



From left: Richclass King of Kings (Best Puppy), Ch. Tylko Cobyco Paranoia (Bitch CC & BIS), Mulcair May Contain Nutz (Dog CC & BOS) and Ch. Palmik Magical Whispers (Best Veteran & Res. CC). Judges Bo Bengtson (left, bitches) and Wim Wiersma (dogs, right). Club official Molly McConkey (center).

The Whippet Club Championship Show

Returning to judge for the Whippet Club in England

By Bo Bengtson

The Whippet Club is most likely one of the oldest of all breed clubs, certainly the oldest for this breed. It was recognized by The Kennel Club in England in 1899, with the Duchess of Newcastle as its first president. (The Duchess herself bred Borzois and Fox Terriers, but the first Whippet to become a champion was almost certainly born on her estate, Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire.) Note that no geographical limitation was considered necessary in those days; the Whippet Club wasn't "of" anything. Today there are at least ten breed clubs for Whippets that have official championship status in Great Britain, most of them with clearly defined boundaries. There are many more Whippet clubs at varying levels of official recognition, some with the focus exclusively on racing.

Today the Whippet is more popular in Great Britain than anywhere else; it hits the Top 20 list of Britain's most numerous breeds almost every year. There were more than 3,000 Whippet registrations with the Kennel Club in 2015, while we had less than half that in the U.S. (AKC doesn't publish registration totals anymore, but ac-

ording to information I received there were 1,382 AKC Whippet registrations in 2015 and 1,386 in 2014, putting the Whippet in 59th and 56th place, respectively, among all breeds in the U.S.)

Even knowing that I would see only a tiny percentage of the total Whippet population in Great Britain, I was curious about what I would find at the Whippet Club's annual championship show in Coventry on April 2, 2016. It was the third time I judged for this club, but that's over a long stretch of time. In the 1970s one of my first overseas assignments was the Whippet Club's "open" (i.e. non-championship) show. Later I also officiated at their championship show, but I had not judged Whippets in England since the Hound Association in 2009.

After a smooth 10-hours flight from Los Angeles to London, I met my co-judge, Wim Wiersma, at the hotel. Wim breeds the Of Summer's Joy Whippets in the Netherlands;

he was in charge of the dog classes, while I judged the bitches. Wim has had Whippets since the early 1960s and has judged regularly in Europe since 2004, although not as yet in the U.S. He was accompanied by Monique Post, who was extremely knowledgeable about breed history. How refreshing

to not be met by an empty stare if you happened to mention Zuber, Stanley Wilkin or Ch. Pilot Officer Prune ... (Who were they? Zuber was born in 1889, the first Whip-

pet champion anywhere; Mr. Wilkin had the Tiptree Whippets in the 1930s, and Pilot Officer Prune was a famous English stud dog, grandsire of the Westminster BIS winner in 1964.) In fact, one of the great things about judging overseas is that you often may become acquainted with people you have not had a chance to talk to much before.

The show was held at a sports center with good light, excellent surface for the dogs to move and plenty of space for both

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rings. The general atmosphere was a lot more relaxed than we are used to at our specialties in the U.S.; there was polite clapping as the placements were announced for every class, but none of the yelling and whistling we're used to at our bigger shows. Handling and presentation were better than I remember in the past, although I'm sure some of our more intense exhibitors would be appalled by the casual attitude of some of the handlers. The fact is that presentation matters less than it does in the U.S.; the focus is more on the dog itself, which I find refreshing.

Before judging I had the pleasure of again meeting Lilah Wainman, daughter of Dorrit McKay, in whose hugely influential Laguna kennels I learned about Whippets in the 1960s. Lilah continues the Laguna strain to this day, mostly focusing on racing and is extremely successful in that area. It was great to see her after so many years!

