

The European Mentality

CAN WE LEARN SOMETHING?

We live and operate in tiny, limited paradigms. What is in the box is usually influenced by what is outside of it. How we operate in the dog fancy is no different. We function in our own little box, repeat what has been done and the way it has traditionally been without much deviation or creativity. This manifestation occurs because we have little or no exposure to anything else. Eventually, we slowly evolve in a direction. Our present state or "way" is quite different than "the way we were". Our manifestation is also quite different than others in the dog fancy operate in different parts of the world.

IN MY *opinion* ONLY



peter belmont jr.

In other countries, those involved in the dog fancy function similarly to us but there are very strong differences that exist. Those differences at first may appear insignificant but in the end, they are important. This all has to do with goals, education, personal involvement and on-the-spot fulfillment rather than being #1.

After having exhibited and judged at important shows in most parts of the world, I can safely say our involvement is off track and continues to spin out of control. It is obvious to me that the dog fancy in the USA today can be divided into two main categories. It is either one great big business or a social event! A missing third category is nearly extinct: the serious breeder in attendance to get an evaluation of pro-

duce in order to gain guidance for further direction.

Red Flags began to wave. At our shows, everything and everybody is in some kind of a great big RUSH. Everybody is in a constant, nervous, urgent hustle. How can any fulfillment, reward, education or even the slightest degree of enjoyment take place in such a flux? It cannot and it is not. Everybody is running around to

get into a ring and win.

This urgency did not exist when I became involved in the dog fancy in the 60s. From that point on, dog shows became a business and the Dog Show Business evolution has never stopped. Now the scene is hectic. Dogs must be gotten in and out of rings, on time and ready to win. Time must be used wisely.

Our own structure is also to blame. Traditionally, AKC has held the necks of our judges across the chopping block regard-

ing staying on time. Too much is packed into one day! Get rid of the Groups! When judges are evaluated, this factor has been used as the weapon to prevent disliked or unpopular with the rep. judges from succeeding. It has been especially useful to resentful or ruthless AKC Reps. on power kicks. Therefore, judges have been and continue to be forced to limit evaluations of individual dogs to 3 minutes, make placements and conclude breed judging on time in order for the circus to begin, the group judging circus.

Solutions: Yes, I have always felt group and best in show judging was



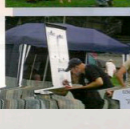
European exhibitors have many things in common with us, we all love our involvement and are proud to display it.

EUROPEAN MENTALITY continued...



Photos, top to bottom, left, top to bottom right:

1. Exhibitors are allowed to set up individual enclosures directly outside rings. This allows for total involvement, inter-exhibitor discussion, relaxation and enjoyment.
2. Global Love. Every child needs and loves a dog and every dog needs a child no matter where on this planet.
3. In many European Countries, show dress is very comfortable and casual. Here, noted Norwegian Judge Knut Blunetzer is seen comfortably in jeans as he examines an exquisite Greyhound shown by none other than renowned All-Breed Judge Roberto Posa of Switzerland/Sweden.
4. After each class is judged, a ring helper immediately records the placements. This enables all to have accurate and immediate access to the results without interrupting persons at the table.
5. All are allowed and welcomed into any ring after awards have been made. There are no NOT ALLOWED INTO THE RING rules and this is wonderful. The Show Ring is not a frightening, sacred place in Europe. It is a place for all to use and enjoy. Exhibitors are allowed to practice in any vacant rings. Exhibitor-friendly? YES! Here, NO!
6. In the fantastic Country of Sweden, naturally, we would expect to see



USE GRASSY BAR, THIS GORGEOUS STONED AT RINGSIDE, EVEN IF SHE IS ENJOYING "RINGING" VAC "VAC" VAC.

EUROPEAN MENTALITY continued...



Above, Azawakh pillar breeder, Frau Monika Kessler of Switzerland enjoys working with her dogs comfortably near the rings.

Right, enough time and space for me to observe and ask questions regarding this captivating breed, Frau Kessler unfolds her treasures, the magnetic Azawakh.

Far right: In Europe, dogs are welcome into public eating places and I love it!

Below: Space is what is needed at dog shows, especially for the wonderful Sloughi. Most European shows are presented in very large areas rather than venues that pack crowds of dogs and people into cans! The Sloughi, of all breeds, needs space and freedom.



for the contributors not the breeders and contribute nothing to the hard core fancy. I would be very happy if dog shows were limited to breed judging only.

