

SATURDAY SWEEPSTAKES

Judge: Sherri Starbird

February 29, 2012

I was honored to have been asked to judge Sweeps at the recent Potomac Valley regional Specialty! Additionally, it was really fun, and many thanks to Debbie Reams, and the rest of the show committee, for the hospitality, and arrangements.

First, the Puppy Sweeps: As many may have guessed, I prefer to see the attributes of our dogs demonstrated by their natural movement. Overall, I think this is improving- or at least certainly seemed so in the dogs I saw on Feb. 18., especially when viewing the side gait. But then there were the fronts- many of them lovely when stacked , but problematic when moving. Of course they ARE puppies and lots of room for change in their growing...but they had to be compared on that day. So I picked what I thought showed the best head, substance, movement and fronts, (since there were fewer problematic rears) in each class. The difficulty of course, is that these things are not always on the same dog! When this happened, the fronts and movement trumped. Problem areas I saw were; some narrow heads and dogs lacking bone/substance, as well as loose, (and usually shallow) fronts, but there were just as many lovely puppies showing breed type- substance, bone, nice fronts, heads. A few placings could have been easily flipped, so close were the dogs in several cases. My picks for Best and Opposite were the two that I thought, did the best job of “summing it all up”.

Veteran Sweeps was a very gratifying, and poignant assignment. I don't think it is my imagination that the classes are getting bigger! It was gratifying to see the competition. And most of the veterans could still move well, even when showing some signs of arthritis. There was an 11.5 yr old cancer survivor who “does 2 miles several times a week”...which is pretty special. It is hard to put up a younger veteran when I want to honor the more venerable dogs by virtue of their longevity, but in the end, I used my default: form and function as described by movement. The 7-9 class of boys was (my notes say) “awesome” and Best Veteran from that class never put a foot down wrong. His competitor gave him a run for the money as both had lovely substance and type. In the bitch classes it was more of the same with substance and movement still evident, and especially so in the 7 to 9 class where BOS came from. The closest class was 9 to 11 bitches, where both still had amazingly lovely and correct movement, type and ABILITY! That decision was one of those “nit-picky” ones that settled on slightly more substance in the 1st place girl. This is the kind of “difficulty” we all want to see!

Thank you exhibitors, friends, show committee, for a lovely day (though I didn't know how to act with no dogs to ex, groom, or sleep with!)

Sherri Starbird
Peacefield Bernese Mountain Dogs
Dover Foxcroft, Maine