

Crufts 2016 – Hovawarts

I would like to thank everyone who brought their dogs for my opinion, the 51 entered included four European visitors and the annual trippers from Ireland – where would Crufts be without you – and 39 from “the mainland”. I believe I am correct in saying that this is the highest entry since the centenary show in 1991, when Hovawarts got their first separate classes, for that I am truly honoured, thank you. A second massive thank you to my very, very hard working stewards – Mr & Mrs Rose who had worked all day in our ring, you made my job so much easier.

It has been said that the Hovawart breed is a three colour breed and it saddens me to say that there was only one lone black female, 10 blondes and 40 Black/golds. Yes it was a B/G that was the overall BOB but the remaining three major wins were all blonde, and the lone black was 2nd in the highest class entry. Before anyone says I’m black biased (having left him at home) I have owned all three colours in my 35 years of Hovawart ownership, so please breeders lets see more colour in the breed, after all its still a Hovawart underneath.

I searched out my previous critique from Crufts 2003 and it was with some concern that my general comments from that day are in the majority still relevant today. Mainly that although UK Hovawart breeders – and I include the Irish in this – have utilised the freedom that the pet passport introduced to the breed, some for the good of the breed, however consider that we are slowly loosing the consistency of type and quality that was seen in those earlier years through to the late 90’s and early in 2000. In 2003 I commented that movement going away was very disappointing with few demonstrating any kind of width at the back and that the breed was loosing the hind angulation with the associated width of second thigh, that is responsible for the correct movement, & this is resulting in a non-typical movement. These comments are included in my critique today, there was a lot of very worrying rear movement which needs to be considered and this was not just in the younger exhibits who have time to develop physically and strengthen up. Correct movement for a Hovawart should be easy, smooth, ground covering and efficient, allowing a Hovawart to work all day in whatever job asked of him. This is achieved on a loose lead, moved at a moderate speed not at an excessive speed with their head held to high thus creating extreme reach and loss of kinetic balance for the dog.

Mouths were also throwing up some faults, which I took into consideration in the judging. Described as a versatile companion and working dog who should be self confident, the majority of the Hovawarts presented to me would fit into this role, albeit with some needing some conditional training before they took on a full day of hard work.

Finally, today I handled some that were not as confident as they could have been with one promising bitch deciding that the day had just too been too much for her (pleased to say outside the ring she regained her outgoing temperament). There was no indication of aggression or nervousness in any

of the dogs just a wish not to be there. I was pleased with my final choices with my Best Dog & Bitch both having won elsewhere under International Breed Specialists.

Veteran dog (5 –3)

1st Murphy & Devane's Ir Ch Glenbower Chieftain – (Blonde) 9 years young & visiting from Ireland. Have judged this boy before and my opinion of him has not changed. Quality blonde. Correct head, good proportions and width of skull, not too heavy, correct depth of stop. Kind correctly shaped eye, dark enough, with good facial pigment. Medium neck into good shoulders, straight legs into good pasterns, excellent feet. Good body with correct lines, through to medium length sloping croup. Tail a little low set and just long enough. Good hind angulation with strong musculature, which powers him around the ring. Can stand with his rear too far underneath him but when he moves he has a good strong topline. His jacket was well shaded and of good quality. When he came back in for the challenge he upped his game and gave Druid a run for his money. I preferred his size to Druid but he could not match the powerful drive of the youngster. Saw enough in the challenge to consider him my choice for Reserve Dog without having to bring in second in open.
RESERVE BEST DOG

2nd Inches' Minches Chief Riever (Blonde) – nearly 10 years young. Correct size. Medium sized carrying a good head, again not too heavy, correct proportions, good eye & colour, correct ears. Short neck from upright shoulder & steep upper arm. Good bone through to well padded feet. Little down on his pastern. Excellent depth of chest with accompanying rib formation. Would prefer a little more length to his loin to finish his balance. Strong topline leading to correct croup to good tail set. Tail just reaches to hock. Good shaped hindquarters. So well schooled, he was unfortunately a little stiff in his movement but moved comfortably around the ring alongside his owner's method of transport! Workmanlike coat, dense and looks like it could protect him from all weathers. Good colour and required shading.