TYPE VARIATIONS

When there are as many Whippets as there are in England it's natural that some of the breeders march to their own drummer. The inevitable result is that the classes were much more uneven in make and shape than over here, making it impossible to generalize and difficult to judge "to type." Although all Whippets in America ultimately descend from British imports, both dogs and breed standards have veered pretty far apart over the years, notably regarding size (larger in the U.S.) and a greater emphasis on glamour points over here. In the 1960s and '70s, most top American Whippets were direct descendants of British imports; we then went our separate ways for a few years, before things turned and there was instead an influx of American blood in the U.K. That was a few years ago; I hardly saw any U.S. kennel names when I went through the catalog after this show (one Plumcreek export was entered but absent). However, the fact that imports from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Holland and Poland were listed attests to the fact that things have changed from the days when bringing a foreign Whippet into England was almost blasphemy.

The British are lucky to have so many shows with breeder-judges within what we in the U.S. would consider easy driving

distance. If we have perhaps one breed-specialist judge for every 25 allrounders in the U.S., the figures are pretty much reversed at British shows. Almost every breeder who has been around for a while and had a modicum of success is eventually invited to award CCs — the challenge certificates that, when your dog has won three of them, make it a champion. The large entries, plus the fact that champions continue to compete for the

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CCs, make it extremely difficult for any dog to become a champion in England. It's impossible to translate their system to an easily comprehensible American version,

but you could say that to gain a champion title over there a dog has to win the equivalent of three five-point majors — and defeat the specials for BOB or BOS as well.

The shorter distances also mean that few British exhibitors have to stay overnight. Showing in the same place for several days, as most of us do in the U.S., is almost unheard of. There are about 40 shows where CCs for Whippets may be awarded, with breed entries often around 100-200 exhibits, sometimes more. Few fanciers go to all the championship shows, and in spite of the fact that there are various "open" shows to fill the calendar even the most active exhibitors probably attend only half as many shows as their counterparts do in the U.S.

There was an entry of 339 Whippets at this show, which I'm told was a good total. Since the bitches are always more numerous than the dogs I started judging half an hour before Wim. The number of classes varies from show to show, depending on the size of the entry, but there are usually more classes to choose from than at AKC shows. Here there were 13 classes for each sex — starting with two Veteran classes (7-9 years of age and 10 years old and over), followed by Minor Puppy, Puppy, Junior, Yearling, Maiden, Novice, Undergraduate, Post Graduate, Mid Limit, Limit and Open. Some of the classes are restricted by age, others by previous wins: Champions, for instance, can only be entered in the Open or Veteran classes.

The reason veterans are judged first must be that organizers are concerned the old dogs may get tired later in the day. The "younger" Veteran class of 14 that started the day was a highlight, with the famous particolor Ch. Palmik Magical Whispers looking every bit the star she is; I understand

Some of the Winners and Placements in the Bitch classes



1st Veteran B. & Res. CC: Ch. Palmik Magical Whispers, J.W.



2nd Veteran B.: Ch. Tannis Bay Sophie's Choice.



1st Minor Puppy B. & Best Bitch Puppy: Cobyco Classic Act.



1st Puppy B.: Danluke Lady Foxtrot at Zenobia.

she has won an impressive 23 CCs. She won the class but was pushed all the way by the well-balanced brindle Ch. Tannis Bay Sophie's Choice, imported from Denmark by Pauline Oliver (AWC national specialty judge in 2014). Third was a black brindle bitch, Stormburst Winter Sparkles for Citycroft, who looked like a worthy champion to me, although she "only" had a Junior Warrant title (awarded to consistently winning youngsters) and a Show Certificate of Merit (ShCM), which seems to be for dogs that can't quite get the champion title. If we have too many AKC champions, the British have too few for the title to serve as a useful indication of a dog's quality. Of the hundreds — thousands? — of Whippets shown in Great Britain, only ten or so become champions each year, which means that a lot of worthy dogs are left out. It's definitely a big difference from the U.S., where almost "everything" is expected to finish.

