

CRUFTS 7/3/2020

HOVAWARTS

It is always a great pleasure and privilege to be invited to judge at Crufts, which is undoubtedly the greatest dog show in the world. I was particularly struck by the beautiful condition the exhibits were presented in this year, considering the awful weather conditions over the last few weeks. The current coronavirus scare meant that regular hand-cleaning was necessary, but it certainly wasn't because the dogs were dirty. Likewise, the temperaments of the whole entry were excellent, I cannot recall a single growl or even undue nervousness at all. The instruction for the exhibitors to show dentition, rather than for me to do it, came from the show management, and not from any anxiety I had. We were also instructed to look carefully for anything detrimental to the soundness, health and well being of the dogs, and I am pleased to report absolutely no concerns on that score.

It was, however, a real pity that we didn't get into the ring until half past three, and then were instructed to hurry to ensure our best-of-breed made it into the group. This happens more years than not and is most unfair to all the exhibitors who have paid more than good money to compete. However, I would like to thank my most efficient stewards, who got us through in time, if not comfort.

VETERAN DOG (1)

1) MURPHY'S IR.CH.CASTLEMARY DRUID

Five years ago, I awarded this wonderful dog reserve bd, just losing out on maturity to a big winner from France. No such concerns today. He is in his absolute pomp, majestic and flowing on the move, eating up the ring with power and grace. He is an extremely well-balanced dog, with a noble well-proportioned head, kind expression, well-laid shoulders, good bone strong legs, good ribbing, nice underline, good topline and tail carriage, powerful hindquarters used well, beautiful flowing coat, superbly handled, both here and in the group, but no dog is perfect, so perhaps I would like an extra centimetre of tail length. BD, BV, & BOB.

PUPPY DOG (2)

This was difficult, with two very contrasting puppies.

1) SHONE'S SAXON SYN TISWY vd ROMERWEIDE at ZWARTBOS

A big, well-grown b/g dog, coming up ten months, with a strong head, a little long and narrow at the moment, good bone, a powerful neck, good shoulders and the makings of a good depth of chest, good overall balance for such a big puppy. He took a bit of handling, but when he got going, he moved well although his topline isn't quite settled yet, and his tail needs to calm down a bit. A real prospect for the future. BP.

2) SPENCER'S DUXFORTIS HARRIS at HIGHTIMBERS

Giving away a couple of months to the winner, this b/g puppy is much more together, and compact. He has lovely overall balance, with a good head and kind expression, a good strong neck, a good front, shoulders laid back, good bone, strong hindquarters that he used well on the move. Again, his topline needs to settle, but his handler really brought the best out of him. If these two continue to develop on the right lines, the breed has much to look forward to.

JUNIOR DOG (0)

POST GRADUATE DOG (4,1abs)

Another close and difficult class

1) THOMPSON'S HIGHTIMBERS MASTER TICKETS

A well-grown b/g, just coming up two years old. He made a very nice picture, harmonious with good bone and a good coat. A noble head, with kind expression and the correct parallel planes, his shoulder placement is good, but his neck is perhaps a touch stuffy. Good legs and feet, and an excellent underline, he moved with purpose, keeping a good topline. A worthy RBD.

2) STEWART'S MICONA ECHO

The first of six siblings to show today, son of the bob, a blond dog nearing three years of age, and coming nicely to maturity. He has good bone, a well-laid shoulder, good ribbing and proper shading in his nice flowing coat. He is well-balanced, and moved accordingly. I just preferred the strength of head of the winner, but a close call.

3) TYREMAN & CHALLONER'S FARMWATCH SNOW SHADOW

Just turned two, this b/g male had a attractive outline, nicely balanced fore and aft, but i would like a little more width throughout, which hopefully will come as he has a good forechest and is well ribbed back. He moved well and kept his topline in the process. It will be interesting to see how he is in a year or two.

OPEN DOG (5, 2abs)

1) MURPHY'S MICONA FOXTROT

The second of the siblings, this b/g dog is a bit more compact and consequently mature-looking than his brother from the previous class. He is beautifully put together, with a nice head, pleasing expression, a strong neck leading into a reasonable shoulder and a good deep chest. He has good bone and feet, and moved with drive, keeping his topline well. Just a hint of pinning in on the day.

2) FOAKES' KANUKALOS RHAPSODY

Older by a couple of years than the winner, and now fully mature, this b/g male is a bigger and rangier style, but with similar quality. He has good bone, the head type I like, a strong neck, good depth of chest, nice shoulders, and a good balance to him front and back. He moved well, under complete control, but in the final analysis I just preferred the winner's tail carriage and expression.

3) ALLEN'S KANUKALOS ALLEGRO

Litter brother to second, and very much of a type with him. Another really nice, harmonious dog, with a good head, a well-laid shoulder, good bone, good overall length and good

movement. He has come on really well, but just lost out today on depth of chest to those ahead of him.

GOOD CITIZENS DOG SCHEME DOG (3, 1abs)

- 1) ALLEN'S KANUKALOS ALLEGRO
- 2) STEWART'S MICONA ECHO

Two super dogs, the placing reflects their relative maturity.