Puppy dog (3-0) – three very raw litter mates all B/G one day short of their first birthday. All relaxed on being handled.

1st Barron & Bettini's Kanukalos Fortissimo

Won the class on his better rear angulations, nearly threw his chances by being naughty on the move but settled once he got going. Above medium size. Strong head, already good width to his skull with correct proportions but would prefer more definition under his eyes & into his muzzle. Correct eye with kind expression. Good ear set. Loose flews. Correct length of neck into good front assembly, strong bone through correct pasterns and strong feet. Good depth of chest, still to develop in the rib, expected at his age. Pleasing

bodylines flowing into a good croup formation. Medium angulations at the back. Tail correctly set, just reaching the hock. Once he (and his handler) settled he moved well for a youngster, profile movement had reach but very close going away. Presented in excellent coat condition however would prefer his gold markings to cover less of him. Strong face markings reached well up the muzzle, on front legs the gold is above the wrist with lack of black markings on the front of the leg with the same excess on the rear hindquarters, with the gold above the hock. Although there is a little brown in the coat, this should go with age.

2nd Foakes' Kanukalos Rhapsody

Thought on first viewing this boy would come out on top but at the moment does not have the rear angulation or body formation of his brother. Medium size. Excellent handling and presentation. Very much the same comments apply as to 1. Head not as strong as 1st but still maintaining correct proportions. Lovely expression from his dark eyes. Well set ears which he uses well. Super feet. Not quite the body formation yet but he has lots of time to develop this. Balanced angulations, firm topline, which he maintained on the move. Liked his croup and tail set. Very attentive to his handler on the move, extended well at the front but could not quite match with drive at the rear of the winner. Again close going away. Lighter gold colour but again over marking in some places. Good black colour.

3rd Allen's Kanukalos Allegro

Again very much in the mould of his litter mates but not yet at the same level of development, again he has time on his side in this late maturing breed. Medium sized. Correct head proportions, kind eye of correct colour, good ear set. Medium neck into pleasing front construction. Strong bone into good feet. Depth & rib cage acceptable for his age, slightly longer in loin but within required body proportions. Lovely tail length. Needs more angulation at the rear to balance his front assembly. Good reach at the front but not fully driving from the rear. Gold markings again need more definition, black coat colour deep and shining.

Junior dog (3-0) all B/G, again two litter mates aged 17 months, with a re-entry from Puppy.

1st Campbell's Quincebois Ironwood – 17 mths

Stands well in the line giving a picture of medium size and good overall balance already giving a finished picture. Although he allowed me to handle him he was obviously not happy as exhibited by the use of his ears and his tucked tail, and I'm sure the use of a slack lead during examination would result in a more relaxed demeanour. Liked his head, correct proportions with good skull strength. Correct eye shape, well set ear a little large. Medium neck length into well formed front angulation. Medium strength bone into correct pastern & firm feet. Has good depth of body with pleasing rib construction. Good body lines, firm topline into nice croup with correct tail.

Pleasing hind angulation already showing width to his second thigh. Moved on a tight lead, which unfortunately inhibits his natural ability to move with a fully extended gait which I'm sure his construction would allow. Moves a little wide at the front and another with close rear movement. Excellent quality jacket, his gold markings could be a little more defined in all areas. A promising youngster.

2nd McManus' Quincebois Redwood

Lighter model than his brother, smaller in size and not yet the development of his litter mate. Good overall balanced picture. Again not relaxed when being handled and gave his handler a hard time when moving, convinced that there had been something in the ring that needed tracking !! Shown again on a tight lead, which does not allow a dog to relax, the tension causing tightness in the neck muscles with the dog being unable to be fully at ease. Saying that he has a pleasing head, nice eye and ear set. Neck of correct length into a good constructed front assembly. Little slack in pastern, feet ok. Depth of chest & rib coming along nicely and again good body lines. Pleasing croup and nice length of tail. Hindquarters are developing well. Movement was difficult to fully assess at times. Better gold marking definition than his brother.

