking the record of his father, Ch. Cordmaker Mississippi Mud, as the top-winning Puli in breed history.

Making Judge More's cut were the Bearded Collie, Belgian Sheepdog, Bouvier, Rough Collie, Shepherd, Old English, Puli, and Sheltie.

Repeating his Group First win from 2009, the Puli pulled to the front of the pack, followed by Belgian Sheepdog Ch. Uri De Beauvoir, Bearded Collie Ch. Tolkien Raintree Mister Baggins, and the German Shepherd.

We look forward to Tuesday night's judging of the Sporting, Working and Terrier Groups, and to seeing how the Whippet, Toy Poodle, French Bulldog and Puli go head to head with three more great contenders.

Sporting Group winner, Brittany
Ch. Willowick Talltean

Day Two

The evening began with the Sporting breeds powering into the big ring, to be evaluated by judge Dr. Donald Sturz, Jr., of Centerport, N.Y.

Considering that two of the nation's most popular breeds are retrievers, there's little wonder that the crowd at Madison Square Garden cheer like mad for their favorite family dogs, the Labrador and Golden Retrievers. This year Golden Retrievers were represented by a spectacular bitch – in fact, the top-winning Golden Retriever bitch of all time. Ch. Toasty's Treasure Island cast her spell on the full house at the Garden and will retire from her illustrious show career after the 2010 competition. Ch. Beechcroft Study's Top Secret, a black Labrador Retriever dog, also thrilled the gallery.

A new breed in this year's Sporting Group was the Irish Red and White Setter. The first Best of Breed at the Garden went to Ch. Shireoak Caniscaeli Windsong, handled by Greg Meyers.

Making his final cuts, Dr. Sturz pulled the Brittany, German Wirehaired Pointer, Golden, Lab, Gordon Setter, black Cocker Spaniel, Irish Water Spaniel and Wirehaired Pointing Griffon. Thunderous applause greeted most of these finalists, including the handsome Griffon.

Working Group winner, Doberman Pinscher Ch. Allure Blazing Star AlisatonThe audience's shouts of "Gol-den! Gol-den!" did not sway the judge's final decision. The unexpected selection of a long shot in this very competitive Group left these press-box pundits asking ourselves, "Who's that girl?!" She turned out to be the Brittany, Ch. Willowick Talltean.

Only one Brittany has ever won the Sporting Group at Westminster before: Ch. Magic Sir-Ly You Jest, "Jester," who pulled this feat off twice, in 2002 and 2003.

Mrs. Kimberly Meredith-Cavanna, a long-time successful Alaskan Malamute breeder from Pleasant Hill, Calif., enjoyed the honor of judging the Working dogs, her first Group assignment at the Garden.

A crowd and insider favorite was Boxer bitch Ch. Winfall Brookwood Styled Dream, handled by Diego Fernando Garcia, who won Group Two at last year's WKC and has won many BIS since last February.

The audience at the Garden is consistently a sucker for a cute face, and Tuesday evening's irresistible mug belonged to Dogue de Bordeaux Ch. Rhodonite Rolex Emberez. This giant red mastiff breed was an unlikely star in a Hollywood movie, "Turner and Hooch."

Judge Cavanna selected the following champions for her short list: Akita, Alaskan Malamute, Boxer, Doberman, Kuvasz, Portuguese Water Dog, Rottweiler, Siberian Husky and Tibetan Mastiff. Audience applause raised the roof when the magnificent Doberman bitch Ch. Allure Blazing Star Alisaton – 2009's top Working dog and No. 2 dog all breeds – floated around the big ring.

Cavanna authoritatively pulled her final four: the Doberman, Boxer, Portuguese Water Dog Ch. Aviators Luck Be A Lady and Alaskan Malamute Ch. Sno Klassic Play The Game.

Superb show dogs with impressive records, Dobermans have claimed Group Firsts 12 times at Westminster, the most recent (before this year) in 2000 when Ch. Ravenswood Southern Cross carried home the prize.

The final Group to be judged, the Terriers, was officiated by Loraine Boutwell of Kansas City, Mo., a versatile multi-Group judge whose career in dogs spans more than half a century.

Terrier Group winner, Scottish Terrier

Ch. Roundtown Mercedes Of Maryscot Historically the Terrier Group is the one to beat, and this year was predicted to be no different. The country's top dog, Scottish Terrier Ch. Roundtown Mercedes Of Maryscot was the favored daughter, and last year's Group First winner.

"Sadie" sailed through her Breed judging under William Potter II in one of the day's most-watched rings.

Charming the audience was the most unlikely of all Terrier breeds, the Glen of Imaal Terrier, a truly typical working dog with a rough-and-tumble appearance. Ch. Coleraine's Mandalay Royalty, owner-handled by Broadway lyricist and Barry

Manilow's musical partner Bruce Sussman, stole the audience's heart by rooting around the green carpet for dropped liver crumbs.

Topping the Glen's antics, Miniature Bull Terrier Ch. Amchara Roc Ur World and handler Jeff Lawrence entertained the room with some unplanned "canine freestyle." Perfectly in tune with the breed's character – true clowns!

Judge Boutwell's short list of winners included the Airedale, Border, Smooth Fox, Norwich, Scottie, Sealyham and Westie. It was Sadie's night to repeat her Group One win, followed by the Smooth Fox, Norwich Ch. Skyscot's Poker Chip, handled by Brenda Lee Combs, and Airedale Ch. Stirling Cool Hand Luke, handled by Ernesto Lara.

We've seen Best in Show competitions all over the United States, England, and Europe, but we still believe that Madison Square Garden is without a doubt the best arena in which to watch Group judging. The grand finale begins in a darkened center ring with spotlights bouncing and following each of the seven contenders as they enter the big ring.

Tuesday night they were: Brittany (Sporting), Whippet (Hound), Doberman Pinscher (Working), Scottish Terrier (Terrier), Toy Poodle (Toy), French Bulldog (Non-Sporting), and Puli (Herding).

The Best in Show judge, Elliott Weiss, is a native New Yorker who has attended Westminster for decades and won the Group here as a professional handler in 1984 with Irish Setter Ch. Meadowlark's Anticipation. He currently resides in Eagle, Idaho.

The Doberman's performance for the gallery sparked wild applause from the audience; the Toy Poodle was magical as always and watched his handler with keen anticipation; the Scottie performed beautifully for her handler; and the ever-popular Frenchie lit up many hearts and eyes.

A judge is charged to find the best dog on the day, in his opinion, and every one of these seven fabulous dogs could have walked away with the silver trophies – all are consummate show dogs and multi-BIS winners.

Judge Weiss signed the book and was accompanied to the center ring by the Westminster brass to the stomping and clapping of a standing audience. The Scottish Terrier!

Sadie's victory marks the eighth time a Scottie has won this most prestigious show and a perfect note on which to retire to a promising career as a mother and cherished companion. Handler Gabriel Rangel was visibly moved as he and Sadie were swarmed by photographers, reporters, and Gabe's jubilant wife, Ivonne.

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