Another factor is the lack of an appropriate work force a show giving club is able to assemble. Most clubs today are short of help therefore multi-tasking is a must and often ineffective. Been there, do not want to do that again, thank you.

Solution: Many European clubs hire professional ring stewards trained by a Ring Stewarding School, are paid and are on time, professional AND courteous. Let's

look at this courtesy thing I have become cranky about this. I continue to see a disturbing and increasingly large number of ring stewards "chatting and gossiping" at the ring entrances rather than doing what they are supposed to be doing? Paying attention to what the judge is doing, recording it accurately and correctly and politely aiding and giving out armband to the exhibitors. Hello! Many times, I have approached an outside ring steward only to take the option of interrupting their personal conversation to then be treated rudely in retaliation

as if I was the offender.

Do not tell me clubs cannot afford to hire professional help? Spending more time building up the treasury, having productive fund raising events rather than having hair pulling contests at meetings is the option. (Oops, not all club members engage in such disgraceful behavior but if the shoe fits...)



EUROPEAN MENTALITY continued...



Doesn't this say "convenient, relaxing and exhibitor-friendly"? Of course it does. It all adds up to one great big enjoyable, educational day.

One can never base judgments on generalities but they do give clues. After spending much time at several important dog shows and dealing with breeders and exhibitors in Europe, I think I can safely relate the European Mentality with regard to the dog fancy.

Not all European Countries have everything in common but common threads do exist. In general the European Mentality is more relaxed, sane, intelligent and enjoyable. Things are not rushed. In Sweden I witnessed exhibitors surrounding the rings, watching and enjoying the judging process. There are no professional handlers in Germany; the breeders and exhibitors want to be part of the appraisal, enjoy presenting their own dogs and seek the written critique required by judges. From my own experience, all involved have more time to enjoy, study, absorb and remain involved in what is going on, the evaluation of the dogs being presented to a judge. This attitude may seem boring to us and a bit more serious-minded than we like but it is not. The Germans love and enjoy dog shows, socialize and have fun, yet understand the results in a useful way. I have witnessed most exhibitors take pride from and appreciate a placement, if it's not first. In the USA, everybody wants

to be first or the judge is accused of not "liking" their dog or them! Forget it, especially with the quality I am seeing in the ring today. I am considering withholding points when presented with mediocre class dogs in order to prevent seeing a ring full of mediocre champions next time.

Aside from enjoying the experience of fulfillment from presenting their own dogs, most Europeans seek education and direction from the judges. You see, there, judges are held in high esteem. They are respected—not degraded—for giving out an award less than desired. Sure, all want to received the highest estimation of their dogs but to win appears not to be the entire aim of the experience in Europe. To learn is. Much time, value and emphasis is placed on the written critique for each dog placed before it leaves the ring.

Dress and attire? The Europeans do not consider a dog show a fashion show or an opportunity to really dress up. Appropriate attire seems to be more a concern. In Germany, casual, if not everyday street attire is normal. In Sweden show ring attire was upgraded but in Italy it is a factor. When it comes to Italy, style is important. Italian men and women, when in public, make sure they look their best and at dog shows that is no different.

Involvement? At most outdoor

shows, exhibitors are allowed to drive on the show grounds, set up tenting right at ringside in order to be part of and closely involved in the entire day. Exhibitors are not segregated in grooming areas far removed from the rings where they cannot witness and enjoy the judging of the whole day. In the USA, exhibitors seem physically removed, walk to the ring, show, and then go home. Is that all there is? As far as parking or set up management, I witnessed not one person in charge of these areas giving rude directions or orders as I have seen in the USA.

Handling? The Swedish exhibitor handles their dogs very, very well. I saw no use of aggressive or flamboyant handling. All was done with detail, care and perfection. In Germany, dogs are presented almost as if being casually taken for a walk. Dogs are politely "set up" for examination but a judge is expected to "find" the dog.

Judges? Judges must pass national or FCI requirements. When hiring negotiations are being made, the clubs do everything possible to hire and provide for the judge they want. In Germany, if a judge offers to judge free, I am told it is FORBIDDEN. Get the picture!

Goals, priorities and reasons, different all but then this is My Opinion Only. Good luck at the shows, I hope you win. ■