3rd Allen's Kanukalos Allegro.

Post Graduate dog (7-0) – very much a mixed bag of types.

1st Williams' Driftingsky Arcus – just 2 years – Blonde

Just loved this boy on first viewing, 24mths, medium size balanced male who just oozes type and quality & demands your attention. Superb temperament, so relaxed he could have fallen over! Maturing nicely. Nothing exaggerated, stands over the ground well. Superb head type, broad clean skull with required measure of definition of stop. Equal proportions of muzzle to skull length and required deep muzzle with correct tapering. Beautiful eye, gentlest of expressions, confident to look you in the eye. Correct set ear. Strong powerful well muscled neck leading into the best of forehands, straight front with a good width. Strong pasterns with good feet, well arched. Firm topline held on the move, good depth of chest and spring of rib, pleasing loin. Sloping croup with lovely tail, used well on the move. Well muscled rear with that oh so rare width of second thigh, all supported by a set of strong hocks. Good quality jacket with required shading, but with that just washed feel ! Once he and his first time Crufts handler got it together they moved round ring with style and ground covering gait. Unfortunately still needs to strengthen going away which is what prevented him gaining any higher award. The dog I would gladly take home.

2nd O'Sullivan's Castlemary Duke – 3 ½ years - Blonde

Another cracking dog from the Irish shores, litter brother to BOB. A striking dog to look at, his coat colour attracting attention, although would prefer it to have more shading. Medium sized but with required power without being

heavy. Pleasing head, equal proportions of skull & muzzle, would prefer slightly less defined stop & less doomed skull. Lovely dark eyes with the gentlest of expressions. Ear correct and carried well. Strong neck into the best of front angulation. Correct bone for his size, straight legs to correct pasterns and the best of feet. Good width & depth of chest, with excellent rib formation. Good bodylines, well formed loin leading into good croup and well set tail. Excellent hindquarters with a good width of second thigh. With his experienced handler he powered round the ring. Would prefer him to be just slightly taller on his leg to finish the perfect picture which would give him a longer stride that would allow him to cover the same amount of ground with less footfall. Preferred the size of the winner & overall standing picture. One of those classes where you would like two red cards.

3rd Kopczynski's Pol Jun Ch Oro Palacowe Piekności – nearly 2 years –

This blonde foreigner finished off a good trio of blondes. Heavier type but still without exaggeration. Stands well over the ground. Stronger head than 1 & 2, but still made up of the correct proportions. Correct eye would prefer slightly darker colour. Ear set a little low and on the big side. Strong neck into well formed front angulations. Good bone into correct pasterns and good feet. Adequate depth of chest with correct rib & length of loin. Firm topline leading to well set tail of sufficient length, used well on the move. Good rear angulation, well muscled which moved him around the ring with style and ground covering gait, unfortunately a little close going away. Well coated with correct shading. Lovely temperament.

Open Dog (5-0)

1st Murphy's Ir/L Castlemary Druid EJC WW – B/G – 3 ½ yrs

This Irish canine gentleman has matured well and is an excellent showman ably assisted by his very competent handler, they make a formidable team. Medium size with correct body length but like his brother would just prefer an extra inch to his leg. Stands so naturally which creates such an attractive picture from any angle. Pleasing head of correct proportions, kindest of eyes, correct and medium-dark in colour. Liked his ear set and tight lips. Well set neck, leading to good layback of shoulder. Slightly steep in upper arm but this did not detract from his overall balance. Correct strength of bone through to good pastern to strong feet. Good depth and width of chest with lovely rib cage leading to desired depth of loin. Hindquarters are well formed with well muscled second thighs which are supported by strong hocks which are well let down. Excellent coat, shiny black. Correct gold colour, some over marking on his front legs, correct at the rear. He is moved on a loose lead allowing him to cover the ground with ease with a lovely head carriage, with no handler interference to his movement. Drives so well from the rear. Excellent presentation and handled to give a perfect performance. Won the class on his better balanced picture and his smooth free powerful gait. Gave a great performance in the group. BEST DOG & BEST OF BREED