VETERAN BITCH (4,1abs)

In this breed, veteran is invariably a pleasure to see, as the dogs seem to have perpetual youth, almost as though there are ageing pictures in the attics of hovawart homes. This class was no exception.

- 1) STEWART'S IR.CH.FASSKOLEYS CARMEL MURPHY

An eleven-year-old b/g lady masquerading in a four-year-old body. No hint of age in her lovely head and kind expression, she has a graceful neck going into good shoulders, nice depth of chest, good muscling throughout and powerful drive on the move. The only concession to her age was a slight dip in topline when trotting.

- 2) MOONEY'S IR.CH.METSAVAHDIN ROBIN

Perhaps there is something in the Celtic air because three of the four veterans today are from Ireland and the fourth from the west coast of Scotland. Another bitch in tip-top condition, a youngster of eight and a bit. Smaller and more compact than the winner, but a really feminine girl with a beautiful head, good bone, nice shoulder placement and a deep chest. Well balanced throughout with a good rib cage. She was just showing a little stiffness in her hind movement.

- 3) WOLFE'S ZWARTBOS VENTNOR

Another good eight-year-old b/g bitch. Not quite the markings of the two ahead of her, but nevertheless another nicely balanced typical hovawart. She has a well-proportioned head with a kind eye, a good reach of neck, good shoulder placement and adequate bone. She just lost out today on power in her movement.

PUPPY BITCH (0)

JUNIOR BITCH (2, 1abs)

- 1) STEWART'S HERE I AM COVA KROLEWSKA KRAINIA

At fifteen months, this blonde girl is still very much the baby, but none the less she has all the makings of another really good one. The outline is good, with the right amount of balance fore and aft, and a frame to grow into. She has a sweet head and expression, good pigmentation and coat shading, and showed like an old hand. Nice,

flowing movement, but she needs to fill out all over. I will be very interested to see her in a year or two.

POSTGRADUATE BITCH (10, 1abs)

In our breed, such a large class is both a rarity and a pleasure, and I'm pleased to say the overall quality did not disappoint, with good ones going cardless in both the numerically big classes.

1) CAMPBELL'S MICONA JULIET

First of the four bitch siblings, again b/g, now really coming into full bloom. Nicely marked, she has correctly proportion head, strong but feminine, a good length of neck, well-laid shoulders, good bone, deep chest, good ribbing and powerful hindquarters, which she used to advantage on the move. I would perhaps like less prominent tail carriage, but well worthy of RBB.

2) SHONE'S ZWARTBOS MOONDANCE

Another coming into her own at coming up four, this black bitch is elegant, with a lovely overall shape and balance. Good pigment and a dark eye give a kind expression to a well-proportioned head. A good neck leads into well-placed shoulders and a deep chest. Good underline, and hindquarters that served her well in movement. Not quite the glamour of the winner.

3) MURPHY'S MICONA DELTA

Another of the siblings, b/g, she hasn't quite matured as much as her winning sister, and is a little slighter all round. Nevertheless, very much of a similar type, and an impressive mover, showing good power and a good topline well kept in motion. One still showing promise to come.
Three super bitches.

OPEN BITCH (10,2abs)

1) MOONEY'S IR.CH.MICONA SIERRA

The third of the sibling bitches, this b/g has been knocking on the door for a while now, with reserve bb both here and at the HCGB club show, but this was her day. A really typical bitch in top condition. Really harmonious, a lovely, feminine head, elegant neck, good shoulders, nice depth of chest, good legs, good underline and topline kept well in super flowing movement. Just a pity for her that her father was in such cracking form. BB.

2) MCLURE'S KANUKALOS BURLETTA

Another following siblings, two brothers having been in open dog. Very much cast in a similar mould, this b/g bitch has now come to her best. A very good head, with the

right proportions and planes leading via a strong neck into good shoulders with correct bone, giving firm legs and a good chest. A nice length of body, sloping croup affording good tail placement and carriage, and strong hindquarters make for a top class hovawart. She just lost out today from lack of "VA VA VOOM"

3) MURPY'S IR.CH. HAYAKLAUSE MOLLY

One I have admired on many occasions, she is another super bitch now five years old, but in prime form and condition. Typical head, and expression, feminine neck with well-laid shoulders. Correct bone for her size, with a good chest and both underline and topline, she moved with drive and purpose, but just lost out today in an excellent line-up on her slightly inaccurate front movement.

GOOD CITIZEN SCHEME BITCH (7)

- 1) MCLURE'S KANUKALOS BURLETTA
- 2) HEFFERNAN'S IR.CH.MICONA TANGO

The sixth sibling, VHC in the strong open bitch class. This b/g bitch is built on similar lines as her sisters, but not quite the substance or scope. She has a lovely head, and her overall shape and balance are good, and a good topline, but I would like a bit more drive in her movement.

3) CHALLENGOR'S ISALYNN v ELDERENS' HOF at FARMWATCH

Now five and a half, this blonde bitch has matured well, and her coat shading is now much more apparent. She was reserve in the large postgraduate class, she has good bone throughout, but has a slight roll to her gait which sadly spoils the effect of her movement.

JOHN SHARPE

JUDGE