PROMISING PUPPIES

In the Minor Puppy class (6-9 months) my choice from some very promising babies was Cobyco Classic Act; so smooth and sound, nearly solid brindle and not yet seven months old. A well-balanced fawn, Danluke Lady Foxtrot at Zenobia, won the Puppy class (up to 12 months). The Junior class (up to 18 months) had an interesting winner, the fawn Railfield Raining Kisses, full of quality and very stylish but with a topline that was more extreme than I prefer. It was certainly correct according to the standard, however, as the phrase "showing graceful arch over the loin but not humped" may be interpreted in several different ways.

In the Yearling class one of the day's finds was the elegant light brindle Dutch import, Shiny Sensations Smooth Foxy Lady of Aarminias, who I'm told has already won one CC. There were fewer Maiden and Novice entries than in the other classes, and Undergraduate again was won by the Junior, Raining Kisses. Post Graduate was the biggest class of the day (28) and also one of the best: The top five could all do well in the U.S. First place went to the orange brindle-and-white Shalfleet Amber Nectar of Meandi, with the somewhat stronger but very flashy particular Kaymark China Rose second. This class made me realize the depth of quality that can be displayed at the cham-

pionship shows in Great Britain; I would have been happy to take any of those placed home with me.

The Mid Limit class was won by another bitch I would be pleased to show in America. The chocolate brindle-and-white Crosscop Me and My Girl at Edenwhip was not only correct but also had a singularly appealing expression. The Limit class of 20 had many good bitches but no clear winner. Eventually the solid brindle Penbriar Duchess, although lacking in glamour, won on her general soundness and balanced movement.

The Open class of 24 entries included several champions and CC winners. I had no problem finding my winner, however. At Crufts several years ago I saw Ch. Tylko Cobyco Paranoia from

ringside when she won Reserve CC as a youngster. I didn't recognize her but liked her even more now, looking superb at well

over five years of age. She has tremendous presence, was in beautiful condition and very well presented, and she also possesses what I consider a nearly perfect balance between power and elegance. That's difficult to achieve; leaning too far in either direction is probably the biggest difficulty when judging our breed, and when a dog hits the right spot, as in this case, it should be rewarded. "Katie," as she is called, also has a beautiful, sweeping topline, great legs and feet, and both sound and rhythmic movement in all directions. On top of everything she has an alert expression and excellent ears.

Katie was born in Poland, sired by one of the famous British Cobyco kennel's exports out of a Polish, half U.S.-bred bitch — a litter sister to Ch. Tylko Ty Viking's Pride. This means she's a daughter of Ch. Wolf Tone Viking out of a Barnesmore bitch. Viking is of Signum, Merci Isle and my own breeding from the U.S.; I have put up his offspring in several different countries, but didn't expect to find one in Great Britain as well.

Second in the strong Open class was the very American-looking, glamorous and feminine brindle-and-white Ch. Shalfleet Sugar Frosting, as sweet as her name implies. Third was a smooth, solid red fawn bitch named April Showers at Crosscop, who won a first CC under Espen Engh last year and picked up a second under Åge Gjetnes, followed by Group 1st and Best in Show, at one of the big all-breed championship events a few weeks after the show I judged. She

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1st Yearling B.: Shiny Sensations Smooth Foxy Lady at Aarminias, J.W.



2nd Yearling B.: Palmik Wish Me Luck, J.W.



1st Post Graduate B.: Shalfleet Amber Nectar at Meandi.



2nd Post Graduate B.: Kaymark China Rose.

will probably be a very worthy champion by the time you read this. The other Open class placements are worth mentioning. Fourth place (“Reserve”) went to the nearly all-brindle Ch. Collooney Whoopee Do Dora and fifth (“Very Highly Commended”) to the white-trimmed fawn Palmik En Vogue, a top puppy last year, already a dual CC winner and certain future champion.