2nd Benoit's Nld/Bel/Lux/Fr/Da/Cro/Bos Ch Gotham des Iles Du Lagon Bleu – B/G – nearly 5 years

Multi top winning foreign exhibit showed in excellent coat and condition. Another who was indicating that he was not fully happy being gone over, holding his tail tucked under his hindquarters. Pleasing head formation, not heavy, equal skull and muzzle length with correct skull width. Nice eye and ear hung a little low. Medium neck into goodish layback of shoulder, little upright in upper arm. Strong bone to correct pastern and good feet. Mature depth of chest with correct rib shape, leading to strong loin with a highish tuck up. Would prefer a little more length to his body, can look more 10/10 than 10/11 at times. Croup sufficiently sloping to a tail of correct length. Would prefer a little more angulation in his rear, not the width of second thigh of Druid. Excellent coat with pleasing gold demarcation. Moves with his head unnaturally high, not helped by the positioning of his lead high on his neck, which at times can produce an over reach and drive where his feet are lifted too high off the ground, rather than a free flowing stride which would allow him to use his head naturally on the move.

3rd Kopczynski's Pol Jun Ch Oro Palacowe Pieknosci

Good Citizen Dog Scheme - Dog (4-1) – all re-entries, all B/G

1st Allen's Kanukalos Allegro

2nd Harrison's Pines Wiggins – 3 ½ yrs

Narrow all through. Carrying a good coat of real weatherproof quality. Slightly tall dog but presents a balanced picture when standing from his angulation. Well handled as he is a strong dog and once settled on the move he worked with his young handler. Head of correct proportions, but would prefer it broader all through. Nice darkish eye, ears low set. Neck just long enough into an upright front assembly. Balanced bone through good pastern to acceptable feet. Although carrying a depth of chest it lacks width and spring of rib could be better. Nice tuck up and good slope to his loin. Lacking in hind angulation. Pleasing face markings from middle gold colour but his leg markings could be clearer. Moved better in this class, possibly because there was more room and although he does cover the ground he is very narrow in rear movement.

3rd Woodger's Hightimbers Tuppence (B/G) – 5 yrs

Mature boy carrying a heavy coat. Correct head proportions but would prefer more definition under his eyes. Middle – dark eye giving a gentle expression, ears correctly set but will carry them back at times. Balanced angulations front and rear, would prefer a little more upper arm and bend to his rear. Pasterns a little down, feet could be stronger. Good depth of chest with good rib. Deep loin to correct croup leading to lovely tail. Can stand with his rear too far underneath at times and when moving does not always hold a level topline, covers the ground okay but narrow going way. Strong black colour to his coat with pleasing gold colouration.

Veteran Bitch (7-1) – all B/G – like post graduate dog a mixture of type. Winner won on better handling, her handler working hard to get the best out of her bitch, which paid dividends. 1 & 2 were different types but both fit the standard.

1st Shone's Ursine v d Romerweide of Zwartbos (Imp Ndl) – 8 ½ yrs

Top size for a bitch but still feminine. Stands over the ground well with good balance. Correct head proportions and width of skull, pleasing definition of stop. Kind correct eye of medium colour giving such a kind expression, ears a little low set, well feathered. Medium neck into well formed shoulders and upper arm. Good bone through pasterns which could be firmer, strong feet. Really good width of chest with corresponding depth completed by correct rib formation. Loin strong and a little deep but she is a mature lady. Good topline leading to pleasing croup and tail set, good length to her tail. Strong hindquarters sporting a good muscular second thigh. Handler works so hard to get this bitch going and once she was persuaded to move she covered the ground effortlessly although lacking some width to her movement going away. All finished off with a lovely jacket of good black colour, correct gold definition, carrying some ageing grey in her trousers. Attentive to her handler at all times, who works so hard to get the best out of her.

