

Reality' Dog Shows on TV

A judge feels that media attention influences decisions in the ring.

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I was judging a show in California and noticed that when the dogs of one particular breed were gathered a TV camera and crew had shown up ringside. I thought it was the local TV affiliate visiting the dog show, which happens fairly regularly when a club charges admission and wants to increase their general public gate. We do it too, and hope that a TV crew will show up certainly free publicity is appreciated.

When it came to the time the breed was to be judged it became obvious that this was more than a local TV crew visiting the dog show something else was happening. It crossed my mind that perhaps a TV personality was showing his own dog at the local show. The man who appeared to be the exhibitor of interest walked into the ring and won first place in his class, and then Winners Dog perhaps for a point, I'm not sure. This breed was my last breed before lunch, so as I was leaving the ring I was asked by one of the TV crew members if I would submit to a brief interview. Curious, I said yes. Well, it turns out it was the cable channel named Bravo, and they are doing a new kind of reality show, following ordinary exhibitors and their quest to make their dog a champion.

I was then asked some questions which were the usual rather dumb questions people outside the sport ask us dog people. "What did you think of the quality of the entry?" "What do you think of the dog we are following?" "What do you think of his chances of getting to your ring in Philadelphia next week?" "Huh?" says me, "Philadelphia?" We are, after all, I'm thinking, talking about a class dog in California, and I am judging only Best in Show the following Saturday in Philadelphia. So I said, "I have no idea what his chances are. I have no idea who is judging this breed next week, nor what the competition might be," and with that I thought it best to wrap up this interview and go to lunch.

The next day they were there again and my husband, Roy, judged the breed in question, and the dog garnered another point. Roy sensibly declined to be interviewed, as clearly I should have done the previous day.

So Saturday night after Best in Show in Philadelphia, I was seated at dinner with a gentleman from the American Kennel Club. He asked me if I'd seen the Bravo TV crew at the show that day and I said no, I hadn't, but then I recounted my story from the weekend before. I also noted that said dog had not managed to find himself in my Best in Show ring actually another nice one of the same breed, a bitch, had instead. Apparently Bravo was following another dog a class dog of a different breed which will remain nameless, who'd won the breed out of the classes, and I was asked by the gentleman from the AKC, "Do you think this special attention could influence judging?" My answer was yes, unfortunately, I do think this special attention at a dog show can influence judging.