All the undefeated class winners lined up for the CC competition, just as for Winners at an AKC show. It was clear to me that this would be a close call between the Veteran and Open class winners, and eventually the latter prevailed, mostly on account of her age. I believe this was her 12th CC. The second-placed Open bitch then challenged the Veteran for Reserve CC, but although the former was very pretty the older bitch’s star quality earned her that spot. (I should add that the Reserve CC is much more highly regarded in Great Britain than most Reserve Winners in the U.S., probably due to the much bigger entries over there.)

The Best Puppy Bitch award went to the brindle baby, who turned out to be a daughter of the CC winner. I didn’t know this at the time, of course, but it wasn’t difficult to guess, as she was in most respects simply a younger version of her dam.

A SURPRISE VISIT

During a break in the judging we got a surprise visit from the Crufts Reserve BIS winner, the fawn bitch Ch. Nothing Compares To You at Crosscop. She was not shown, being on the way to a “Champion of Champions” event, but I was glad to get a chance to go over her. She was beautiful, but I’m not sure if she could

have defeated Katie — it’s probably not fair to guess, since I didn’t see them in the ring together. The Crufts winner has so far overshadowed her litter sister, April Showers, who was in the Open class, but the fact that *both* have won BIS at all-breed championship shows within just a few weeks of each other is apparently a record for litter sisters of *any* breed. Their pedigree, incidentally, is all British for several generations, mostly Cobyco and Collooney.

Since the dog judging was not over by the time I finished I was able to watch Wim Wiersma judge the Limit and Open classes — without a catalog, of course, as we still had to judge Best in Show. Wim’s winner of Limit was a fawn, who I found out later was named Mulcair May Contain Nutz, sired by Ch. Lanakeshena Love In Motion at Veredon out of Mulcair Mums The Word. He won the dog CC, with the Open class winner as Reserve CC, Railfield Raincon in Yialousa — a half-brother on the dam’s side to my Junior class winner.

When there are two judges for a breed in England they decide jointly which one of the CC winners should be awarded Best of Breed. I’m not sure how much diplomacy and gentle (or not-so-gentle) persuasion usually goes into this, but Wim and I agreed amicably after going over each other’s CC winner that the bitch should be Best in Show. Wim correctly pointed out that the dog had more depth of brisket than the bitch, but I feel pretty strongly that this is one area where the standard’s request for a “very deep” chest doesn’t mean “the deeper the better.” I think most coursing people will agree with me on that as far as functionality goes.

We also agreed on awarding Best



1st Open B., CC & BOB: Ch. Tylko Cobyco Paranoia.



2nd Open B.: Ch. Shalfleet Sugar Frosting, J.W.

Puppy in Show to Wim’s choice for best dog puppy, Richclass King of Kings; the baby bitch puppy at this point had obviously tired of the whole thing. When Iva Kimmelman saw photos after the show she remarked that the dog puppy looked “like one of your dogs,” but he is, in fact, sired by the famous Ch. Shalfleet Simply A Lord. With 36 CCs, Lord has won more than any other Whippet male before him and is obviously turning out to be an influential stud dog as well; at least a couple of my class winners were sired by him. He will be six years old later in 2016, but I thought he still looked good from ringside. Lord is probably the main provider of foreign blood in British Whippets right now, his pedigree being a judicious blend of Canadian Lorricbrook, American Sporting Fields, Italian Rivarco and old British blood from Falconcrag and Oakbark.

It was, all in all, a very interesting assignment, well worth the long flights and jet-lag. The club’s secretary, Mary Anderson, was as efficient as she was pleasant, which is saying a great deal. Both she and her committee deserve all credit for a smoothly organized show and wonderful hospitality.



BACK TO THE '70s

The Whippet Club (UK) Open show in 1972 was judged by Bo Bengtson and Caroline Brown. BIS was Ch. Shalfleet Sailing Free (right), with BOS to Ch. Peppard Royal Victory (left). There was an entry of 174 Whippets.