2nd Boisseau's Pines Ankheth at Quincebois – 8 yrs

Medium size and much the same comments apply to Ankheth . She presents a picture of balance, which like the winner, can only be achieved from good construction. Pleasing head, would prefer more depth of colour to her eye, ears in the right place but if allowed she will hold them back, spoiling a clean picture of her head. Correct angles front and back, matched by required depth and width of chest. Correct bone through slightly weak pasterns to adequate feet. Has good bodylines but when allowed to she will stand with her rear too far underneath thus losing the required level back. Not quite the slope of croup of the winner, correct tail length. Strong well formed rear angulation, good width of second thigh. Nice jacket with good gold markings. Not the enthusiasm in movement as the winner and although she is capable of moving with a ground covering gait she can be a little lazy and her handler needs to work a little harder to get the best out of her. Two quality bitches.

3rd Scully's Pines Meditation – 8 yrs

Different type to 1 & 2. Medium sized and carrying a spayed coat. Well handled to get the best out of her. Head is long in appearance and lacking some width doesn't help, another that requires some fill in under the eyes. Kindest of eyes, correct colour and shape. Good neck into a good front assembly, good bone to good pastern but a weaker foot. Deep chest with correct rib, pleasing depth of loin and bodylines, but another that will not always stand well over the ground, giving the "bum in the air" look. Needs better angulation to her rear. Her hard working handler gets the best out of her helping her to cover the ground well, but lacks the drive of those above

her due to her straighter hind quarters. Tail is carried correctly but has a “J” formation to its end. Longish coat, good colour with correct gold markings at the front but overmarked at the rear.

Puppy Bitch (2–0) – the female litter mates of the puppy dogs, with very much the same comments applying.

1st Spencer’s Kanukalos Harmony at Hightimbers

Two very similar bitches but the winner was more settled than her litter sister today. Medium sized and developing nicely, pretty head with the required proportions, pleasing stop. Kind eye of correct colour, nicely set ear. Good neck into reasonable front assembly. Well off for bone. Pasterns correctly sloping but feet could be better. Depth, width and ribs developing well, hope she doesn’t gain any more length. Would prefer more slope to her croup, tail slightly low set but of good length. Rear angulation needs to develop but time is on her side. Good black jacket but she is carrying some grey undercoat which should disappear with her first moult. Gold markings don’t need to get any larger. Moves well on a slack lead, covers the ground, happy attitude but needs to strengthen in movement, which again should come with age. Won best puppy over her litter mate who is better developed than she is but by the time he was pulled in for the challenge decided he would do an impression of a kangaroo! BEST PUPPY

2nd McClure’s Kanukalos Burletta

Have to say I preferred her construction and finish to Harmony but she was not fully settled in showing mode or moving, but her day will come. Another pleasing head with required proportions, not quite the fill in as 1. Kind dark eye with pleasing expression. Correct ear. Her neck flows smoothly into her correct front assembly. Lovely strength of bone through good pasterns and strong feet. Already showing signs of good ribs & width, depth developing well. Good body balance and already strong topline which is finished by correct slope to her croup, super tail. Better bend of stifle than 1. Coat is black with lightish gold colouring. Good markings on head but gold on her legs need more definition. Her handler tried her best to get her to settle into a relaxed gait which I’m sure she is capable of doing, sympathetically handled. A very pleasing puppy.

