

Back To The Future

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I recently came across an article written some 25 years ago by the late Dr. E.S. Montgomery, well-known judge and terrier man. It occurred to me that what he wrote then still carries the same meaning today and therefore, it is worth repeating for those who might be new to the world of breeding, exhibiting and judging dogs.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Judging dogs or, for that matter, the judging of all classes of animals, is a matter of:

Studious approach to the anatomical structure of the animal to be judged.

Studious approach to the standard of perfection for the animal to be judged.

Keen observation that is learned by examination and re-examination of hundreds of animals and discussions of each animal with an experienced teacher—whether he be breeder, exhibitor or judge.

Balanced appraisal; first, of good points, then, of defects of the animals and how each affects the animal and whether the faults are transmittable.

The ceaseless study of type, conformation and balance to ensure close relationships between breed type, breed character and breed conformation in the exhibition ring and the work for which the breed was originally developed.

The final graduation to recognize quality in an animal.

Condition, immaculateness of presentation, trimming of coat, showmanship—how important are they? In the exhibition ring, all are assets, with showmanship the inestimable one.

A poorly conditioned dog, a thin dog, a dog with an untidy coat— these do and should penalize the dog, but not negate his winning if he has other guns with which to win. Type, soundness, balance, quality—these are the virtues that should outshine showmanship and condition and protect the dog and the bitch with the greater merit in the breed and for the breed, intrinsically, as well as under the skin, extrinsically. Beauty is only skin deep—I add—so is ugliness! But in dogs, beauty is only partially external; much beauty is under the skin— the bones, musculature, angulation of the joints, natural bodily outlines, the strength, the power, the temperament and the character.

Priceless as the glamour arising from ring presence and showmanship is, it must never dominate breed type, breed conformation and breed character! Man-made qualities, however appealing, must never diminish the importance of type or render insignificant poorly made second thighs, weak hocks and wobbly rear ends. Pronounced turn of quarters is more important than clever handling that hurries a dog with great speed to disguise faults and weakness in hind action.

A lack of showmanship repels all too many judges. Likewise, ring showmanship lures equally too many judges. Both groups are wrong! Lack of showmanship should be penalized only when all other points of comparison to the standard of perfection are equal.

All-rounders, and I believe rightly so, judge more on soundness, ring presence and showmanship. The specialist judge, on the other hand, should adjudicate more on breed type, breed character, expression, quality of breed, character and breed characteristics.

— ESM

Wise words then, wise words now.

— Margaretta Wood, AKC Gazette Breed Columnist

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