

## English Springer Spaniel Wins Westminster

**James competed against six other exceptional show dogs for America's most prestigious title.**

*Allan Reznik and Susan Chaney*

The lights dimmed, and the seven Group winners entered the ring one at a time under a spotlight to herald the judging of Best in Show.

Judge Robert Indeglia proceeded to examine each of the seven finalists, standing still and on the move. The full house at Madison Square Garden was encouraged to applaud and cheer on their favorites.

From this stellar lineup of top-winning dogs, Indeglia chose English Springer Spaniel James, more formally known as Ch. Felicity's Diamond Jim, as Best in Show. Nearly 7, James is celebrating a phenomenal 2006. He ended the year as No. 2 dog all breeds, and in early December won the AKC/Eukanuba Championship. James' handler, Kellie Fitzgerald, is recognized as a Springer specialist; James is the second Springer she's guided to a Westminster Best in Show. In 2000 she took top honors at the Garden with Samantha.

Here's a run-down of key information from the two-day event, Feb. 12 and 13, 2007.

### Day One

Handler Laurie Jordan-Fenner puts Akita Ch. Redwitch Reason To Believe through her paces before the history-making dog took the Working Group First at Monday evening's competition. © Mary Bloom

With an impatient – or excited – dog joining in the singing of the national anthem, it was clear the time had arrived to launch the judging of the first four groups of the 131st annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show on the evening of Monday, Feb. 12, 2007.

Working dogs were the first to be judged with Jean Fournier doing the honors. Entering the ring in New York's Madison Square Garden were well-known veteran campaigners, as well as upstarts who had defeated the No. 1 dogs in their respective breeds earlier in the day. There are always surprises at Westminster's breed-level competition when the country's top contenders meet head to head.

Working Group First went to the Akita, Ch. Redwitch Reason To Believe, a powerful mover, who has become the top-winning female in the breed's history under the able handling of Laurie Jordan-Fenner. Another Spitz breed, the Alaskan Malamute Ch. Nanuke's Snoklassic No Boundaries, placed second. Ch. Pouch Cove's Head Of State, a son of Newfoundland Josh, Westminster's 2004 Best in Show winner, followed his father's winning ways, taking third place in this competitive group. Rounding out the Working Group winners was a Kuvasz, Ch. Szumeria's Wildwood Penny From Heaven RN, a rare Hungarian flock guardian breed.

Comedian Bill Cosby's Dandie Dinmont Terrier Harry won the Westminster Dog Show Terrier Group Monday night, paving the way for a possible Best in Show win on Tuesday. © Mary Bloom

Judging was halted for a moment of silence to honor the memory of one of America's most distinguished figures in the dog world – all-breed judge Anne Rogers Clark who passed away on Dec. 20, 2006. Mrs. Clark had been assigned to judge the Terrier Group. With her passing, Dr. Richard Meen of Canada was invited to step in.

This group included some of the country's hottest contenders, among them the No. 1 dog all breeds for 2006, Dandie Dinmont Terrier Ch. Hobergays Fineus Fogg, an Australian import co-owned by entertainer Bill Cosby, Dr. Emma Greenway, and Capt. Jean Heath. Harry sparkled for his handler Bill McFadden, and caught Dr. Meen's eye for top terrier honors. The international flavor continued with Second going to the South American-born Smooth Fox Terrier, Ch. Torquay S Demetrio. The big-winning Sealyham Terrier Ch. Stonebroke Right On The Money claimed Group Third, with Fourth place going to the red Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Ch. Bullseye American Idol.

This gloriously coated white Standard Poodle, Ch. Brighton Minimoto, won the Sporting Group Monday evening. © Mary Bloom

Another distinguished Canadian judge, R. William Taylor, had the privilege of assessing the Toy Group. Although small in stature, the Toy Group traditionally includes some of the biggest winners on the dog show circuit. The dynamic white Toy Poodle, Ch. Smash JP Win a Victory, gave her all for handler Kaz Hosaka and was rewarded with the Group First. Vicki hails from Japan. Next in Judge Taylor's lineup was Ch. Pequest Persuasive, a Pekingese. Taking third place was Pug, Ch. Sugarbear Flamingstar O'Harada, a real crowd-pleaser based on audience applause. The final nod went to Brussels Griffon Ch. Knolland Miss Suzy.

With the live telecast scheduled to end at 11 p.m., the pressure was on Richard Bauer to judge the Non-Sporting Group (18 breeds) in just 30 minutes. His ultimate victor was Ch. Brighton Minimoto, a gloriously coated white Standard Poodle, handled by Christian Manelopoulos. Classic Bulldog Ch. Cherokee Legend Rock rolled into second place behind the Poodle. Last year's Non-Sporting Group winner, Ch. Merry Go Round Mach Ten, a Dalmatian, came in third this year. The final winner of the evening was Chinese Shar-Pei Ch. Asias Excalibur Whiplash.

## Day Two

With a light snowfall dusting the city, dog fanciers made their way to Madison Square Garden Tuesday evening for a second night of Group judging and the ultimate selection of Best in Show at the 131st annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

When Ch. Smash JP Win a Victory enters the Best in Show ring Tuesday evening, she'll be just the third Toy Poodle to do so in the history of the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. © Mary Bloom The Sporting Group was the first of the evening to be judged, by Jeannette McGinnis. This Group is always popular with spectators, containing as it does such ever-popular breeds as the Labrador and Golden Retrievers, Cocker Spaniels, and the Irish Setter. Triumphant in this competitive Group was English Springer Spaniel James, more formally known as Ch. Felicity's Diamond Jim, and ably handled as always by Kellie Fitzgerald. Amid thunderous applause, Vizsla Ch. Renaissance Lord Of Th'Dance captured the second spot. Setters were particularly strong in this Group with two of them figuring in the placements: English Setter Ch. Stagedoor Rock It Man, third, and the nearly 9-year-old Irish Setter Ch. Saxony's Snow In August, fourth.

Hound Group Judge Michael Dougherty pulled a selection of large and small breeds for his final lineup. Leading the pack was the engaging Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen Ch. Celestial Cj's Jolly Fairchild, handled by Greg Strong. Fairchild is the consummate show dog with a tail that never stops wagging and an infectious bark that prompts spectators to respond with exuberant applause. The glamorous cream-colored Saluki Ch. Shahtani Tropical Breeze wafted into second place. Third place went to last year's Group First winner, the Scottish Deerhound Ch. Thistle Glen Margot. The pendulum swung back to small hounds for Group Fourth with the Miniature Wirehaired Dachshund Ch. Scoshire Famous Amos, the lone male in this quality quartet.

The last Group of the night was the Herding dogs, judged by Eric Ringle. This is another popular Group with the crowds who love their German Shepherds, Collies, Shelties and Corgis. For his first place winner, Judge Ringle pointed to the impressive Bouvier des Flandres Ch. Ace's Indelible Mark HT, handled by Larry Fenner. Taking the second spot was German Shepherd Ch. Kaleefs Geneva Aeval-Achtung. A rollicking Bearded Collie, Ch. Brigadoon It's All About You, bounced into third place. Rounding out the Group was Cardigan Welsh Corgi Ch. Kingsbury's I'm Harry P.

But the top dog of the night was of course the Springer Spaniel, James, whose silken coat, exuberant personality, and master handler Kellie Fitzgerald helped him to take the spotlight that night in Madison Square Garden.

As custom decrees, Kellie accompanied James to Sardi's restaurant where he dined on steak and greeted his fans, just a glimpse of the celebrity he will enjoy in the upcoming year.