Junior Bitch (4-0) – all different types

1st Murphy & Mooney’s Hayaklause Molly (B/G) – 13m

Catalogue shows that she has been imported from Finland to Ireland. Baby of the class. Super young female of medium size of lovely clean cut type. Good bone and substance and shown in fit muscular condition. Feminine head of good proportions, medium well set ears, correct required definition to her stop, dark eyes. Already carrying a strong well muscled moderate length of neck into well laid shoulders with good forechest development, straight front with

quality bone through correct pasterns finishing with a tight foot. Already has a good spring of ribs, strong topline which she held on the move, lovely underline. Sloping croup with pleasing tail set of good length. Her rear angulation matches her front, strong & muscular for one so young, already with good width of second thigh. Quality jacket, coat in superb condition, correct texture with clean markings. She excels in movement, head forward and driving very balanced and harmonious and unrestricted by her handler. Overall a complete picture of a potential top quality bitch in great condition whose handler got the most out of her today. Considered her for further honours just lost out on the more mature ladies in the challenge today but the bitch I would take home today.

2nd Challoner's Isalynn v Elderens' Hof (Blo) – 16 m

Another import, this time from Holland. Heavier type than the winner not visually helped by her heavy jacket and some excess weight. Pleasing head for her age, well filled in under the eye, correct proportions but would prefer slightly more slope to her stop & a little more tapering to her muzzle and width of skull, but she has time on her side. Lovely dark eye, a little round, excellent pigmentation, flews slightly loose. Good neck into a good front assembly, but although she stands well for her very experienced handler she tends to pull her head back into her shoulders due to her attentiveness to her handlers hands, making her look very stuffy. When she stands herself her good front angles are clearly seen. Because of her heavy jacket you have to really feel with your hands. Quality bone through gently sloping pasterns to good tight feet. Already owning a deep chest and good rib formation into a pleasing loin. Croup correctly sloping with a good length of tail. Good rear angulation, well muscled with a promise of good width of second thigh. She can tend to stand with her hocks inwards. She is moved on a slack lead and although she covers the ground well she moves very close behind. Coat is dense and is dark blonde and although attractive it is lacking the required shading. Couldn't match the winner on hind movement.

3rd Betts & Sharpe's Quincebois Tulipwood by Pines (B/G) – 16 m

Developing nicely and not quite at rate of 1 & 2, but time is on her side in this late maturing breed. Medium size with quality bone. Pleasing head, skull length not quite caught up with her muzzle, moderate stop. Lovely dark eye, such a kind expression. Nicely set ear which she uses well. Her neck flows well into her good layback of shoulders, slightly upright in upper arm. Quality bone through to her good feet, sufficient slope to her pasterns. Has the depth of chest but still developing its width and spring to her ribs. Nice bodylines, firm back, nice slope to her croup. Well muscled hindquarters not quite the width to them as 1 & 2, but she has time to catch up. As always with this handler she moves her dogs on a slack lead with no tension between them allowing her dogs to move in the most natural way, but my notes say "verbal diarrhoea from handler affected their movement today". This resulted in the youngster continually looking up and this affected her free flowing forward movement. Not the jackets of 1 & 2 but what she had was coal black and of good quality, like many of the black/golds here today she tends to some

overmarking on her legs. Has the look of her maternal grand mother about her, not disgraced standing third. Three very promising bitches.

Post Graduate Bitch (10 –1) – again all different types present in this the largest class of the day & the most demanding on my judging process.

1st Hemsworth's Driftingsky Tousele (B/G) – 2 yrs

Not seen her since she was a puppy and how she has blossomed. For me this bitch has excellent breed type and a subtle non exaggerated quality about her. Everything in the right place with no exaggerations. She stood calmly and accepted my examination calmly with an occasional wag of the tail acknowledging my presence. She has a quality head with correct required proportions. Dark eye of correct oval shape, calm expression. Correct ear set of good size. Medium neck flowing into a firm topline supported by correct front and rear angulation. The cleanest of bone right through the pasterns to well padded feet. Good depth and width of chest with pleasing rib formation. Correct loin and tuck up. Nice croup to well set on tail of good length. Good width to her second thigh with underlying musculature. Quality black coat in super condition, gold could be a shade darker with clearer definition on her legs. She is not a flashy mover just precise and flows around the ring alongside her handler on a slack lead. Her profile movement is excellent but it is not currently matched by her rear movement going away, which is what lost her Reserve Best Bitch today. Not surprised to find her litter sister to the Post Graduate dog winner, congratulations to their breeders.

2nd Shone's Zwartbos Chale (Bla) – 4 ½ yrs

Unfortunately not in the bloom or coat of the winner today. She made her handler work for this place, just pipping her litter sister into third place. Taller than the winner but still with the required balance. Very pleasing head, correctly proportioned and obviously feminine. Would prefer a darker eye. Nice ears. Strong neck leading to acceptable front assembly. To be super critical she is slightly steep in upper arm. Correct strength of bone through sufficiently sloping pasterns to good feet. Good width to her chest from correctly formed ribs matched by ample depth of chest. Good body lines, firm deep loin. Sloping croup with correct tail and set, good length. Not quite the rear angulation of the winner but what she had was wide and well muscled allowing her to move round the ring with a ground covering gait, her handler at times struggling to match her speed, moved on a slack lead. Another one who is close going away. Left most of her jacket at home, what was left was deep black other than her white spot on her chest.

3rd Wolfe's Zwartbos Ventnor (B/G) – 4 ½ yrs

Very much in the mould of her mother who had won veteran. Heavier type of bitch but still maintaining her femininity. Correct head proportions would prefer a slightly less domed skull. Nicely formed eye but needs to be darker. Nice ears, set well. Strong neck into well formed front angulation. Straight front through to well padded feet, pasterns could be less angled. Good chest

formation with good width. Pleasing body lines, very strong muscular loin leading to good croup and good tail which has a “J” end to its formation. Sufficiently angulated rear that had excellent musculature. Was surprised to find on feeling through her thick jacket that she was carrying some excess weight but this did not affect her moving around the ring. Once her and her handler got going it was a pleasure to watch, free moving without any restriction, supple and so easy on the eye. Best mover in this class. Finished with a quality black jacket of super condition. Her gold markings could have been a couple of shades goldier but they were in the right place. One of the hardest decisions between her and Chale, but felt that Chale had the slight edge on femininity, eye colour and pastern strength.

Open Bitch (6-0) – yet another class of different types to decide upon which again made the judging process thought provoking. Ended up with three different types in the first three positions, all fitting the standard in their own way.

1st Gutjahr's Zwartbos Arreton (Blo) 4 ½ yrs

This bitch catches your eye immediately when moving in profile at the beginning of the class with her effortless ground covering action during which she took fewer strides than others due to her excellent reach facilitated by correct shoulder placement together with drive from her well muscled hindquarters. Her handler also plays her part by moving her on a slack lead, in such a relaxed manner, it is so effortless you have to look if there is actually a lead there. Middle size. Her head is typical and feminine, correct proportions of skull width, length and muzzle. Pleasing stop with required definition. Correct ears, just a shade on the large size. Middle brown eye with the most lovely expression. Excellent pigmentation, carrying a winter snow nose. Her medium neck flows into her so correctly held topline. Correct front assembly supported by straight forelegs of quality bone through the best of pasterns to really good feet. Deep brisket with correct spring of rib. Just enough tuck up, strong muscular loin. Best of hindquarters with a very good width of second thigh and turn of stifle, but in no way exaggerated. Lovely tail. Middle blonde colour with correct shading, medium length. Not the longest of jackets but she is sufficiently coated. Overall she shows no exaggerated features – everything is in balance. She combines breed type with overall soundness and shows to advantage and presented in hard condition. Her better front, extended gait and wider rear action going away won her the class. BEST BITCH. Arreton matched the dog on movement but lost to the dog on her lack of mature coat & slightly narrower rear movement.

2nd Dall'olio's H-Invisible Sun Del Mare D'Inverno (Blo) – 4 yr

A foreign exhibitor who presented this blonde girl to its best. On first viewing she appeared at top height but her handler is quite petite and hands on proved the bitch to be middle/large. Excellent presentation. Pleasing head, muzzle could be a shade shorter and a little more tapering. Correct eye shape, light in colour. Nice set ear but large, reaching below the corner of the mouth. Medium neck into adequate shoulder placement but not matched by

her straight upper arm. Good bone to slightly weak pasterns & feet. Rear feet were correct. Good depth of chest, but not the spring of rib of Arreton. Although the loin is slightly longer than required it is strong and does not weaken her topline on the move. Shorter croup with lower tail set, good length. Hindquarters shows her long in stifle, could have more width to her second thigh which would give her a better let down on standing. Well muscled. Moved well for her very competent handler, although stood with the lead placed high behind the ears, the lead was loose while moving to allow her to stretch unhindered. Good in profile but her movement going away was very close. Finished by a quality coat of good medium blonde colour with good shading. Brought her in for the challenge as she was close up to Arreton and did enough in the challenge to be awarded RESERVE BEST BITCH.

3rd Inches' Fasskoleys Silkie (B/G) – 5 ½ yrs

Again different type but still fitting the standard. Middle type who has benefited in body development from her litter last year. Nice head proportions and pleasing stop. Pleasing eye of good colour and shape. Ears set okay, she uses them a lot and can leave them off standing at times. Can stand with her head pushed into her shoulders which can unbalance her and give her a dippy topline on standing, but on the move it is level. Standing like this also exacerbates her straight forehead. Correct bone to nicely angled pastern, feet look flatter than they are due to excess feathering. Very pleasing depth of chest and rib, firm loin. Needs more slope to her croup, tail just long enough. Would prefer more angulation at the rear, good strong hock. Quality shiny black coat, attractive markings on her head but would like less gold on her legs. Had to ask her handler to up the speed of the scooter and when she did Silkie produced a comfortable easy, ground covering stride in profile. She paddles a little at the front due to being a little wide there, going away, like the majority of the breed is narrow.

Good Citizen Dog Scheme – Bitch (6-0) – 1 new entry –

1st Shone's Ursine v d Romerweide of Zwartbos (Imp Nld) (B/G) – upped her game in this class, which kept her the red card from one of my favourite bitches.

2nd Whitmore & White's Tyehelva Super Summer of Driftingsky (B/G)

She is of lovely type but I wish she had more enthusiasm for the show ring, you see her trot in and a look comes across her face and she just switches off despite everything her hard working handler tries. It is a bit of a cliché but she is of the old type so pleasing to my eye and it's encouraging to see that this type, that was seen in the early days of the Hovawarts in the UK in the 80 – 90's, is coming through in her grand children, the two post graduate winners. Middle sized of correct type. Best of heads, kind dark oval eye with the gentlest of expressions. Good ear, neat & well set. Medium neck into slightly upright shoulders with correct return of upper arm. Best of forechests with matching depth and such a correct rib cage which you can see without having to put your hands on her. Mature depth of loin, with strength giving her a firm

topline both standing and on the move. Correct slope and length to her croup, tail just about long enough. Her hindquarters just need that little additional bend to her to stifle but what second thigh she has is well muscled. If she had put more effort into her movement she would have easily won this class on her lovely type and overall harmonious picture. Try as her handler did she could not get her to move with the required drive that this bitch is capable of doing. Finished with a quality coat of good black colour with correct medium gold markings that are rarely seen in the breed today.

3rd Robinson & Brown's Zwartbos Moet (B/G) – 2 ½ year old daughter of the winner.

Has matured nicely since I last saw her. Lovely body condition. Middle to large type but still feminine. Pleasing head of good proportions, medium coloured correct eye. Low set ear, strong neck into pleasing front assembly. Straight bone through pasterns which could be firmer, flat feet with black ticking, rear feet correct. Depth of chest could be deeper, but has width, with a goodish rib into a longish loin with minimal tuck up. Strong hindquarters and broad when viewed from behind, would prefer just a little more bend to her stifle. Nicely made croup leading to a good tail, very well feathered. Quality jacket, very dense, super black colour. Her middle gold markings on her legs are very good but she is lacking full markings on her head and chest. Well handled and shown, moves well once she gets into her stride but is very close going away.

Judge: Julie Condron